



# Push to go back to the two-party system

Anna Pha

**It was full on last week, no insults spared, as leading Labor figures got stuck into the Australian Greens. While PM Julia Gillard was focused on Opposition leader Tony Abbott, some of her federal and state colleagues had the Greens in their sights. The Murdoch and other mass media helped spread the venom, doing their best to discredit the Greens as a political force. It was hard to believe that it was the same Labor Party that depends on the Greens to remain in office and to pass legislation.**

The likes of NSW ALP secretary Sam Dastyari would rather give an Abbott government effective control of both Houses through the support of the extreme Right than risk the Greens strengthening their position in Parliament and weakening the two-party system.

Greens deputy leader Adam Bandt warned the "theatrics" could backfire on Labor. "These Labor numbers men are destabilising this minority parliament, undermining their leader and moving Tony Abbott one step closer to The Lodge."

The extreme Right forces behind the attack on the Greens are not concerned what harm it might do to Labor before the next elections, as long as it puts a halt to growing numbers who are supporting the Greens.

Chief government whip Joel Fitzgibbon told the NSW Labor conference: "If you have a look at their manifesto, you will see economic vandalism, you will see populism you will see extremism, and of course you will see inconsistency." He also accused them of having either "populist and unachievable" or "achievable and economically destructive" policies.

He said the Greens would "only ever be a fringe party", contradicting his own warnings about the growing primary vote of the Greens. Labor's fear is that the Greens are no longer a "fringe" party, but present a serious challenge to Labor which has been decimated in two states and whose primary vote is down to 30 percent federally.

If not nipped in the bud now, the Greens pose a serious threat to the two major parties and the two-party system that has worked so well for big business whose interests both parties represent.

A number of members of the Left of Labor have rightly argued that policy reform, not attacking the Greens, will bring voters back. Senator Doug Cameron added a more sober note: "I say that we should not attack any party that takes progressive positions. The positions the Greens take on the IMF and the WTO, my union AMWU [Australian Manufacturing

Workers Union] wrote those policies and they plagiarised them."

Australian Workers' Union secretary Paul Howes hurled insults at the Left and Senator John Faulkner responded: "The fact that we chose to spend a week talking about our preferences might help explain why more and more Australians are deciding that Labor is not their preference."

*The Australian* quotes Howes as saying "The Greens juggernaut is now threatening to cause serious long-term damage to the cause of the labour movement and progressive politics in Australia."

It is not the Greens who pose the threat to the labour movement or progressive politics. It is Labor in the grip of the Right, which has failed to honour its commitments regarding asylum seekers, industrial relations legislation, the rights of Indigenous Australians or take decisive action on climate change.

It made no sense in terms of Labor's immediate electoral prospects.

Sam Dastyari made comparisons with Pauline Hanson. "The Greens are to the Left what Pauline Hanson and One Nation are to the Right, and they share ridiculous albeit different, economic agendas. With Bob Brown's departure, I can't see how the Greens have any chance of keeping extremism in check."

Then in an interview on Macquarie Radio, Dastyari went further describing the Greens as "bordering on loony in half a dozen different areas."

Dastyari was instrumental in getting a resolution through the NSW state Labor conference last weekend abandoning the automatic allocation of preferences to the Greens, instead giving the power brokers the option to put Family First or other reactionary forces before the Greens.

It was Labor's allocation of preferences to Family First in 2004 that saw Steve Fielding elected to the Senate instead of a Greens candidate. Fielding backed the Howard government, including providing the critical support for WorkChoices. If Labor preferences had gone to the Greens in Victoria, WorkChoices would never have been passed.

As well as the present agreement with the Greens that enables Labor to govern federally, the ALP owes eight of its Lower House (including four in NSW) seats to Greens preferences. The Greens have a real chance of winning in the Victorian state by-election for the seat of Melbourne on July 21. Labor has put Family First ahead of the Greens in allocating preferences.

When PM Gillard addressed the NSW Labor conference, she did nothing to counter the attack on the Greens. In fact she stood by comments



made last year in her Whitlam Oration that the Greens would "never embrace Labor's delight at sharing the values of everyday Australians."

Right-wing power broker Howes, backed Dastyari in his attack on the Greens. He described them as one of the greatest threats to employment security in the country.

Federal Resources Minister Martin Ferguson, the little darling of the mining industry, told *The Age* that his position was well known - "I've got no truck with the Greens."

Foreign Minister Bob Carr, told the media that the Greens "can't be trusted on questions of economic management or national security."

Climate Change Minister Greg Combet, attempting to distance Labor from the Greens, said the two parties "have different values and different policies".

### Victorian by-election

Daniel Andrews, Labor leader of the Victorian state Opposition, using a column in *The Age* newspaper (09-07-2012) attempted

to turn the electorate against the Greens. "... the Greens cannot be an alternative to Labor, because the Greens do not seek to be a party of government. They do not want to govern," he said.

Nothing could be further from the truth. It is the aim of the Greens to govern and the growing support for the Greens and disillusionment with the major parties that is behind Labor's attack on the Greens.

Greens leader Christine Milne said it appeared that Labor figures such as Dastyari and Howes had turned against Gillard. "It's not just an idle threat, but in terms of Dastyari and Howes, it's part of the destabilisation against Gillard," she said. She indicated that the Greens intended to stand by their agreement

The Greens pose the most serious challenge to the two-party system with their progressive policies on a range of issues. As Labor has continued to shift to the Right it has lost members and considerable support in the community. ❗

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## The Guardian

Issue 1556

July 18, 2012

### “God is not mocked”

Last week at a special Mass, Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney Julian Porteous offered prayers for victims of abuse by members of the clergy. Many members of the congregation reacted with anger. Prayers are not enough, and never have been. Victims and their families are now calling for a Royal Commission into the matter.

Responsibility for these crimes does not rest with the clergy alone. Australian governments have taken little action to deal with the problem, and the Church itself has shown disregard for the law. Concealing evidence of a crime is an offence, and senior members of the church have failed to notify police about cases of abuse. The perpetrators were often allowed to continue their duties in different parishes, where the pattern of abuse continued. The abuse became a hierarchical system of denials, cover-ups and lies that reached the highest level of the church.

Twenty-five years ago a magistrate dismissed a case involving one victim, Damien Jurd, on the grounds that he was not as reliable a witness as the accused, a teacher at his school. Tormented by the trauma of his experiences, including the rejection of his case, Jurd later succumbed to drug addiction and committed suicide. As the ABC's *Four Corners* program recently revealed, in 1992 the teacher, known only as “Father F”, confessed to an internal Church inquiry that he had interfered with Catholic altar boys over many years.

Father F was formally defrocked, but only after 13 years. Father Brian Lucas, a senior church official who participated in the inquiry, attempted to explain the Church's lack of action by pointing out that Father F had not given the names of the victims, and that in any case “the first responsibility to report crime is by the victim”. They therefore decided that no criminal investigation could be mounted. However, it was up to the police to make that decision, not the Church. Moreover, anyone who has evidence relating to a crime must report it, regardless of whether the victims have made a complaint or been identified.

Admittedly, the Catholic Church is not the only organisation, religious or otherwise, whose members have committed these crimes, as shown by the recent shocking revelations about abuse of Australian naval cadets. Nor are all priests guilty of such acts. Far from it; most are decent, respected members of the community. However, the Church has a particularly long and intense history of sexual abuse, resulting from its demand that members of its exclusively male priesthood must remain celibate. The stated aim was to remove priests from the supposedly corrupting influence of lust, but its original purpose was actually to ensure that they would not have wives or children, and would leave their property to the Church.

A result of that terrible, avaricious policy has been a thousand-year culture of secret sexual affairs and vice. Girls were particularly at risk because there was less likelihood of pregnancy. Children of both sexes could be frightened into silence, having been taught that the Church represents God, who must be obeyed.

As Damien Jurd found out, if all else failed the perpetrator could denigrate the character of the victim, or rely on psychological pressure. One man has testified that in the 1970s he told the principal of his Sydney Catholic high school he had been sexually assaulted by a science teacher. He said he had not told his parents; he felt he could not do so because they trusted the teacher. In due course the teacher was sacked, but no further action was taken. The victim now intends to lodge a formal complaint about the principal's failure to notify the police.

The actions of many members of the Catholic clergy are inconsistent with their own religious beliefs, as well as the law. Their behaviour, and the reluctance of governments and the police to take action on these matters, has made a laughing stock of both religion and the law.

The Bible says “God is not mocked”, and neither is the law. The victims and their families are determined that those who have abused children placed in their care will be punished. The Church must also apologise, compensate the victims, and change its policies – and the sooner the better.

#### PRESS FUND

Last week Queensland premier Campbell Newman declared that his forthcoming budget would be particularly tough – i.e. tough on his party and his government! What about the ordinary Queenslanders on whom his axe is certain to fall? The budget will undoubtedly have the same terrible impact as in other states recently taken over by conservative governments. Despite this, even in the worst of times our readers have contributed to the Press Fund, which helps us meet the operating cost of producing *The Guardian*. So please if you possibly can, send us something for the next issue, as the following wonderful people have done for this one:

Anon \$10, R Girvan \$20, John Hale \$60, Mark Mannion \$5, “Round Figure” \$11, William Wilson \$100, RIP Monarch \$100, Workers' lunch group \$164

This week's total \$470 Progressive total 5,300

# Money for Public Health not for War



Members of the Keep War from our Door outside Tanya Plibersek's office during the July 12 rally.

Photo: Denis Doherty

Denis Doherty

On July 12 a *Money for Public Health not for War* rally held outside the office of the Minister for Health, Tanya Plibersek in Broadway, Sydney drew attention to the government's excessive spending on the military and its subservience to the US war machine. Issues raised included the presence in Australia of US Marines, US nuclear subs and the use of Cocos Island for US drones.

As well as the ridiculous plan to buy 12 submarines at a cost of \$24 billion and host ultra-expensive warplanes, warships and other equipment.

As if on cue the government released its Defence Capability Plan 2012 on July 10 outlining \$153 billion of purchases for the ADF. The plan was immediately labelled unaffordable by commentators and roundly condemned by the protesters outside Tanya Plibersek's office.

A delegation was allowed to

present a letter to a staffer of the Minister detailing objections to the uncontrollable military budget and suggesting that the money be redirected into the health system for more nurses and better facilities.

This demonstration was the first of new network called to oppose Australia's growing militarism and massive integration with the US war machine. The group is called the “Keep War from our Door – Wave of Hope”. Visit their website: [www.keepwarfromourdoor.org](http://www.keepwarfromourdoor.org) ✪

## Statement

# The Sudanese People on the March

In its statement the Secretariat of the CC of the Sudanese Communist Party has called on its members, supporters and the general population to continue to demonstrate their protest against the policies of the ruling regime. It stressed the importance of the continuation of the mass demonstrations, occupation of the streets, raising the levels of the battle till the overthrow of the regime.

The demonstrations started on June 16 by Khartoum University students and were immediately joined by other university students. The character of the demonstrations has changed with the active participation of different sections of the population. While the streets of Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman have witnessed tens of thousands of protesters, the cities and towns of Atbara, Karima in the North, Portsudan, Kassala and Algardarif in the East, Madni, and Kosti and Alobied in the West have witnessed mass protest actions not seen in the recent past. In short the demonstrations have spread to the different corners of the country with thousands joining the protest movement.

The regime's response is utmost brutality. There has been intense police and national security crackdown on the peaceful protesters with extreme violence used to disperse the masses. Hundreds were seriously injured especially among the students, where the regime used its civilian thugs, the baltigia and shibiha of Sudan, to attack the demonstrators with knives, iron rods and sticks.

A lot of students and demonstrators were detained for days and released. However in the past few days a number of activists, whom the regime label as ringleaders were detained.

Information trickling out of detention centres in Khartoum North speak of torture during intensive interrogation. The headquarters of the National Intelligence Security Services is busy receiving detained activists of different political organisations. It is worth mentioning that majority of the press were either forced into reporting the regime's version or closed down.

*Almidan*, the official organ of the Sudanese Communist Party is virtually closed.

While the peaceful

demonstrations are continuing, spreading and encompassing new forces, the regime is resorting to unprecedented repression. Al Bashir called on the security forces to crush the “insects”. It is clear that Al Bashir is a criminal and will not stop at any brutality to defend his rule. It is expected that the regime will detain, torture and eliminate its opponents, because its rule is not just cruel and brutal, but incompetent and corrupt.

It is at this juncture, comrades, when our people are fighting to put an end to 23 years of misery, we appeal to you to raise to the highest level your solidarity with and support to the struggle of our people for democracy and social justice. Help us to fetter the hands of the thugs of the security services, to respect the right to peaceful protest, to demand the release of all political detainees.

The coming days and weeks will witness more stubborn resistance against the dictatorial regime.

We shall fight on until final victory.

In solidarity, Secretariat of the CC of the SCP ✪

# Ten more years of government intervention

Darren Coyne

**Aboriginal people living in prescribed communities across the Northern Territory face another ten years of government intervention in their lives. The Stronger Futures bills were passed by the Senate the week before last, and then ratified by the House of Representatives.**

Labor and the Opposition joined together to pass the laws with minor amendments, despite attempts by the Greens to have the laws thrown out, or heavily altered.

The laws include tough alcohol restrictions, and a program that cuts the welfare payments of parents whose kids skip school, known as the Students Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM), and prohibit cultural considerations being taken into account in sentencing.

The package also expands income management for people on welfare to five trial sites outside the NT – in Bankstown, NSW, Playford, SA, Shepparton, Victoria, and Rockhampton and Logan in Queensland from July 1.

Logan Indigenous Community Justice Centre chairman Terry Stedman said people were concerned there was no way to evaluate a decision to refer people on to income management, and about the lack of an appeals process.

"Instead of punishing people the government should be spending this money on ensuring enough support services for these families – such as more mental health services for children and adults, more advocacy services (particularly for migrant families), domestic violence perpetrators' programs, drug and alcohol diversion facilities and others – which are sorely missing or lacking in Logan," he said.

"Local businesses are worried too about the impact this will have, especially when you consider that there was no economic impact statement done in our community.

"I fear where this is all going when we start to treat people differently like this.

"We'd like to see a Families Responsibility Commission (FRC) set up in Logan so we don't have bad decisions and so targeted individuals and families have some sort of recourse.

"This seems to work well in North Queensland where the FRC can properly assist people and even be critical of government where support services for our society's most vulnerable families are simply inadequate."

Meanwhile, Aboriginal leaders Dr Djinyini Gondarra, from Arnhem Land, and Rosalie Kunoth Monks, from Central Australia, declared a day of mourning, while others vowed to step up the fight to have the laws examined for potential human rights breaches.

National Congress of Australia's First Peoples co-chairs Jody Broun and Les Malezer said even though the laws had passed they should still be examined by a Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.

"While we are disappointed at the outcome, we will ensure Aboriginal people are aware of the available complaints mechanisms, if needed," they said in a statement.

"We will continue to work with government, communities and relevant authorities to find acceptable solutions to overcome disadvantage and to generate development, wellbeing and equality for the people of the Northern Territory."

Greens Senator Rachel Siewert, a fierce opponent of the laws, said their passage was a sad day for Aboriginal people in the NT.

"The continued commitment to the interventionist approach in the Northern Territory is a commitment to punitive and largely unproven measures, developed on the back of a flawed consultation process," she said.

Senator Siewert vowed to continue the fight against the legislation.

"The Greens will not (let) a day pass without closely scrutinising the operation of this legislation and we will continue talking to communities about how best to deliver the outcomes they want," she said.

Meanwhile, another critic, Graeme Mundine, head of the Sydney Archdiocese of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, also described it as a sad day for all Aboriginal people in Australia, and a sad day for democracy.

He said more than 43,000 people had signed a petition against the laws, and the vast majority of more than 450 submissions to a parliamentary committee examining the laws had been against them.

"Civil society has played its part in our democratic process, but government and opposition parliamentarians have failed in their responsibilities," Mr Mundine said.

"They have ignored the voice of the people and pushed their own ill-informed and racist agenda."

Amnesty International said the passing of the laws represented the government's blatant disregard for its human rights obligations.

Amnesty Indigenous Rights Program spokesperson Monica Morgan said the government had ignored a massive outcry from Aboriginal communities and advocates opposed to the laws, including the Yolngu Nations Assembly, Alyawarr communities in Central Australia, and the Gurindji people of Daguragu and Kalkaringi.

"Rather than genuinely listening to and working with the communities affected, the government has simply pushed through laws that extend some of the punitive aspects of the Intervention, such as linking school attendance with welfare payments," Ms Morgan said.

"It is difficult to imagine how these policies can work when there are such strong feelings of continued mistrust amongst the affected communities.

"Aboriginal peoples in remote communities deserve the same respect, safety and protection as does any Australian – but this will not be achieved in a sustained manner under Stronger Futures."

*Koori Mail* ☘



## CSL members in Victoria strike for rights at work

**More than 50 workers had taken protected industrial action at CSL and were planning to take a second 24-hour action as *The Guardian* went to press. CSL develops and manufactures vaccines and plasma protein biotherapies.**

Members of the National Union of Workers voted to take industrial action after negotiations with the company at their Broadmeadows Melbourne site broke down.

As well as the stop work action, there will also be a ban on international blood processing at the site. Members have ensured that there will be no risk to supplies of critical blood products, and the government has a significant stock pile of these products.

The NUW members at the CSL production facility are Operators, and they take real pride in the work they do for the company. The union said all they're asking is that they get the respect they deserve for the hard work they do for the company.

The main issues that members want in their new EBA are:

- The continuation of 12 hour shifts. CSL Operators have worked 12 hour shifts for 20

years, the company wants to get rid of this, but many workers have their lives planned around working 12 hour shifts and members do not want this taken away from them.

- Members want to be shown respect for their work; for the last 20 years CSL provided thermal socks for working in cold areas – and now after 20 years they're taking the socks off them. Workers have the right to be treated with dignity at work.
- A fair wage increase. Company profits have gone past \$1 billion and the wage offer is too low. Members are asking for 6%.
- NUW members want their own Agreement. They are production operators and their needs are different from other workers at the site, the issues they need resolved are specific to their work.

The union says these workers' claims should be met by the company, and calls on CSL management to return to the negotiating table for a fair and swift outcome to be resolved. ☘

Pete's Corner



Deputy to the Latin American Parliament, International Relations Secretary of the Venezuelan Communist Party.

**TOUR DATES**

BRISBANE 15-16 AUG

PERTH 16-18 AUG

ADELAIDE 18-20 AUG

MELBOURNE 20-21 AUG

CANBERRA 21-23 AUG

[cpa.org.au/whats-on](http://cpa.org.au/whats-on)

# Indefinite strike action at Coles warehouse

**In Queensland and Western Australia, Coles' shoppers have been signing petitions in outrage at the inequality that warehouse workers in Somerton, Victoria have faced for the past six years.**

"Why," one shopper asked, "do Coles think it's okay to outsource their labour if it means their workers don't get the same conditions of other workers at Coles warehouses?"

People in the community agreed that shift loadings for working unsocial hours and RDOs for workers to spend time with their families were important rights that workers should be able to collectively bargain for. Members stood in the cold and the rain last week after indefinite strike action began.

Workers at the Coles warehouse in Somerton, in Melbourne's north, have made it very clear to the labour provider Toll Holdings what the issues are that have led to industrial action. Strike action will continue after a meeting with Toll management failed to make any headway with negotiations.

National Union of Workers (NUW) delegates and state secretary Tim Kennedy met with senior

representatives of Toll to press their case for equal rights and pay for the workers.

Mr Kennedy said Toll, who manages and employs the workers at the Somerton warehouse on behalf of Coles, had outlined the same proposal already rejected by workers.

"Our members believe that if a Coles shift worker in a Coles warehouse gets paid a shift loading for working an afternoon shift or a night shift, then Toll shift workers doing exactly the same work in a Coles warehouse supplying Coles Supermarkets should also be paid a shift loading for performing shift-work," Mr Kennedy said.

"Toll however told us today that their commercial relationship with Coles prevents them from offering an employment loading which includes shift loading.

"We know for a fact Coles provide shift loading at other sites so we remain baffled as to why Coles won't treat their Somerton workers the same," he said.

Mr Kennedy said the union once again outlined the five key issues that need fixing in order for workers to return to work:



- Time for workers to have with their family: the creation of a roster for day shift workers that allows them to take a rostered day off and voluntary public holiday system – so that workers can choose rather than be forced to work public holidays.
- Shift loading to be paid for the entirety of a shift to a worker

who does afternoon or night shift – not a couple of hours per shift as proposed by the company.

- The automatic option for direct and indirect casuals to become permanent employees after 6 months.
- Inclusion of basic union rights in the Agreement – such as right of entry.
- A decent wage increase to catch up to other Coles warehouses.

"We left the meeting with an agreement to meet again and we will go into that meeting in good faith in the hope that Toll will put a

new proposal on the table that goes somewhat to addressing the issues," Mr Kennedy said.

Mr Kennedy thanked the workers on the picket line since and warned it could be a long battle.

"These workers all have bills to pay, some have families and mortgage payments to meet and they would like nothing more than to go back to work. But they won't be doing that until Coles start treating them with respect and offer them equal pay and equal rights as other Coles workers," Mr Kennedy said. ✪

## MUA stands with traditional owners

**The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) said it is proud to have hosted an anti-nuclear rally against the proposed nuclear dump site at Muckaty last week in Darwin.**

The rally was held at Stokes Hill Wharf and attracted wide-ranging support, with a number of MUA officials from around Australia in attendance.

The rally was held on the seven-year anniversary of Muckaty being selected as the site for a nuclear waste facility - which is still opposed by traditional owners, the NT community and community and environmental groups from around Australia.

"The MUA has been proud to support the traditional owners who are opposed to the construction of

the proposed dump in their community," said MUA NT organiser Thomas Mayor.

"The MUA is also very concerned that our members would have to handle this waste when it enters the Port of Darwin, bound for Muckaty when the emergency response capabilities in Darwin do not exist for such a dangerous cargo."

He said the MUA attended the rally in force, and will continue to oppose the dump.

Muckaty was chosen as the site for Australia's first nuclear waste facility by the Howard government, and there has been consistent opposition from members of the community and the NT government.

Members of the Warl-Manpa community have lived at Muckaty, near Tenant Creek for thousands of years.

At a recent hearing at the Federal Court in Melbourne, traditional owners had hoped to have the date set to begin a formal hearing to try to have the decision overturned, but that decision has now been adjourned until November.

"It is a really frightening thought that local people won't get a say about what's stuck there, buried in their own lands," said Mr Mayor.

"As a community, we will be standing together to say that this plan is unacceptable." ✪

## Fewer jobs doesn't equal greater efficiency

**The union for federal public servants is warning the government that it needs to stop cutting jobs in its drive to find public sector efficiencies or risk damaging the services provided to Australians.**

The call comes in response to the release of the government's *Driving Efficiency in the Australian Government* report that details plans to cut \$13 billion from the public sector over nine years.

"Our members support the community's legitimate expectation for an efficient public service, but too many of these savings are cutting jobs and services," Community and Public Sector Union national secretary Nadine Flood said.

The report itemises savings through whole-of-government purchasing of technology and equipment, reduced travel expenses and better managed office arrangements, but says little about the 4,300 people out of work in the past year.

"Our members are reporting that they have more work to do with less staff and that's really straining the system. The effect is borne out in the figures too, for instance in the past year from April to April the Department of Human Services, which includes Centrelink and Medicare, lost 1,200 workers but for the same period they received a million extra calls," she said.

"There is nothing wrong with making the public service more efficient, but cutting 4,300 jobs, as the government has done this year, does nothing to improve the effectiveness of the public service."

Ms Flood is calling on the government to spend some time finding the smart savings.

"Blunt cuts like the four percent efficiency dividend doesn't do that. The so-called efficiency dividend simply squeeze jobs and services.

"There are always better and smarter ways to do things but cutting jobs and services isn't smart and it has a negative effect on all Australians," she said. ✪

## Tougher penalties for stopping workplace bullying

**Workplace bullying is a hidden problem in Australian workplaces and must be treated as seriously as other physical hazards to workers, unions have told a Parliamentary inquiry.**

The ACTU's submission to the House of Representatives inquiry into workplace bullying recommends tougher penalties, including jail terms for extreme cases, and a greater recognition that employers have a responsibility to provide a bullying-free workplace.

Research by the Productivity Commission found workplace bullying is costing the economy \$6 billion to \$36 billion per year, on top of the human costs for victims and their families.

ACTU assistant secretary Michael Borowick, who will give evidence to the inquiry in Melbourne, said workplace bullying was a health and safety issue that had been neglected for too long.

"Although we need tougher penalties, it is more important that we change workplace culture to ensure bullying does not happen in the first place," Mr Borowick said.

"Everyone is entitled to respect at work. The effects of bullying are serious, many people who are bullied report depression or other

mental health issues and have difficulty returning to work.

"It is not good enough for employers to ignore this issue. Every workplace should have policies and procedures to deal with bullying and harassment, and employers should acknowledge their responsibility to provide a safe and harassment-free environment for all their workers."

He said bullying needed to be explicitly defined in workplace health and safety laws and the penalties of serious incidents of workplace bullying should match those for other major breaches of health and safety. This should include the potential of imprisonment.

Mr Borowick said that complaints of bullying needed to be dealt with as early as possible.

"We need a forum to easily resolve bullying complaints before they escalate. Bullying behaviour on its own should be enough to trigger a complaint, rather than waiting for an injury to occur."

"Over 2.2 million Australians are in some insecure work arrangement, such as casual, contract or labour hire work. These workers are particularly vulnerable to workplace bullying because they are often unable to speak up for fear of losing their jobs." ✪

# Finding the way to avoid asylum seeker deaths

Peter Mac

Several years ago approximately 300 people died when the vessel known as the SIEVX sank, while the Howard government was enforcing its harsh "Pacific solution" and detaining asylum seekers on Nauru. Last year 50 asylum seekers drowned after their boat was smashed to pieces on Christmas Island's rocky coastline, as helpless residents watched in horror. More than 200 died last year and about 100 died last week. In all, a thousand asylum seekers are thought to have died at sea since the late 1970s, many in vessels never detected by rescue crews.

However, last week federal parliament broke for its six-week winter recess, without having reached an agreement on the best way to avoid the tragedy of asylum seekers dying en route to Australia.

The government, the opposition, the Greens and the independents were united in expressing concern over the deaths, and some were visibly distressed during discussion on the issue. Nevertheless, the way forward could not be found, because the government and opposition parties are rigidly committed to the off-shore processing policy and their incompatible versions of it.

The government has adopted an amended policy under which asylum seekers who have entered Australian waters or territory would be sent to either Nauru or Malaysia. However, the opposition coalition rejects Malaysia as a destination, or any other country that has not signed the UN Refugee Convention.

Legislative amendments proposed by independent MPs Rob Oakeshott and Andrew Wilkie also involved offshore processing but differed from the policy variations of the government and opposition, so they were rejected. The Greens have consistently opposed off-shore processing but are outnumbered.

The government has now placed

the issue before an investigative committee, which will have to report back to parliament after the recess. Its members include retired defence chief Angus Houston as chairman, refugee expert Paris Aristotle and diplomat Michael L'Estrange. Significantly, the committee does not include a representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, whose office has been a critic of the offshore processing and mandatory detention policies.

## Failed policies locked in

Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser has pointed out that the present policies are bound to fail as a deterrent to asylum seeker boat voyages, because they would have to involve punitive measures worse than the terrifying treatment the asylum seekers have already experienced in their countries of origin.

"No punitive measure, no nastiness by any Australian government, can match the terror from which a genuine refugee is fleeing", he observed.

In the late 1970s the Fraser government dealt with the cases of 70,000 Southeast Asian asylum seekers by processing applications for asylum in Indonesia, and by increasing Australia's annual quota of refugees.

Liberal leader Tony Abbott has offered to raise the present quota from 13,750 to 20,000 per year, but only as part of a deal that would involve reopening the former Howard government's infamous Nauru detention centre, and only over a three year period.

The coalition wants to tow asylum seeker boats back to their point of departure. Indonesia has strongly objected to that suggestion, and last week it called for Australia to live up to its obligations under the UN Refugee Convention, rather than blaming the Indonesian government for letting the boats depart.

The coalition also wants to reintroduce the notorious temporary protection visas, which often led to the enforced separation of members of asylum seeker families. As a concession the government has offered to reconsider its opposition to temporary visas.

The government has offered to accept an extra 4,000 refugees from Malaysia, but only as part of their policy of forcibly sending new asylum seeker arrivals to that country for indefinite detention.

## The way forward

The emerging solution to the asylum seeker death crisis is twofold. Firstly, we need to increase Australia's annual intake of refugees. In contrast to the government and the coalition, the Greens want an increase of several thousand in the yearly quota, and their policy is unconditional.

Greens leader Christine Milne has commented that if the increase was made "... there would immediately be far less pressure to get on boats and risk their lives."

Secondly, we have to stop threatening asylum seekers with exile in Malaysia or Nauru or somewhere else if they get on a boat, and instead offer them a better deal.

Echoing Fraser's policy, human rights barrister Julian Burnside has proposed that "...The obvious solution ... to stop people getting on boats ... is for Australia to set up a fair dinkum, fair processing system in Indonesia with the cooperation of the Indonesian government."

Under Burnside's proposal the government would also warn applicants not to board the boats, and would provide them with a written guarantee that if their application was successful they would receive a ticket to Australia, and would eventually be safely resettled.

Other measures could be taken. For example, the Australian government could enter into an agreement with governments in Indonesia and other countries of departure to run a street advertising campaign, which would inform asylum seekers about the risks of boarding the boats, and offer them a preferable alternative along the lines of Burnside's recommendation.

That recommendation is likely to meet with the approval of the Greens. In contrast, the opposition coalition has indicated it will reject any recommendation that doesn't comply with its current position, and the government has pre-empted the committee's decision by declaring it is certain to favour the Malaysia option. Neither the government nor the opposition is thinking outside the square.

If Houston's committee consults "experts" other than those who recently advised the government that the Malaysian proposal is the best option, there is a small chance that in six weeks' time it will recommend Burnside's proposal, or a variation of it. If so, there is an equally small chance that the Gillard government will accept it.

Overall, the chance of that happening is very, very slight. But the fate of thousands of the world's most desperate people rests upon it. ✪



Qantas is embarking on a new advertising campaign designed to make the airline's image "more contemporary". The new marketing effort wants to convince "the next generations of flyers", existing customers and those flying with other companies that Qantas had made critical changes to its service and product to "rebuild emotional relationships between Australians and Qantas". It will be interesting to see what the results of this campaign will be. Qantas executives seem to forget that their potential customers also remember their savage attacks on Qantas workers, sackings, lies about relocating maintenance work overseas, suspending flights across the world in response to industrial actions. Australians did have emotional relationships with Qantas but it has to work both ways.

The Arctic is a key site for climate science because the impact of warmer air and water temperatures can be measured directly. According to the US National Snow and Ice Data Centre, sea ice in the Arctic melted at a record pace last month. The loss of Arctic ice presents a big problem for attempts to contain dangerous climate change at safer levels. The white ice reflects light and heat away from the Earth's surface. The smaller the ice cap, the less heat is reflected away. This leads to warmer water and further loss of ice. The trend towards a shrinking polar cap has been evident for quite some time as global temperature rises. It is generally accepted that climate change is what we are dealing with and certain steps should be taken to minimise the human contribution to it. Climate change deniers of course are still not convinced though. Alan Jones, an Australian conservative commercial broadcaster told a rally in Melbourne that climate change science was "propaganda", the notion of global warming was a "hoax" and "witchcraft". People on some Pacific islands are already almost knee-deep in this "witchcraft", with water rising and destroying their homes and crops. Polluting industries love climate change deniers because they want justification for not paying taxes on their super profits.

The environment group Markets for Change investigated claims made by Harvey Norman that the company's Naturally Australian flooring products were made from "sustainable and renewable natural resources". It turned out that the flooring was made from native forests in NSW where koalas face extinction. Figures from the Australian Koala Foundation reveal that there may be as few as 43,000 koalas remaining in the wild and logging forests is a leading threat to koalas.

NSW motoring body the NRMA has welcomed both the state and federal governments' decision to consider forcing oil companies to advertise all prices of fuel on their petrol price boards. "Price boards can often be misleading as they include shopper docket discounts and don't include prices for all grades of oil," said NRMA Motoring and Services President Wendy Machin. "By advertising all fuel prices we hope it will force oil companies to be more competitive as their prices will be available for all to see," she added.

Melbourne

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# Syrian conflict exposes America's "Axis of Evil"

Finian Cunningham

**Forget about oft-repeated Western admonishments against Islamic extremists, rogue states, corrupt regimes, authoritarian superpowers as being "the enemy" of freedom-loving people. It is the American government and its allies who are the real "axis of evil" confronting the world.**

It is the system of capitalist corruption, elite exploitation and enrichment, and its corollary of imperialist warmongering that the US and its allies uphold – that is what is driving Syria and the rest of the world into poverty, conflict and the brink of catastrophe.

Ironically, it was 10 years ago when the then President George W Bush coined, or rather his speechwriter coined, the phrase "axis of evil". During his 2002 State of the Union address to the American nation, Bush warned against three countries that "aggressively pursue weapons of mass destruction" that "export terrorism" and are ruled by "an unelected few". He named Iraq, Iran and North Korea as the "axis of evil".

Later, the Bush administration would expand the "forces of evil" bearing down on the world to include Cuba, Libya and Syria.

Of course, being an arrogant superpower intoxicated by its own vanity, the American president offered no evidence to support such outrageous slander – a slander that is still a plank of US foreign policy because it has never been officially retracted.

If the Western corporate-controlled media was truly independent, as it claims, instead of being a servile mouthpiece for elite power, then it could have provided some historical corrective to the preposterous axis of evil slur. The media might have noted that Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein had actually been installed by the US after a murderous CIA coup against Abdul Karim Qassim. When Bush Jnr made his infamous speech, the people of Iraq had been subjected to a devastating war inflicted by his father, Bush Snr in 1991; and they had borne 10 years of crippling US-instigated economic sanctions that claimed the lives of over one million Iraqi children, which former US secretary of state Madeleine Albright once described as "a price worth paying" in the bid to oust the former American client.

Turning to Iran, the presumed Western organs of truth could have informed the public that Iran's government had attained political and economic independence from American tyranny in 1979 after the people of Iran threw out the Washington-backed dictator, Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi. The Shah, along with his brutal SAVAK secret police, was installed by the US in 1953 as an absolute monarch after the CIA and British MI6 overthrow the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh because the latter dared to harness Persian oil wealth for the benefit of the people rather than the pockets of Western capitalists.

As for North Korea and its reclusive communist regime, whatever its internal problems, the Western media could have put Bush's axis of evil label into perspective by pointing out that the Asian country has not waged war on any neighbour and has no substantiated links to international terrorism. Indeed, North Korea's obscurity and underdevelopment can in large measure be attributed to America's war of aggression on the Korean Peninsula

# WAR IS TERRORISM WITH A BIGGER BUDGET



during the early 1950s in which the people of northern Korea were forced to live in caves to escape from the carpet-bombing inferno that the US unleashed. Officially, the people of North Korea still live under the threat of annihilation by the US because Washington never signed an armistice in mid-1953 when hostilities ended.

## "War on terror"

The supine Western media would never acknowledge the obvious: that the real reason for Washington creating an "axis of evil" was to bolster its fraudulent narrative of the newly minted "war on terror". The ruling class of the US and its allies need some kind of external enemy in order to justify their militarism and foreign aggression. For over four decades, the convenient enemy was the "evil Soviet empire". That allowed the US and its allies to invade and subjugate countries all around the world in the name of "fighting communism" and "defending the free world" when the real, hidden agenda was gaining control of natural resources for Western corporations.

From 1945 to the 1990s, the US and its European allies conducted overt and covert military interventions in more than 50 countries around the world, from Latin America to the Caribbean, from Africa to the Middle East and Asia. That is an average of one military intervention for every year. It is estimated that the death toll from these US-led coups, subversions, proxy wars and all-out wars, such as in Vietnam, amount to well over 10 million people. A Western holocaust in the service of capital.

With the sudden collapse of the Soviet

Union in 1990-91, the Western powers needed to come up with a new enemy to justify imperialist business as usual.

This was the beginning of the "war of terror" narrative and variations of that, such as "axis of evil" and "weapons of mass destruction".

Rather than a peace dividend manifesting from the ending of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, the American national security doctrine that dominates Western governance was permitted to continue because the US and its allies now had a "new enemy". Trillion-dollar military budgets would therefore continue to be sustained at the expense of social development, and, crucially, military interference in the affairs of sovereign nations would again be invoked in the name of "defending the free world". The US spends more on military than all nations of the world combined even as its own society goes into social meltdown from poverty.

What the official nomination of the axis of evil did not disclose was that the designated culprits had certain other more important attributes. They are, or were in the case of Libya, independent of Western foreign policy, and, in particular, trenchantly critical of US and European support for the decades-long criminal aggression of Israel towards the Palestinian people and other Middle Eastern states. Moreover, Iraq, Iran and Libya possess some of the world's largest known reserves of oil and gas.

The "axis of evil" epithet was therefore not only a way of maintaining the otherwise obsolete national security doctrine of the US and its allies, it also served to isolate, demonise and target the said countries for "regime change" – that is change to regimes that are pliable to the economic and political dictates of Washington and global capital.

Of the original six members of the axis of evil, as designated by the Bush administration, Cuba and North Korea are effectively quarantined by Western-imposed blockades and embargoes, isolated from balanced international relations and development. Of the other four, Iraq and Libya have been invaded by US-led forces, destroyed and realigned to serve Western interests. The remaining two are Syria and Iran, both of which are being assailed by economic sanctions and Western covert aggression.

This week, Russia, China and Iran reiterated

the reasonable proposition that the people of Syria must be allowed to determine their political future without foreign interference. Even Kofi Annan, the Arab League special envoy, who has in the past been keenly accommodating to Western governments, appears to have backed this proposition. Indeed, during his recent visit to Tehran, Annan agreed with Iran's foreign minister Ali Akhbar Salehi that Western interference in Syrian affairs and supply of weapons must stop.

What is the position of the US and its allies? Rejecting any internal Syrian solution, Washington, London, Paris and their allies Turkey and the Persian Gulf Arab monarchies have vowed to increase financial and material support for the armed groups that have been waging a campaign of terrorist subversion over the past 16 months. The US-led axis insists that Syrian President Bashar Al Assad must go immediately at their say-so. US secretary of state Hillary Clinton said that Russia and China will be made to "pay a price" for their (reasonable) position. Clinton then made the sinister warning that Assad's "days are numbered" and that if a political transition does not occur on American terms then the Syrian people face "a catastrophic assault that would be very dangerous not only to Syria, but to the region".

That is the mindset and language of a fascist rogue state.

What is happening in Syria is a heart-rending tragedy. But one positive thing to emerge from the suffering is the glaring truth for the world to see who exactly constitutes the "axis of evil". An American president's words are coming back to haunt in a way that he never imagined. For what the world is witnessing in Syria is the American axis of evil. This truth is obliging us to look back at past decades and to recognise the ultimate source of violence, conflict and wars down through modern history.

This truth is compelling us to look at the present with eyes opened as to why poverty, social decay and misery sit alongside unaccountable elite wealth, power and warmongering. The axis of US-led powers that serve a global elite are ransacking their own societies and any other that stands in their way of dominance. And this truth can set us free.

globalreserach.ca ✖

**It is estimated that the death toll from US-led coups, subversions, proxy wars and all-out wars, amount to well over 10 million people.**

# Haiti: Five star hotels are being built amid shanty towns

Julie Lévesque

As part of the country's "Reconstruction", The Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund recently invested US\$2 million in the Royal Oasis Hotel, a deluxe structure to be built in a poverty-stricken metropolitan area "filled with displaced-persons camps housing hundreds of thousands". Royal Oasis belongs to a Haitian investment group (SCIOP SA) and will be managed by the Spanish chain Occidental Hotels & Resorts.

AP reported in April that funds raised by the former US Presidents to help the neediest Haitians are now being used to build a hotel for "rich foreigners" including tourists as well many foreign NGO "aid workers" currently in Haiti.

It is worth noting that Western governments have insisted that aid money for Haiti be given to NGOs and foundations rather than to the Haitian government, which they consider to be "corrupt".

In the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake, people in the US, Canada and the EU, who made donations to those humanitarian organisations and NGOs did not realise that their contribution to Haiti's reconstruction would be channeled towards the building of five star hotels to house foreign businessmen. Their expectation was that the money would be used to provide food and housing for the Haitian people.

## Royal Oasis infomercial

The Royal Oasis as well as other hotel projects totalling over US\$100 million are, according to AP, "raising hopes that thousands of [foreign] investors will soon fill their air-conditioned rooms looking to build factories and tourist infrastructure".

The "10-story building will include an art gallery, three restaurants, a commercial bank and high-end shops. Construction on the Royal Oasis began before the earthquake and is expected to finish by the end of the year." The earthquake was therefore a blessing for the hotel promoter and contractors, bringing US\$2 million originally raised to "go directly to supplying these material needs [food, water, shelter, first-aid supplies]". Among the companies involved in the construction of the Royal Oasis two are Haitian, one is Canadian (Montreal) and the other American (Miami).

## Foreign aid: Who benefits?

Foreign "aid" often benefits NGOs of the donor country as well as the local business elites in the recipient country. The Council on Hemispheric Affairs has blamed both Bill Clinton as well as previous US presidents for having maintained Haiti in conditions of "endemic poverty through a self-serving US rice export policy. By 2003, approximately 80 percent of all rice consumed in Haiti was imported from the United States." (Leah Chavla, "Bill Clinton's Heavy Hand on Haiti's Vulnerable Agricultural Economy: The American Rice Scandal", *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, April 13, 2010.)

Last January iWatch News reported:

According to [US] government figures, 1,537 contracts had been awarded [to US Companies] for a total of US\$204,604,670, as of last fall. Only 23 of the contracts went to Haitian companies, totalling US\$4,841,426 (Marjorie Valbrun). Haitian firms are few and far between on reconstruction rosters.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a division of the World Bank, has also invested \$7.5 million in the project, claiming it will "create employment, generate business opportunities for small businesses and promote



sustainable development." Since 2006, US\$68.6 millions have been invested by IFC in the Haitian private sector. Despite those investments, the per capita GDP in Haiti has seen very little improvement during that period. There is a fine line between slavery and an average US\$2 a day salary, which ousted president Jean Bertrand Aristide wanted to abolish prior to his overthrow in a US-French-Canadian sponsored Coup d'Etat.

"The good news" is that the project will create jobs for Haitians. The Oasis foundation has also created a program to train workers for the tourism industry. The project promoter, Jerry Tardieu told AP "the new hotels will help more people get out of the camps by giving them jobs to pay for rent on homes being rehabilitated by government and non-profit organisations." He says 600 people have been employed for the hotel's construction and once open and running, 250 to 300 new jobs will be created.

On top of the US\$2 million invested in the hotel, a modest grant of \$264,000 goes to the "Oasis Hotel's nonprofit arm, the Oasis Foundation [...] bolstering the hospitality sector by reopening l'École Hôtelière Haitienne (the Haiti Hotel School). Basically those funds are used to make comfortable hotel rooms, lounges and cafes for foreigners and "train Haitians to serve them" in a congenial five star environment.

While Haiti was lacking in hotel rooms in the wake of the earthquake and job creation is a key to poverty reduction, a majority of the population still live in makeshift shelters of cardboard, scrap metal and old bed sheets. People struggle to have water to drink and food on their table – and in many cases they do not have a table. Meanwhile, the construction of luxury hotels for foreigners is a number one priority, in comparison to "housing for the locals".

Tourism Minister Stephanie B Villedrouin said "all of those [850] hotel rooms [destroyed in the earthquake] will have been replaced by the end of the year. Port-au-Prince officially has a 60 percent occupancy rate but many of the hotels are too rustic for international travellers

[including the NGO, World Bank and USAID staff on mission to Haiti]."

The "international travellers" are the unspoken victims of rudimentary and rustic hotel accommodation when on mission to Haiti, according to Marriott's executive Alejandro Acevedo. "Marriott International, ...is building a US\$45 million, 174-room hotel [in Haiti] in partnership with mobile phone company Digicel Group." Marriott's Acevedo complained that "even he had to share a room with his boss on a recent visit because of the dearth of hotel space."

Meanwhile, most Haitians live in overcrowded camps such as Champ de Mars camp in Port-au-Prince, "densely packed with shacks made from bed sheets, tarpaulin and scrap metal, which provide flimsy shelter for some 17,000 people." Forced evictions also take place regularly, according to AlertNet.

The AP report adds that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) bought land for US\$10.5 million and are also thinking of building a hotel: "The money came from donations raised by national Red Cross agencies for quake recovery, causing some to wonder if the money would be better used to house displaced people rather than aid workers."

## Where did the money

come from?

## Where did that money go?

Millions of people in the US, Canada and Western Europe donated part of their savings to their local Red Cross, which was then channelled to the IFRC, the world's largest humanitarian umbrella organisation. The IFRC claims to be "providing assistance without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions."

This land purchase by IFRC not only violates its humanitarian mandate but also the trust of its constituent Red Cross and Red Crescent organisations worldwide. Red Cross donations should have gone supporting IFRC's mandate

with regard to "shelter recovery and settlement planning", in a post-disaster environment as clearly stated on the IFRC website:

"Most people who have lost their homes through a disaster want to repair or rebuild their homes as soon as possible. Many start the reconstruction process immediately after a disaster, whenever circumstances and resources permit. Shelter assistance provided by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies recognises this, and where appropriate prioritises the provision of materials, tools, cash and technical assistance to support the process." According to the AP report: "Signs of Haiti's comeback can also be seen in the 105-room Best Western hotel being built within blocks of shanty-covered hillsides."

The five star Best Western project is worth US\$15.7 million and is located in the plush city of Petionville. The "first US hotel in Haiti" is funded by local investors but will be managed by a Dallas firm and is expected to create 150 jobs.

While several hotels are being built to provide "room and board" for potential foreign investors, very few homes are being built for locals and "the vast majority of construction has been temporary shelters with a life span between two, maximum five years", according to Gerardo Ducos from Amnesty International.

In order to shut down the Champ de Mars camp, which would be tantamount to the expulsion of more than 17,000 people, a controversial Haitian government program funded by Canada has been offering \$500 to dwellers who leave and find a home elsewhere. In practice this project leads to the de facto expropriation of slum dwellers in high value central downtown area of Port-au-Prince. While the amount is enough to pay the rent for a year, Ducos wonders: "What happens to the people when their rent money runs out in a year?"

Will there be enough jobs for them in the hotel industry? Will the salaries be high enough to pay the rent?

A lot of unanswered questions remain. [globalresearch.ca](http://globalresearch.ca) ☺

**A majority of the population live in makeshift shelters of cardboard, scrap metal and old bed sheets. People struggle to have water to drink and food on their table ... meanwhile, the construction of luxury hotels for foreigners is a number one priority.**

# Creative extortion

Soraya Sepahpour-Ulrich

The cash-strapped American empire has become creative at extortion. Applying its customary double-standards and blame game, it has made death singularly profitable by legalising extortion and demanding compensation for its military personnel killed while occupying other countries – and placing the blame on a third party.

For the umpteenth time, a US court has passed judgement against Iran for the 1983 marine barracks bombing in Lebanon. To date, a total of US\$8.8 billion has been issued against Iran for the death of 241 American soldiers in Lebanon – over US\$36 million per soldier. These judgements are not without ramifications.

## The blame game

According to official accounts, truck bombs blasted the building housing American “peace keepers”. The reality is that there were no American “peace keepers” in Beirut at the time of the blasts. The clearly defined mission of the US marines deployed on August 20 to supervise the evacuation of the PLO guerrillas was accomplished by the end of the first week of September. The troops withdrew to ships in the Mediterranean Sea. No peacekeepers were harmed during this mission.

However, 19 days later, after the Israeli invasion and occupation of West Beirut, and the brutal Sabra-Shatila massacres under the supervision of Ariel Sharon, a larger US force returned to Beirut – this was with a very different mission in mind. Theirs was not only to secure the airport, but to help the new Gemayel regime “consolidate” power.

Ronald Regan had decided to launch a “second Cold War” in the Middle East and in line with this strategy the additional forces were

*According to official accounts, truck bombs blasted the building housing American “peace keepers”. The reality is that there were no American “peace keepers” in Beirut at the time of the blasts.*

showing a permanent US presence in the region. In Lebanon, some 100 field grade US Army and Special Forces officers were training “the most highly motivated” Lebanese brigades, that is, those with strong Phalangist militia components. According to the Britannica Concise Encyclopaedia, these were the same militias who under Sharon’s supervision massacred 800 – several thousand women, children and elderly at Sabra and Shatila. “Peace-keeping” had taken on a new definition.

By September 1983, as part of this new mission, US warships were



The 1983 marine barracks bombing: a total of US\$8.8 billion has been issued against Iran for the death of 241 American soldiers in Lebanon – over US\$36 million per soldier.

shelling Syrian and Druze militia positions outside Beirut, and Marine ground forces were trading artillery and sniper fire with Shi’a and Druze fighters. The October 23, 1983 truck bomb attacks were an inevitable consequence of US actions.

The United States courts have implicated and passed judgment against Iran for the bombings although Iran was not involved. However, it is safe to surmise that the resistance looked to Iran for inspiration. Iran had ejected America’s man in Tehran, the Shah, and with it America, with a simple religious ideology – Islam.

Regrettably, America is demanding millions of dollars from Iran for inspiring resistance, thus making a mockery of law so as to enable extortion.

## Consequences of the blame-game

Distorting the law to extort money sets a dangerous precedent locally and internationally. The Occupy Wall Street which soon became global held a candle light vigil for Martin Luther King. During the Occupy protests injuries occurred, including two police officers in Zucotti Park, New York, and three deaths were reported as a result of the Occupy Movement. It would be preposterous if the United States government passed judgment against the late Martin Luther King’s estate for having been an inspiration to people living under tyranny and inequality.

In line with this thinking, it has even suggested that the “Arab Spring” was inspired by Gandhi. It would be

equally preposterous if Gandhi were to be held responsible for the untold number of casualties and extortion demanded of India.

But clearly, when politics is involved, inspiration comes with a heavy price-tag. Self-defeating as these sham judgments may be, they also offer a lesson for those who would heed them.

According to *Army Times*, victims’ relatives were paid US\$2,500 for each death. It is cheap for Americans to kill innocent civilians when occupying a country. Granted, when the killings cause a sensation, as with the killings that went on a killing spree in Afghanistan, the compensation is jacked up. However, rebel fighters who look to the United States and her allies to topple their government would do well to bear in mind that from an American perspective, their life is worthless while that of an American – well, priceless.

Information Clearing House ☛

## Canadian scientists protest sackings, spending cuts

Blake Deppe

**In June 2012, Canada’s government made excessive cuts in its environmental departments, resulting in the firing of many top scientists – and their supporters – had decided they’d had enough; they led a march through central Ottawa to Parliament Hill, in protesting what they said was a vicious attack on science and the environment.**

The demonstration was led by a woman pointedly dressed as a Grim Reaper, leading the rest of the workers along with a coffin meant to represent “the death of evidence.” That symbolism served as commentary on conservative Prime Minister Harper’s apparent disinterest in funding or supporting all things scientific, which many feel is motivated by his administration’s bedfellowship with Big Oil.

“Evidence is the way that adults navigate reality. When countries [deny evidence and] engage in fantasy, that’s called state propaganda,” said professor Arne Moores, addressing a crowd of 800 plus people at Parliament Hill.

On top of the firings and department cuts, said scientists, the

Harper administration intends to stop funding a number of additional projects, like an Arctic environment atmospheric research laboratory. US scientists have remarked that shutting down that lab will interfere with the world’s ability to monitor the ozone layer. Activists are quick to note that this comes at a time when oil companies are setting their sights on the Arctic and its sensitive ecosystem.

Also being shut down is the Experimental Lakes Area in Ontario, which plays a big role in studying the effects of water pollution. That area – a collection of 58 remote lakes and a laboratory – has been running since the ’60s, and was the place where the first evidence of acid rain came from.

“It is completely shocking,” said Jim Elser, an aquatic ecologist at Arizona State University, who performed experiments at the site during the ’90s. “It’s sort of like the US government shutting down Los Alamos [it’s most important nuclear physics site] or taking the world’s best telescope and turning it off.”

Doing away with the ELA also means that all workers there will lose their jobs.

“The government is shutting down science and decimating

Canada’s environment,” said earth sciences professor Sherry Schiff.

“It’s pretty transparent.”

Jeff Hutchings, professor of biology at Dalhousie University, added, “An iron curtain is being drawn between science and society. Closed curtains, especially those made of iron, make for very dark rooms.”

The ELA also played a key role – albeit inadvertently – in the fight against Big Oil. “People working at ELA [were] constantly finding reasons why you can’t just put a pipeline here, or an industry there, because there are going to be environmental costs,” said freshwater lake biologist John Smol.

University of Victoria climate scientist Andrew Weaver was able to sum up the reason for the Harper administration’s anti-science assault: “It’s not about saving money [for the government]. It’s about improvising ideology. What’s happened here is that the government has an ideological agenda to develop the Canadian economy based on the extraction of oil as quickly as possible.” They want to “sell it as fast as they can, come hell or high water – and eliminate any barriers that stand in their way.”

*People’s World* ☛

## SACP congress gets under way

**The 13th congress of the South African Communist Party (SACP) opened to singing and dancing by more than 2,000 delegates in Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal last week.**

The size of the event reflects the growth in SACP membership from 51,000 at its previous congress in 2007 to 161,000 today.

Chairman Gwede Mantashe said the presence of leading communists in the country’s African National Congress (ANC) government and trade union federation COSATU meant they were well placed to identify and help resolve conflicts. But he urged delegates to play an even more active role at all levels of the ANC and COSATU.

“A good communist works hard to strengthen the mass movements, respects the decisions of organisations in which they work and strives for principled unity rather

than becoming a source of division,” he said.

He contrasted this approach to those driven by careerism, corruption and self-enrichment, warning that “nobody with their hands in the till can be regarded as a communist.”

In his address, Mr Mantashe also confirmed that he will be standing down as SACP chairman in order to concentrate on his post of ANC secretary-general.

“It is not an ideological decision,” he made clear, “but a practical one of trying to do two vital jobs at the same time.”

Guest speakers will include the country’s President Jacob Zuma, COSATU secretary general Zwelinzima Vavi and representatives from the communist and national liberation movements of 25 countries.

*Morning Star* ☛

# How the election was stolen in Mexico

Tim Pelzer

**Evidence continues to mount that the recent "victory" by conservatives in Mexico's national elections was completely fraudulent and that the country's centre-left coalition should have been declared the winner.**

After two recounts of votes in Mexico's July 1 national elections, centre-left candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, called AMLO by friend and foe alike, continues to reject the official election results.

Those official tallies establish rival right wing candidate Enrique Peña Nieto of the Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) as the winner.

AMLO, candidate for the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), the Labour Party (PT) and the Citizens' Movement (formerly the Convergence Party) presents a mountain of evidence as proof of his party's assertion that the July 1 elections were "totally falsified".

First, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), after finding irregularities, conducted only partial recounts before issuing the following "final" tallies:

For the right-wing Enrique Peña Nieto (PAN) the official total was 19,226,784 or 38.2 percent.

For the centre left Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (PRD-PT) the tally was 15,896,999 or 31.6 percent.

Josefina Vazquez Mota (Party of National Action) officially received 12,786,647 votes or 25.4 percent.

Gabriel Quadri (New Alliance) officially garnered 1,150,662 votes or 2.9 percent.

Since Mexico has no runoff elections, the right-wing Nieto becomes the winner if those are the actual totals.

AMLO, at a July 9 press conference in Mexico City, claimed that Nieto won only because the PRI engaged in a massive vote-buying operation that bought five million votes from the country's poor.

Sixteen PRI state governors played a big role in distributing pre-paid gift cards for Soriana (a new department store chain that sells food and household goods), cash, farm supplies, tax forgiveness and other

items in exchange for casting a ballot for PRI candidates.

AMLO said some people who initially accepted the Soriana cards and then afterwards felt "regret" delivered the cards unused to his PRD-PT coalition. Pasted on the walls in his Mexico City headquarters where he gives daily press conferences are hundreds of the vouchers given to the bribed voters.

AMLO and Ricardo Monreal Avila, the PRD-PT's campaign coordinator, revealed that PRI governors funnelled public, private and illicit money, including funds from the US, amounting to billions of pesos, to PRI operatives at the local level and that those operatives used the funds to buy the votes.

A power point presentation showed financial documents and checks that implicate the PRI governor, his cabinet and political operatives in Zacatecas state.

Peña Nieto met with the 16 PRI governors on June 12 to plan the massive vote-buying operation, claim the two PRD leaders. It is illegal for political parties to buy votes in Mexico. The website of Mexico's daily left-wing newspaper *La Jornada* has posted videos of people being interviewed by hidden camera who admit they accepted Soriana vouchers in exchange for voting for the PRI.

The student movement "I am #132," which campaigned against Peña Nieto and refuses to recognise the election results, has shown similar video footage of bribed voters accepting Soriana vouchers.

To demonstrate links between the PRI and Soriana, *La Jornada's* front cover on July 7 showed a picture of Peña Nieto at a publicity event for Soriana wearing a green Soriana T-shirt.

AMLO said that there were also irregularities in at least 113,855 polling stations out of 143,132 across the country. In some cases, more votes were counted than those who actually voted or vice versa. The final vote tallies that were counted in front of all party representatives in the polling stations were not always correctly reported by IFE's PREP (rapid vote count) and votes were removed for some candidates (AMLO) or increased for others (Peña Nieto).



Centre-left candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, called AMLO by friend and foe alike, continues to reject the official election results.

In other places, voters were denied the right to vote because there were not enough paper ballots.

AMLO said his coalition will be going to the Federal Electoral Institute's electoral court to overturn the election results in the coming days. He wants IFE to reopen the ballot boxes and recount all the votes.

AMLO also says that the second vote recount by IFE was inadequate and that the federal electoral agency had failed to ensure a fair election. "IFE did not do its job of keeping the elections clean," he declared.

Lopez Obrador supporters are circulating via Facebook copies of hand written polling station vote tallies side by side with IFE's vote tally to show examples of how IFE officials altered vote counts to favour the PRI.

Polling station 0389 in Tabasco reported that 111 votes were cast for Lopez Obrador but IFE only listed 11; the polling station in Nezahualcolyotl, Mexico State reported Lopez Obrador received 81 votes but IFE only mentioned 56; in Zaragoza, Mexico state, IFE disqualified Lopez Obrador's 81 votes for being ineligible even though the handwritten vote tally document from the polling station clearly states 81 votes; In Tultitlan, Mexico state Peña Nieto got 81 votes but IFE reported 801.

Other pictures on Facebook are of young men, faces blackened with

paint to conceal their identities, burning ballot boxes. In another, scorched, frayed ballots from people who voted for the PAN are strewn on the desert floor.

Lopez Obrador supporters are also distributing videos through YOUTUBE demonstrating voter suppression. One shows a group of voters in the Federal District, led by an outspoken older woman, demanding the right to vote at a polling station after they are told by an election official he had run out of paper ballots.

The Internet hacking group Anonymous is circulating pictures from the IFE website showing Lopez Obrador as the presidential winner, easily overtaking his PRI and PAN rivals, before the results were changed to show Peña Nieto as winner.

The PRI's Peña Nieto denied that his party bought millions of votes with the Soriana pre-paid cards and other payments and has submitted a complaint to the Special Investigator for Electoral Crimes to investigate where the Lopez Obrador campaign obtained the Soriana vouchers. Peña Nieto claimed his party won the elections fair and square, the elections were transparent and clean, and Lopez Obrador cannot accept that he lost the presidential elections a second time. Nieto also accused PRD-PT supporters of dressing in PRI T-shirts and handing out the gift cards.

Despite Nieto's denials, Soriana

posted a letter at its stores announcing that it would no longer "accept the pre-paid cards in our stores due to the fact" that the PRI withdrew funding for the cards that its supporters distributed.

PAN leader Gustavo Madero admitted that the PRI always wins elections through "money and deception". He questioned the legitimacy of Peña Nieto's victory given the PRI's illegal massive vote buying effort during the elections. He stated it would be difficult to annul the elections but one cannot reject this possibility. The PAN would respect any decisions that electoral authorities make on the elections, stated the PAN leader.

In Durango State PAN, PRD and PT leaders formed an alliance to annul the July 1 elections. The three parties will submit evidence documenting how the state's PRI government used taxpayer money to buy votes. For instance, the Secretary of Social Development sent a truck of cement to the Mayor of Santiago Papasquiaro that instead arrived at the home of the state PRI leader who distributed the cement to supporters to assure a vote for the PRI.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of people marched through the Mexico State on July 7 to protest election fraud. The biggest protests took place in the capital Mexico City where tens of thousands protested.

*People's World* ☺

## Statement: General Federation of Iraqi Workers (GFIW) Thugs attack workers and trade union offices

**On July 10, a group of thugs stormed the GFIW Head Office in Baghdad attacking and assaulting trade union activists and leaders of the GFIW. They smashed doors of the offices of three unions: Construction Workers, Mechanics and Printers, seizing union records and belongings and forcibly removing trade union activists and staff from the GFIW building under a barrage of physical threats and abuses.**

This latest cowardly attack is a continuation of violations committed by these thugs. A few days earlier, they illegally shut the

GFIW headquarters, barring leaders and activists of unions from access to their offices.

The GFIW warn these sinister proxy thugs and their masters, who are seeking to impose their control and dominate the GFIW and its unions, to stop their intimidation and physical attacks against trade unionists. The GFIW asserts that it shall use all legal means to bring these thugs to justice, and calls on the government and its law and order agencies to intervene to put an end to these violations and attacks.

The GFIW appeals to all

patriotic forces, Iraqi public opinion, civil society organisations, and Arab and international trade union organisations to condemn these cowardly attacks and express solidarity with Iraqi workers and their trade union movement, and prevent interference in the internal affairs of the unions by any party.

Long live Iraqi working people and their trade union movement

Shame and disgrace on those who seek to falsify the free will of trade unions.

Baghdad July 10, 2012 ☺

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## An Arms Trade Treaty will save countless lives

**World leaders have a historic chance to reduce human suffering and save lives if they can agree on an effective treaty to govern the globe's multi-billion dollar trade in arms at negotiations in New York.**

This is not just an issue in war-torn countries like Afghanistan and Sudan; it matters right here in our region too. The Pacific has one of the world's highest rates of firearms ownership, and it has suffered high levels of armed violence and unrest fuelled by readily available arms and ammunition.

Australian Red Cross, and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, are calling on states to adopt a strong and comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty at the UN-organised negotiations, which run from 2 to 27 July. Conventional weapons – from tanks to assault rifles and machine guns – are often too easy to obtain and every day Red Cross is confronted with the humanitarian consequences.

Currently worldwide every year, hundreds of thousands of civilians are forced from their homes, injured, raped, or killed because of the widespread availability and misuse of weapons. In many parts of the world, weapons are so easy to obtain and armed violence so prevalent that after an armed conflict, civilians face

many of the same threats that they did during it.

This is a critical humanitarian issue which should unite the government, opposition and all political parties represented in the Australian parliament. A robust arms trade treaty can make a difference for millions of people confronted with insecurity, deprivation and fear. We must do everything we can to make it a reality.

There are an estimated 875 million small arms in circulation worldwide, produced by more than 1,000 companies from nearly 100 countries. Lawfully held stockpiles of small arms by civilians in the Pacific include 3.1 million firearms, which is one privately-held gun for every 10 people.

Incredibly, international trade in dangerous materials – things like hazardous chemicals, substances that deplete the ozone layer, hazardous waste and narcotic drugs – is regulated, but an international treaty governing trade in conventional weapons does not exist.

**Robert Tickner**  
Red Cross CEO

## Asbestos and lead policy synergies will save lives

**Is there a single doctor in Australia who knows that lead researchers in the USA have estimated that 30 million Americans (approximately 10 percent of the population) will die early, mainly from heart attack or stroke, due to exposure to lead?**

Whereas a diagnosis of mesothelioma or asbestosis points to asbestos exposure, a diagnosis of hypertension, or even a heart attack or stroke do not automatically suggest to the doctor that the patient has been exposed to lead.

In the case of lead, Cause and Effect are not clear cut.

Lead education strategies have

to begin with doctors, whereas with asbestos, they begin with builders and DIY renovators.

The ACTU has proposed an asbestos strategy for Australia, which calls for the establishment of a National Asbestos Authority (NAA) for a Safe Asbestos Free Environment by 2030. We propose that such an Authority be widened to also deal with the problem of lead exposure: a National Asbestos and Lead Authority (NALA) for an Asbestos-Free and Lead-Safe Environment by 2030.

The ACTU strategy, as put to the federal government covers education, prevention and research into treatment of asbestos-related diseases.

A joint authority, such as The LEAD Group proposes, would include doctor education, as part of the Lead Safe policy. This could potentially increase longevity for 2 million Australians.

**Elizabeth O'Brien**  
President of The LEAD Group

## Land of the Fairgo?

**Watching the first program on SBS about Vietnamese living in the Sydney suburb of Cabramatta, I was struck by the difference in asylum seeker policy in the mid '70s as opposed to today. The Liberal government at the time welcomed refugees from socialism, but today's so called Labor government treats genuine refugees like criminals.**

The immigration policy of the Frazer government was similar to that practised after World War II by the then Immigration Minister Arthur Caldwell who welcomed refugees from Eastern Europe with open arms. These people who he called *Beautiful Balts*, many of whom would have been Nazi collaborators, were obviously allowed in to counter the influence of the Communist Party which was very strong at that time.



DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

*Write a letter to the Editor*

I saw a *Four Corners* program in which Greens Senator Sarah Hanson Young was moved to tears after seeing the plight of asylum seekers being held in detention. Surely the Gillard government is committing a crime against humanity for its policy on asylum seekers who are escaping conditions that Australia in part helped to create.

We should all be thoroughly ashamed that this situation is occurring in the *Land of the Fairgo* and raise further demands for the humanitarian treatment of asylum seekers.

**Ron Barrett**  
Sydney

# Culture & Life

by Libby Powell

## Justice catches up with Argentina's baby-snatchers

**Every Thursday afternoon they gathered in Plaza de Mayo. Even in the heaviest April downpours, when the Argentinean square was almost deserted and the pavements reflected the gaudy pink of the Presidential Palace, hundreds of women gathered in protest. White headscarfs covered their heads, and in their hands and on their chests were faint photographs of young men and women: their children that were taken. There are no photographs of the grandchildren they still hope to find. These grandchildren are in their 30s now, the babies of the Dirty War.**

At least 30,000 people deemed left-wing "radicals" by the Argentinean government were abducted between 1976 and 1983. Justified by the government as a "National Reorganisation Process", it was a period marked by widespread political repression, torture, forced disappearance and extra-judicial killing, including "death flights", where victims were bound and dropped

from planes into the Atlantic. Most of the victims were young activists, union members or students, a third of them women.

The grandmothers have never stopped searching for this lost generation. Nor have they stopped calling for justice for those behind the abductions.

The sexual and gender-based violence inflicted by the junta has since been deemed by activists as genocidal, aimed at destroying the reproductive capacity of female dissidents. In designated camps and wards, women were subjected to rape, the mutilation of reproductive organs, forced abortion and the systematic abduction of infants and babies born inside the detention camps. An estimated 200 children were born in captivity and pregnant women forced to give birth while gagged, blindfolded and bound. As many as 500 children are thought to have been taken and given to families with close ties to the government or the military to raise as their own.

## A powerful voice against impunity

Beginning as a group of just 14 women, their weekly vigil outside the Presidential Palace was joined by thousands of ordinary women, whose shared bereavement and loss transformed them into the single most powerful voice against the impunity of those responsible for the seven years of violence. Their vocal, public, female-led action shattered the oppressive silence of the government at the time. In the years that followed, they struggled hard against a series of governmental pardons that sought to offer amnesty to those involved in the name of reconciliation.

In 1997, they set up a DNA-testing program with the National Bank of Genetic Data, banking their own blood so that anyone born between 1976 and 1983 who doubted their parentage could come for screening. One hundred and five of those children, now all in their 30s, have since been found.

The Grandmothers have left their mark. And now there is some justice for those lost



The grandmothers have never stopped searching for this lost generation. Nor have they stopped calling for justice for those behind the abductions.

years. On July 6, 2012, the man responsible for masterminding the systematic abduction of the babies more than 30 years ago, former president Jorge Rafael Videla, was given a 50-year sentence for his role.

Eight co-defendants, including the dictator Reynaldo Bignone and former navy officer Jorge Acosta, were also convicted.

The courtroom, packed with the families of the victims, heard testimonies from 20 young adults, many of whom had recently been forced to confront the fact that they had been brought up by people who had been complicit in their parents' death and disappearances.

Videla, now 86 years old, is already serving life sentences for crimes against humanity. Given that he will not live to see out this most recent sentence, nor suffer any additional years in prison, the ruling may seem to some as little more than symbolic justice.

## Recognising responsibility

The mothers and grandmothers of those that were murdered or disappeared, however,

have always maintained that there is both a personal and national value in the legal recognition of responsibility. In response to the judgments, Estela de Carlotto, President of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, said: "It's healing for all society to know that [the perpetrators] are being judged, and will continue to be judged and condemned until the last crime that can be attributed to them."

The final collective march of the women in Plaza de Mayo was held in 2006; their focus turned to the evidence gathering that contributed so much to the convictions last week. While the historic square is left to tourists and business people, the women, once dubbed as "Las Locos" [the Crazy] by Videla's military, have shown that they can hold their ground.

To those who doubt and those who are yet to be found, their website sends a message: "Our grandchildren have not been abandoned. They have the right to recover their roots and their history; they have relatives who are constantly engaged in searching for them."

*New Internationalist* ✪



Sun 22 July –  
Sat 28 July

As regular viewers of Kevin McCloud's long-running series *Grand Designs* will be aware, most of the houses that feature on the program are very posh, expensive and usually the brainchild of a professional for whom money is not a severe problem. In his follow-up series *Grand Designs Revisited* (ABC1 Sundays from July 22 at 7.30pm) we take another look at some of these often idiosyncratic homes during construction and after they are finished and being lived in.

In the first episode of the new series we look at a huge home built halfway up a hill in the Lakes District with views that are breathtaking. The owner/builder Robert Gaukroger is an engineer and the house he has designed reflects that. The design is innovative as well as ambitious, and very expensive. Robert and his wife Milla began the building with only part of their budget in place and have had to sell off their other possessions to finance the job. Eventually, however, they run out of money completely with the house still not finished and a repossession order from the bank hanging over them. They and their two children stand to lose everything.

How the whole project works out satisfactorily is like a modern day fairy tale, complete with a huge unsolicited loan from a total stranger

and the common sense decision to turn the guest bedrooms into an up-market B&B. The result, Robert and his family actually get to live in the extraordinary house he designed and built. And the view down Lake Windermere is truly to die for.

The final episode of *Race To London* (ABC1 Tuesdays at 8.00pm) sees five of the six athletes we've been following achieve selection for the Australian team going to London for either the Olympics or the Paralympics. Michael Klim, the oldest competitor fails to make the swimming team, and his disappointment and rueful acceptance that all his hard work was not enough to beat younger, fitter swimmers is palpable.

The episode seems to run out of things to say before it nears its end and waffles around filling in time for a while, but until then I had found it a finely competent piece of work. Amidst all the jingoism being shouted out from the Australian mass media, the modesty and sportsmanship displayed by most of the athletes in this little series was admirable (the exception was wheelchair rugby player Ryley Batt, whose thuggish attitude – "I want to hurt people and win a gold medal" – left a nasty taste).

Big posh houses are the subject matter of another series, *Country House Rescue* (ABC1 Wednesdays at 6.00pm). If it was merely a series about how rich people could hang on to their mansions it would not be worth bothering with. But these stately homes are part of the British people's national heritage, and letting them fall to rack and ruin for lack of money is not really an acceptable option. The National Trust of course has taken over some of them but they do not have the funds to look after them all and in any case houses survive best if they are actually lived in.

The option of presenting them to public bodies like trade unions to be used as residential schools



Michael Klim's hard work was not enough to beat younger, fitter swimmers – *Race To London* (ABC1 Tuesdays at 8.00pm).

or as sanatoria is also not one that capitalism would willingly embrace so the only option left seems to be using these large houses for wedding receptions, photo shoots, hotels or B&Bs.

This week's episode sees businesswoman Ruth Watson trying to turn a Georgian villa (built in 1791) into a viable business enterprise for Will and Rebecca, the young couple who have inherited it. They have also inherited antagonism, hostility and suspicion on the part of Will's mother and her sisters. Keeping the peace is as big a problem as finding a way to make the building pay for its upkeep.

The solution is curiously British: "Domestic Goddess weekends" where a group of seven or eight female friends pay around £5,000 (between them) for a weekend stay with demonstrations of flower arranging, hat trimming, cake decorating, etc. The family is won over with a program of improvements to the garden.

The young couple are very down to earth and the program is curiously engaging.

Anyone who has mixed with school-age girls much in recent years will know that there is a proportion of them who have taken the quest for equality with boys to the logical conclusion of aping the thuggish behaviour of the worst male hooligans. And why not, if they come from the same social and economic backgrounds they will surely have the same stunted social outlook and severely limited prospects. Anti-social behaviour is only to be expected.

The answer is surely to show them that life is not necessarily like that, that there are reasons and causes for the rottenness of modern life and that in the fight for a better life for all lies the salvation of the rest of us.

Britain being a capitalist power, authorities there are naturally reluctant to teach kids to be revolutionaries, so they take a different approach. They lock 'em up. A staggering

2,000 school-age kids are locked up in "secure installations" at any given time in Britain. I didn't see that statistic being thrown around much during the Queen's recent "jubilee".

If you would like a closer look at some of these unfortunate children watch the second and third episodes of *Kids Behind Bars* (ABC2 Wednesdays July 25 and August 1 at 8.30pm).

Trevor Eve, the star of possibly the best "post mortem detective genre" series, *Waking The Dead*, is back with a second series of *Kidnap And Ransom* (ABC1 Saturdays from July 28 at 8.30pm), in which he plays hostage negotiator Dominic King.

In the first episode of the new series, King is making an exchange of cash for a family of hostages in Kashmir when the Indian police arrive and begin shooting. Soon he has a whole new group of international hostages to try to free. It is realistically filmed and acted with panache. ☘

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Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Tom Pearson

Published by  
Guardian Publications Australia Ltd  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by Spotpress  
24-26 Lillian Fowler Place Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment  
is taken by T Pearson,  
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Jane Caro, author, speaker, academic;  
Angelo Gavrielatos, Fed. Pres. Australian Education Union

July 27

### "KONI 2012" –

### FACT OR FICTION ON POST-COLONIAL CENTRAL AFRICA

Wendy Lambourne, Dr, Sen Lecturer Centre Peace & Conflict Studies;  
James Dhizzala, Ugandan Doctoral Studies Centre Peace & Conflict Student;  
Geoffrey Onen, Ugandan Activist

August 3

### SRI LANKA – DISAPPEARANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS & THE SURVIVAL OF THE TAMILS

Sam Pari, Dr, Human Rights Spokesperson Tamil Community;  
Brami Jegan, Human Rights activist & media co-ordinator for  
Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon

August 10

### BRITISH GOVERNMENT AS BIG BROTHER – NEW LAW TO ACCESS THE INTERNET OF ALL ITS CITIZENS – PRIVACY IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA

John Dowd, AO, Int. Commission of Jurists;  
Stephen Blanks, NSW Council Civil Liberties

August 17

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# The last war crime debuts at Cannes – But censored in US

Jeanine Molloff

During this summer of Occupy and subsequent police brutality, the subject of torture is hotly denounced by protesters and conveniently ignored by candidates. Like that ostrich diving head first into the sand of political expediency – Americans want to focus on the alleged debt crisis or gay marriage – anything that absolves us from the messy subject of tortures committed in our names by the Bush/Cheney administration and which continue under Obama to the present day. The entire Bradley Manning debacle speaks volumes to this accusation.

In spite of strong evidence identifying Dick Cheney as the mastermind behind this torture regime – the subject remains taboo, both in the “news” business and in Hollywood – that is until Hollywood executives watched trailers for the anti-war documentary *The Last War Crime*.

Written, produced and directed by a new talent known only as “The Pen”, this film documents the torture protocol ordained by the Bush-Cheney administration. Since it first circulated a trailer on the web it has been heavily censored and cyber attacked. You Tube has removed it at intermittent intervals and MTV (which is owned by Viacom) has refused to sell air time for a commercial.

Apparently, there are some things that Viacom won’t accept money for – namely any film or story which exposes the regular torture ordered by Vice-President Cheney. Curious about this documentary and the blatant censorship – (I couldn’t download it) – I contacted the artist aka The Pen. Here is the interview.

**JM:** What are you hoping this film will accomplish in terms of genuine political change?

**The Pen:** *The Last War Crime* movie is about indicting Cheney for torture. And isn’t that something billions of people want to see? They say sometimes life can imitate art. But first we felt it was important that we retrace our country’s steps as to how torture was used to get the false intelligence to sell us on a war with Iraq. The real story of how this happened has been buried under an avalanche of pseudo history.

They want people to forget the Downing Street minutes and the foreknowledge that the British had that Cheney and Bush were determined to invade Iraq, even if they had to “fix the facts around the policy” to do so. They want to obliterate the memory of the flimsy legal arguments in the torture memos. So we dig out all the true facts, and put them on the big screen, together with an entertaining narrative story about what it would have been like if justice had already prevailed.

The people who committed these war crimes believe they can escape accountability by changing the way people think, by selling the American people on the idea that torture was a great thing that got us wonderful intelligence to protect us. But the only people making these arguments are the torturers themselves and their propaganda advocates.

All other percipient witnesses confirm the opposite, which we knew already, that torture does not

even work, and that any actionable intelligence they got was obtained before they started torturing people. So part of the mission of this movie is to counter their ongoing lies initiative, to change the way people think back to the truth, and then we can have good policy change, which is political change.

**JM:** Do you expect more interference, and if so in what form?

**The Pen:** Based on what we have run into already, the attempted YouTube censorship (which we forced them to reverse after more than 7,000 direct protests), the rejection of the ad submitted to MTV (Viacom Inc), it is clear that we are encountering serious censorship interference from the very beginning. Obviously we are telling a story that certain people don’t want heard. The American people believe that we have free speech. It was on that justification that the Supreme Court said in the Citizens United decision that the gloves were off, and that corporations with unlimited war chests should be permitted to flood our political process with money favouring their point of view. But now we see that the other side of that bargain was a fraud; that these same corporations believe they can discriminate against points of view they disagree with. So for the actual people, we find that even if we have the money, we cannot even BUY “free” speech.

This is not a tolerable situation. Must we generate thousands of protests every time we want to run an ad when it is rejected for political reasons?



War criminals Obama and Bush.

Already Viacom has received over 12,000 protest messages in response to our call to action there, and in that situation apparently they think “we the people” can just be ignored. We are seriously considering a federal lawsuit; the argument has to be made, that if they accept political advertising of any kind, at least in that case, it must be some kind of 14th Amendment equal protection violation to practice what we would call “speech discrimination”. Only by bringing such a case can we determine if we actually have free speech or not.

**JM:** Has there been any direct retaliation or threats connected with the release of this film aimed at you? Any suspected retaliation?

**The Pen:** Gandhi is reputed to have said, “First they ignore you, then they ridicule you, then they fight you, and then you win”. At this point we are still mostly at the attempted “ignore you” stage.

**JM:** What has Hollywood’s reaction been to this film’s coming debut? Are you encountering the same kind of cowardice that Michael Moore

experienced after his Oscar night comments about the war?

**The Pen:** We are just starting to get the word out about this film. The censorship attempts are doomed to fail, but we still don’t have enough visibility to where the rest of the Hollywood film community would be called on to react. It would not surprise me if some of the censorship we’ve been talking about was based in part on cowardice. Of course we all remember when Michael Moore called out the fiction of the basis for the war in Iraq at the Oscars.

But in that case another reasonable possible explanation is that those who booed him then would object to any attempt to politicise the Academy Awards ceremony. The problem is that when you say you don’t want to hear about this political issue here, and you don’t want to hear about it there, you may end up with the dynamic we are confronting now with *The Last War Crime* movie, that the corporations that dominate our media really don’t want these issues talked about anywhere.

**JM:** Anything else you would want to add?

**The Pen:** The soul of America is on trial right now. We have thrown not just international law overboard, we have repudiated our own long established law. We have always considered waterboarding to be torture. We have always prosecuted waterboarding in the past as torture. So what’s the difference now? We are called by history, the real history, to stand up and speak out about this, to bring America back to its highest calling.

So if your readers are interested in participating in the Viacom action they can go to where you can also see the ad that MTV rejected. And there is a Facebook page where we are posting video clips, still shots from the movie, including behind the scenes shots, and more on a daily basis, so you can follow our progress and help get this movie out in real theatres where it belongs and deserves to be.

NB: It should be noted that as of May 22nd, 2012, *The Last War Crime* was presented at the Cannes Film Festival. There was no refusal to air the film, no censorship, corporate or otherwise. Apparently the independent artistic community in Cannes and similar venues knows something that evades the vapid corporate offices of Hollywood.  
Information Clearing House

**The soul of America is on trial right now. We have thrown not just international law overboard, we have repudiated our own long established law. We have always considered waterboarding to be torture. We have always prosecuted waterboarding in the past as torture.**



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