



Time for real plan for manufacturing

Anna Pha

The Gillard government's "\$1 billion jobs plan" is the latest in a long list of pre-election announcements. According to Prime Minister Julia Gillard it is a comprehensive plan to support and create high skill, high wage jobs for blue collar workers and turn Australia into "a country that makes things". Labor's "Industry and Innovation Statement – Plan for Australian Jobs", to give it its full title, falls far short of what is required to rebuild the manufacturing sector in Australia which at present employs less than 10 percent of the workforce.

Addressing delegates at the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) national conference last week, Gillard said, "We can't simply drift into the future thinking, well, it doesn't matter, everything will be all right ... We cannot embrace an agenda of cost-cutting and wage reduction as our future." She described the document as "a comprehensive plan to make things".

One billion dollars will be spent on creating jobs and \$1 billion will be saved by cutting research and development (R&D) tax breaks for corporations with an annual turnover of \$20 billion or more. Sounds great – rob Rio Tinto to create manufacturing jobs for workers.

It is not a comprehensive jobs plan. It falls far short of what is required to develop manufacturing in Australia. It is not even an additional \$1 billion in funding as Lenore Taylor, writing in *The Age* (19-02-2013) points out: "The Gillard government's \$1 billion jobs package actually only spends an extra \$421 million on new job-creating measures and delivers the government a handy \$600 million to help its stretched financial budget."

All of these figures are totals over four years, and in no way indicate what might be spent in the next budget. But money aside, the "plan" also relies on the private sector choosing to use Australian rather than imported products and employing Australian workers on high wages. There are no measures to ensure any of these things will happen.

The resources sector will be obliged to employ Australian Industry Opportunity Officers on projects over \$2 billion if they are to qualify for a five percent reduction in tariffs on imports. Their job is to attempt to source local content for their projects. They will be obliged to report to government every six months on their efforts. But there is no obligation to use local content where it is available – neither for the private sector nor for governments.

The research and innovation funding is

geared towards small and medium sized businesses and venture capital with the emphasis on the private sector receiving the funds but being able to draw on the public sector for assistance.

Ten industry precincts will be established starting in Melbourne and Adelaide to "bring together researchers and businesses to make sure the great ideas are spread and adopted, to give us comparative advantage that will help us sell our exports into Asia and create Australian jobs," Gillard promised AWU delegates. "Projects in Australia, employing Australians – that is the way it should be."

It is not clear how or why the private sector would want to spread the great ideas with strong patent laws in place.

Not all the precincts have been named. The one in south east Melbourne will be will be a Food Precinct. In Adelaide, the Defence Precinct "will service the state's strong defence industry," and will assist the state realising "its vision of employing over 37,000 workers and contributing \$2.5 billion to the economy by 2020".

Gillard actually chose a gathering at Boeing Aerostructures in Melbourne to announce the great \$1 billion plan. Per dollar the defence industry has one of the lowest rates of employment and highest rates of environmental pollution, apart from the death and destruction its use causes. The government should put the funding into converting existing defence enterprises into civilian projects.

If the government were serious about jobs, then it would be acting to stop Telstra's subsidiary Sensis cutting close to 700 backroom jobs and sending the work offshore. It would be regulating for the use of products made in Australia by governments including itself. It would halt and reverse its privatisation of Telstra, the Commonwealth Bank, Australia Post services, public housing, etc.

Gillard is correct, planning is needed, for job creation and associated R&D. There cannot be any return to the manufacturing days of the 1970s, but Australia could still make its mark in manufacturing by taking the necessary measures.

It is an important sector of the economy which requires serious planning to be redeveloped and cannot be left to neo-liberal economics and the private sector which have failed dismally.

The alternative plan

In any plan, the question of skilled labour is fundamental. That means addressing the education system from pre-school through to TAFE and university. At all levels education and training should be free. At higher levels



Holden Manufacturing operations, Elizabeth, South Australia.

there should be appropriate income and other support, not just for younger students but also for adults returning to study.

Industrial relations reform is required to restore full trade union rights, including the right to strike and the right of entry of trade union officials, so that high wages and good working conditions can be won and protected.

R&D is critical. This should be funded by governments and carried out in the public sector. Australia has produced some of the greatest scientists and engineers in the world. Too many of them have been forced go overseas through

lack of support to continue or develop their highly innovative work in Australia.

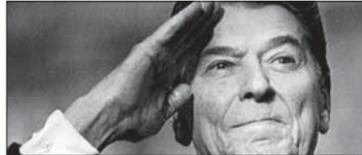
University research is now largely dictated by the corporate sector. The outcomes are not publicly available for use. This must cease. The government must fully fund university research out of central revenue and research projects be selected on the basis of their merits – how potentially beneficial they will be to society, how they advance the progress of science, not their immediate importance to profit-driven private corporations.

Continued on page 2

3  Shooting threat rises in NSW parks

4  Logan accuse asylum seekers of "staging photos"

5  Greens/ALP break-up

10  Culture & Life Two costly fiascos

Guardian

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Right of entry an inviolable right

For decades trade union officials freely entered workplaces, checked working conditions, inspected wages and working hours books of all employees, attended to safety issues, assisted members with problems and ensured that employers were complying with their legal obligations. They were free to talk to workers during meal and other breaks and actively recruit and organise in the workplace. They exercised one of the most fundamental basic trade union rights – right of entry – which is central to the ability of trade unions to organise, defend and recruit members. The Australian government is obliged under international law to legislate for and guarantee right of entry.

Employers have long opposed the right. To them it is a barrier to union-free workplaces. Without unions, employers would be free to pick off workers one by one, slash wages, abolish penalty rates, increase hours of work, demand unpaid overtime, abolish annual and sick leave, casualise whole workforces, take short-cuts with health and safety, and do whatever else they wished to maximise the exploitation of their workforce and profits.

The Howard government's WorkChoices gutted long-standing right of entry provisions. Despite Labor's pre-election promise to tear up WorkChoices, the Rudd government's Fair Work Act (FWA) (Julia Gillard was Workplace Relations Minister responsible) retained most of its restrictions on the right of entry. Union officials require a government-issued permit to enter a workplace. They must give employers 24-hours' written notice with reasons before seeking to enter, and the allowable reasons are limited. Who they can meet is restricted, where and when they can meet is determined by the boss, ability to inspect work areas and gain access to records (eg to check for underpayment of wages) is also very limited. Breaches of these anti-union provisions can result in suspension or loss of permit and hefty fines on individuals and their union. (See *Guardian* #1448, 24-03-2010)

The FWA, in line with its intentions, has seriously hindered the ability of unions to carry out their work. "The problem we face is that the employer chooses a designated meeting area. Often this is far away from workers' normal crib rooms, making it difficult to have contact with them and recruit or identify any issues," CPA President Vinnie Molina told *The Guardian*. "Workers feel intimidated and fear for their jobs if they choose to attend those meetings. Often they do not want to miss their meal break. The boss keeps track of who attends those meetings." Mr Molina, who is a full-time organiser in the building and construction industry in Western Australia, has had his permit temporarily revoked for attempting to defend members of his union, the CFMEU, and has been subjected to heavy fines for such crimes as "trespass".

"Basically WorkChoices and now the FWA restrict the ability to organise and recruit by making access and contact with workers on the site difficult. It means workplace issues cannot be resolved or addressed as they arise. Many conditions have been undermined: basic rights such as clean and decent crib rooms, toilets, coffee and tea or even cool water in summer are issues faced by workers every day. Another difficulty is that many employers ignore the official's rights, refuse access to the workplace, especially if an official suspects occupational health and safety (OH&S) breaches.

"Prior to WorkChoices, union officials did not need to give notice, they conducted meetings where workers had their normal breaks or they walked through the workplace talking to individual members and dealt with issues. Recruitment, organising, and dealing with OH&S issues, underpayments, lack of superannuation or long service leave contributions have become more difficult. In short, the legislation has been drafted to undermine the right to organise in violation of ILO conventions. It also provides employers with all the support and resources to sue unions if they dare to breach the oppressive laws."

The Liberals are determined to abolish what remains of the right of entry. "The complete ditching of right of entry will mean the ditching of the basic human right to belong to the collective and organise," Mr Molina said. "If right of entry is abolished, safety on the job and basic conditions will be further undermined. Unions will have to look at new ways to organise and recruit. This means the organising will have to be done outside the job, car parks, home visits, before and after work and or at the pub."

PRESS FUND

In May Marius Kloppers will retire as BHP Billiton's boss with a payout of \$75 million in cash, shares and "performance rights" to corporate profits. He has a million shares in the company, and will remain an employee, (doubtlessly well-rewarded for his trouble), until October. *The Guardian* is committed to the world-wide struggle to bring about an end to capitalism, the political economy that transfers most of the wealth created by ordinary working people to a tiny proportion of the population, as demonstrated by the obscene handout to Kloppers. Your contribution to the *Guardian* Press Fund will help us in that objective, so please send us something for the next edition - and if possible follow it up, because we really need your help. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$5, Todd Nickle \$60, "Round Figure" \$10

This week's total: \$75 Progressive total: \$455

Findings ignored ... again

The Victorian government and the fire agencies have thumbed their noses at the independent Royal Commission findings again, ignoring interoperability and not utilising the services available to them, despite the serious operational situation that Victoria is currently facing.

While Country Fire Association personnel are currently stretched thin to cover strike team deployment, there has been absolutely no attempt to deploy resources from the Melbourne Fire Brigade in either a strike team capacity and/or a recall or move up capacity.

The United Firefighters Union has sent an open letter to the Fire Services Commissioner, Fire Agencies and State government:

Dear Mr Lapsley,
Interoperability and maximum use of emergency service resources

I respectfully write to you regarding one of the major findings of the Royal Commission into the Black Saturday Fires in February 2009.

The Commission found that: "Some organisational factors inhibited the fire authorities' response on the day. There were serious deficiencies in the top-level leadership arrangements as a result of divided responsibilities, and the full potential of the operational capability that was available was not exploited because of differences in processes and procedures."

As you can see, the Royal Commission found that Victoria's emergency service operational resources were not used to their full capacity and predominately this was because of parochial artificial boundaries and interoperability issues.

The Royal Commission further stated that:

"The immediate priority must be to lift baseline operational capacity and interoperability in all of Victoria's fire agencies. A clear commitment and a concerted effort are needed

now. Leadership is required to create the environment and impetus for continuous improvement and to build capacity, resilience and operational fire management expertise in recognition of Victoria's status as the most fire-prone state in Australia.

"Administrative approaches to coordination have often proven ineffective, so the Commission considers that an organisational structure is needed to strengthen operational integration and establish a source of authority to ensure that change happens. To avoid parochialism, which can compromise reform, the source of authority needs to rest outside the individual fire services."

The Commission views improved operational performance as the absolute priority. In support of this, it considers modest and targeted structural reform is needed as a catalyst for change and to tackle the identified operational shortcomings in order to achieve four goals:

- improved common operational policy and standards
- stronger coordination and unambiguous command and control
- improved interoperability
- a strengthened capacity for agencies to provide an integrated response.

It is now three years since the findings of the Royal Commission were handed down and I am extremely disappointed that I have to report to you that, at this very moment, it appears that the fire services have not learnt anything from the Royal Commission findings, rather they have reverted back to their old bad habits of parochial attitudes.

The situation at the present is:

1. At this point of time, the CFA are deploying strike teams to various locations within Victoria;
2. This has led to the necessity of recalling staff to ensure that there is adequate fire protection in the communities that the

strike team members have been drawn from;

3. MFB firefighters have not been requested, recalled or moved up to these areas;
4. Therefore CFA career firefighters are placed in an unreasonable position where the likely outcome is the onset of chronic fatigue due to the excessive demands that are being placed on personnel as a result of:

- a) the current fire operations in Victoria
- b) MFB firefighters not being utilised to assist

The above problem can be alleviated if the findings of the Royal Commission had been adhered to and the parochial attitudes of the fire services were not allowed to continue to prevail.

For example there has been absolutely no attempt to deploy resources from the MFB in either a strike team capacity and/or a recall or move up capacity to alleviate the current shortfall of operational personnel in the CFA.

It is disappointing that the interoperability measures to ensure adequate staffing have not been utilised. These include secondment programs, move ups and/or deployment of career personnel from both fire services.

We respectfully ask that you exercise your discretion in your capacity as Fire Services Commissioner to override the current situation so that the unrealistic burden on CFA career staff is removed.

Additionally it is a community right that their resources, being the MFB, CFA and DSE, be utilised to their full capacity in accordance with the Royal Commission outcomes. We respectfully request you to rectify this as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Marshall
UFU branch secretary

Time for real plan for manufacturing

Continued from page 1

The corporatisation of world renowned organisations like CSIRO must cease. These institutions should be completely funded by the public purse and their work uncompromised by private dollars, and publicly owned.

There is no shortage of areas requiring research and development. Climate change, for example, has huge potential for job creation as well as benefiting the community and planet. Australia was once at the forefront of solar power research. With Australia's huge land mass, hours of sunshine and vast oceans the potential to convert to renewables is huge.

The public sector could and should be providing renewable energy to homes, businesses and regional and rural communities. Scotland, for example, is already 35 percent dependent on renewables. Any profits from renewables could be used to further R&D or fund social needs.

That is just one area. There are many others such as public transport, housing construction, pharmaceuticals, medical products, food, production materials, agriculture, fire-fighting, etc. Another important area is the conversion of military industries to civil production. Australian manufacturing has

a future with sophisticated products which are designed and produced in Australia – for local use and export.

Where would the money come from for the R&D? There is no shortage of possible sources:

- Cut the multi-billion dollar diesel fuel rebate to the mining companies.
- Cut military spending by at least 10 percent.
- Stop subsidising an otherwise unviable private hospital system by abolishing the \$5 billion private health insurance rebate.
- Increase corporate taxation and higher marginal tax rates on the rich.
- End negative gearing on investment property. Bring in a real super-profits tax to cover all business sectors.
- Establish a publicly owned national bank which can provide cheap loans and profits go into the public purse.

The private sector has failed to deliver for Australian workers and the Australian people. They have taken the government hand-outs, exploited Australian workers and gone offshore. Such policies require the abandonment of neo-liberal economics and in its place pro-people policies centred around the public sector.

A real plan would also involve detailed development in consultation with trade unions, communities, research institutions, and other relevant bodies.

Labor's opinion polls have taken a hit. This should come as no surprise to anyone. The government can make as many fine sounding announcements as it likes but after almost six years in office, people are judging the government by what it has delivered and how it affects them.

Single parents who had their payments slashed, the unemployed trying to survive on \$37 a day, age pensioners struggling below the poverty line, those with chronic illness who lost Medicare access to dental treatment, the tens of thousands on hospital waiting lists, the millions denied secure jobs, the homeless and many others who Labor has failed dismally – they vote. Why would they want to vote for a party full of glowing promises and six years down the track and still to deliver?

A promise of \$1 billion over four years won't fool the unemployed or young workers and students who cannot go to uni or TAFE to get the qualification and skills they require because of fees and lack of income support. ☘

Shooting threat rises in NSW parks

Peter Mac

The successful operation of national parks is dependent on the banning of recreational hunting within park boundaries, which protect native animals – not to mention the public – and preserves parks in their natural condition for the public benefit.

But in NSW that restriction has been dumped by the O'Farrell government for the benefit of private corporations. Prior to the last state elections, the government promised to look after the NSW parks with great care. However, after taking office it announced it would allow supervised shooting of feral pests by amateur hunters in 77 of the parks.

The government needs the Upper House votes of members of the Shooters and Fishers (S&F) Party, and the announcement followed discussions in which S&F parliamentarians agreed to support the government's plan to privatise the state's electricity system.

Preserving public safety and protecting native species under the amateur shooter scheme could only be ensured by having park rangers accompany the shooters during every hunt. However, this would consume the rangers' work time, thus invalidating the government's claim that introducing amateur hunters would provide extra personnel to cull introduced predators.

Amateur hunting would also increase the risk of accidental shootings, because of the lower skills of amateurs compared to professional shooters and park rangers. In New Zealand last year three park visitors died after amateur shooters mistook them for deer. In Australia, those

who apply for permission to hunt in Australian national parks must have an R-licence, but getting the licence doesn't require an eyesight test.

Last December a leaked document revealed that the government had received a risk assessment warning of the high probability of accidental death if amateur hunting was introduced. But the government went ahead anyway. It had its mind on other things.

Child hunters and their dads

If you thought things couldn't get worse, think again. Premier Barry O'Farrell is now seriously considering a proposal from the NSW Gun Council to allow accompanied minors as young as 12 years old to shoot in national parks. The Gun Council, a supposedly independent advisory body, receives taxpayer funding but is dominated by avid amateur shooters.

The proposal includes the use of not only rifles but also high-powered bows and arrows and antique "black powder" firearms. The proposal would involve 55 parks in the "Zone C" category, i.e. those most distant from heavily populated areas. Although remote, these parks are open to the public, just like the others.

Native species would be at high risk because of the difficulty amateurs have in distinguishing between certain introduced and native species that look very similar from a distance. But even more importantly, the risk to visitors would be dramatically increased because the scheme would only involve supervision of children by adults, not parks staff.

Public safety and the protection of native species in these national parks

would therefore be dependent on the eyesight, skill, integrity, trustworthiness and stability of adult and child hunters, not dedicated park rangers.

Adolescents tend to chafe at the prospect of having to be accompanied by mum or dad, and sooner or later many will inevitably try going out hunting on their own.

Moreover, there is a major problem with identifying hunting permit applicants whose behaviour is irresponsible or unstable. Rangers are carefully selected under strict job specifications, and their behaviour is vetted over a long period in the course of their work.

The same cannot be said for amateur hunters. NSW police are now said to be gearing up for hostile confrontations between amateur hunters and park visitors, not to mention disputes between amateur hunters themselves.

And there are other problems. The amateur hunter scheme will cost \$19 million for hunting coordinators, staff training, shooter education, and safety regulation signage. The scheme has also been criticised by scientists speaking at the University of Technology in Sydney, who described it as expensive, cruel and ineffective in controlling feral pests.

Environmental scientist Dr Daniel Ramp has stated that "recreational hunting ... is not an effective tool for dealing with introduced animals. If the number of animals shot is too small to impact on populations, the killing of animals, often in cruel circumstances, simply cannot be justified."

Spiking the guns

Amateur shooters can't wait to get their kids out into the parks with a gun. Last year, in anticipation of the scheme's acceptance by the

government, 410 licences were issued to children between the ages of 12 and 17. That's an increase of 57 percent over the previous year.

The shooters program is now scheduled to begin in April. In the meantime, the government has commissioned further risk assessments for the "child hunter" scheme. However, judging by their reaction to last year's initial assessment, the government draws the line at taking any notice of warnings the assessments carry.

National park visitors are likely to face the menace of gun-toting adolescents, possibly visually disabled and/or without the presence of a responsible adult, possibly accompanied by an unstable adult, and possibly using antiquated and unreliable weapons. That's a totally unsatisfactory situation, and the implementation of such a scheme would be totally irresponsible.

But regardless of the public risk, the government is determined to press on, in order to maintain the alliance with the Shooters and Fishers Party and thus get its privatisation agenda through parliament.

According to the Australian Workers Union, the parks employees they represent will take industrial

action if the government accepts the amateur hunting recommendation. Union organiser Paul Noack said: "[The child hunter proposal] makes an utter mockery of the government's proposal to utilise volunteer shooters for supplementary pest control. The AWU draws a line in the sand on this matter."

The National Parks Association has also held protests over the amateur hunter scheme. Speaking to a rally on behalf of the Association, Justin Mackee declared: "Residents from Armidale have worked tirelessly for years to create a stunning network of national parks in the surrounding area. Every Liberal and National Party member of the NSW government has failed to stand up and protect our ability to enjoy them in a peaceful and tranquil manner."

The amateur hunter proposal necessitates immediate action by the unions and the public to prevent implementation of the outrageous scheme. However, the government is only interested in using the National Parks to fulfil its state assets privatisation program. Curbing the government's ruthless agenda will necessitate culling it from office. ✪



Flea Creek campground in Brindabella National Park, NSW.

Pete's Corner



INTERNATIONAL

IWD March on
9 March 2013
Meet at Noon
Town Hall, Sydney

More info on:
www.sydneyiwd.com

WOMEN'S DAY

Logan accuse asylum seekers of "staging photos"

National Communications Manager for the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Sandi Logan, on Twitter has accused asylum seekers of "staging" photos of the deplorable conditions of their exile on Manus Island. Photos included very basic amenities for water, people lying in camp beds outside to get relief from stifling heat, beds with inadequate mosquito netting, metal containers housing asylum seekers with no doors or screens to protect them from mosquitoes.

"How is it possible," says ChilOut spokesperson Leila Druery, "to stage a photo of missing doors, flyscreens, no privacy, really basic washing facilities?"

After the photos were published DIAC quickly moved to disable cameras. Detainees could no longer show conditions on Manus to people in Australia or the press.

Mr Logan posted on Twitter that the move was designed to protect the "privacy" of clients held on the islands. "These people chose to take and send these photos," says Ms Druery. "Surely people have the right to send photos of themselves if they so choose. At any rate the photos only showed the backs of people, all faces were covered, so that no one would be identified. This was done more in fear of retribution by DIAC, rather than over concerns of people's privacy.

"This is about DIAC covering its backside, not allowing people to see the realities of detained life on Manus. The argument about privacy is simply spin," says Mrs Druery.

DIAC employs many staff, including a large media department, which creates videos and countless campaigns to show conditions of immigration detention, not always reflecting the reality of harsh conditions people must endure, some might say they are the masters of "spin" and "staging".

A case in point: In June 2012 DIAC produced a video extolling the virtues of their excellent Leonora educational plan, which they said started in May. ChilOut saw absolutely no evidence of this during their May visit to the remote desert facility, staff didn't mention it, nor did they mention any expansion of a very basic Australia 101 program, which ChilOut found completely inadequate for the 140 boys detained there.

Ms Druery states "It's hard to imagine an education plan and its implementation appearing out of thin air immediately after our visit. As far as we can ascertain the video was pure spin."

With many detention centres being in remote and now overseas locations it's almost impossible for advocates or agencies to have proper oversight of conditions. The department attempts to control and craft

every piece of communication that comes in and out of these centres. Mothers cannot take photos of their newborn babies. Some children, having been born in detention may have no photos of their first few years of life. No cameras are allowed in or out of facilities.

Australia prides itself on freedom of speech, and the notion of a fair go. How can anyone have a fair go if their voice cannot be heard? The government doesn't want Australians to see asylum seekers' faces, doesn't want us to realise they're human. These people deserve a voice. They deserve to be heard. An open and frank discussion on what we're doing to them needs to be part of a dialogue between Australians, the government and asylum seekers. Right now one party controls a major part of this conversation, and that's not right.

Asylum seekers on Manus have asked for media to visit them so they may share information about conditions under which they're living. The department denies them this right.

ChilOut fights for the release of all children from immigration detention. We will not stop until that is enshrined in law and practice.

Meanwhile, at the time of writing, asylum seekers on Nauru were on their fourth day of a sustained protest, according to information supplied to the Refugee Action Coalition Sydney (RAC) from inside the Nauru camp.



Seven detainees have now stitched their lips and have retreated inside their tents.

A protest of more than 100 people continued in the detention camp. This is 30 more people than were involved previously. Detainees are chanting "Don't kill refugees", "We are not criminals" and "Close Nauru", and have written these words on t-shirts.

These events are the latest in months of unrest on the island. There were five suicide attempts in early February, followed by an escape of five detainees earlier this week. October to December of last year saw protracted individual and mass hunger-strikes, suicide attempts and general chaos.

"Nauru must be closed immediately," said RAC spokesperson Nick Riemer. "Brendan O'Connor (Minister for Immigration) has said he doesn't want to see people losing their lives at sea. But what of the lives of the detainees on Nauru and Manus Island? Offshore processing has failed as a deterrent as it was always going to. People are coming on boats in greater numbers than ever before. The only purpose served by keeping people in the Pacific is to harm them further. We will see more suicides,

more tragic self-mutilation and more lasting psychological trauma until the government brings all the detainees to Australia.

"Lip-stitching was a shocking feature of the darkest years of Howard's Pacific Solution," Riemer continued. "A decade later, we're right back where we started. What needs to happen to get the government and opposition to end this madness? The conditions simply don't exist on Nauru for humane refugee processing, as both Amnesty and UNHCR have said. The medical centre can't even cope with perfectly normal health problems, let alone the kinds of things we're seeing now.

"The only place the right conditions exist is Australia. Nauru and Manus refugees should be sent back to the mainland and allowed to live in the community, just as thousands of other refugees are already doing. Otherwise the humanitarian crisis on Nauru will roll on, leaving its trail of destruction behind it. How many self-mutilations, suicides and broken lives is the government prepared to accept? How many people are to be sacrificed just for asking Australia for its help?" ✪

Workers picket Recall Records Management warehouse

Richard Titelius

Since Thursday February 21, workers at the Malaga warehouse in WA of US Records Management Corporation, Recall have been on strike and manning a picket outside the gates of their workplace.

The picket was set up by the workers union at the Recall warehouse, the National Union of Workers (NUW) who have been in attendance along with organisers, delegates, family and friends from a number of other unions including the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Maritime Union of Australia and the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association.

The workers at the Malaga warehouse have been locked in negotiations for a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement for the past eight months with the management of Recall offering 3 percent per year over three years while the workers are asking for 4 percent per year.

The workers at Recall believe the company is able to afford to pay this amount after management at the company awarded themselves a 37 percent pay increase.

Dean, an organiser for the NUW at the picket line advised that



The picket line which has been maintained in front of the gates of the Recall warehouse in Malaga.

Western Australia was also the lowest paid amongst workers at Recall warehouses across Australia, with WA workers being paid between \$2 and \$6 per hour depending on classification, less than workers in Victoria with the cost of living in Perth being one of the highest in Australia.

The workers and officials at the picket are in high spirits and have observed that the consequences of

the picket have begun to impact upon the bottom line of the company. They believe that in the next few days officials from the Recall corporation will begin to negotiate in good faith after earlier having a Sydney law firm send intimidating letters to all employees threatening legal action for the consequences of the legitimate pursuit of their industrial rights. ✪

Perth

International Women's Day

UnionsWA and Slater & Gordon Lawyers invite you to an International Women's Day Sundowner

Women in Politics

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When: Thursday 14th of March
Time: 5:30 - 7pm

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Food and drinks provided

Please RSVP to:
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UNIONSWA Not a problem. Slater & Gordon Lawyers

Greens/ALP break-up sharpens "get the Greens" agenda

Bob Briton

Greens leader Christine Milne's announcement last week of the break-up of the political relationship with the Gillard government was no bombshell. In fact the guarantee to support confidence votes and supply still stands so, in most regards, life goes on as if nothing had happened. Commentators note that both parties would welcome the opportunity to distance themselves from the reputation of the other in the electorate. They will be free to "be themselves" in the lead-up to the federal election on September 14. But there is a disturbing element in the background to the split – the drawing together of the ALP and the Coalition to try and neutralise the Greens as a political force.

Milne used her address to the National Press Club to set out the grounds for the unusual divorce. There was the mining tax that raises hardly any revenue, the carbon tax that goes soft on big polluters, the backing given to coal seam gas projects, the refusal to stop mineral exploration in Tasmania's Tarkine wilderness, the offshore detention of refugees, the forcing of single parents onto the dole and a general lack of transparency.

"[Labor] has embraced the agenda of Gina Rinehart, it's embraced the agenda of Rio Tinto and Xstrata," Milne said. "They don't care about people and the environment and that's exactly what's showing up here with its over-generous compensation to allow polluters to keep on polluting."

Gillard was not smoothing any ruffles, either. She previously described the Greens as a "fringe

party" and she returned to this theme with gusto. "At the end of the day, the Greens party is fundamentally a party of protest rather than a party of government," the PM said. "I'm not surprised that the Greens party has walked away on the basis of a difference about jobs," she added in reference to Labor's support for mining the Tarkine.

The Greens will target Labor voters disillusioned by the federal government's total embrace of the economic agenda of big business and its continuation of Howard's reactionary social attitudes. Labor will try to win back supporters who have been duped by the corporate media to believe that Gillard has been captive to the Greens and their allegedly "trendy" concerns.

The Murdoch media, in particular, has been waging a war on the credibility of the Greens but, if the polls are any guide, it's not working. Support is hovering at around a healthy 11 percent. The handover of the party's leadership from Bob Brown to the less charismatic Christine Milne has apparently not hurt the Greens in terms of voter intentions. But the party's future in parliament is not completely in its own hands. Labor and the Liberals are said to be in conversation about cutting the Greens out. Opposition leader Tony Abbott has said he will announce preference decisions closer to the election date but that didn't stop him from confirming that the Libs definitely would not be giving preferences to the Greens in the seat of Melbourne, currently held by the Greens' Adam Bandt.

Milne is putting on a brave face. She says her party is aiming to win lower house seats and senate quotas

in its own right. That will be difficult and fears are held that Adam Bandt and South Australian senator Sarah Hanson-Young might lose their posts. With most commentators already calling the election for the Coalition, the Greens are highlighting the need for a solid vote for them. At Sarah Hanson-Young's recent campaign launch, former leader Bob Brown warned "Voters have two choices – the Greens retain the balance of power, or Abbott runs riot."

All these developments take place independently of the needs and wishes of the people, particularly the disadvantaged. Milne was right to describe the two major parties as the "indentured servants" of billionaire mining magnates but the reality is that the Greens have to fit in with this overarching agenda or have an extremely limited role. The party doesn't have an alternative to the capitalist system whose destructive features it can often identify but can't grapple with at a more fundamental level. The political force that will do that and set about breaking the dominance of the monopolies hasn't been built yet. A good Greens vote so that Abbott's rampage will be restrained to some degree in the senate is undoubtedly important. Far more urgent is the building of the left and progressive alliance in the communities and the workplaces of Australia with a strong Communist Party at its core. ✪



Greens leader Christine Milne.

Ancient trail links coast to mountain

Laurelle Pacey

Many believe the Bundian Way walking track in southern NSW could become as popular as Western Australia's Bibbulmun Track and the Northern Territory's Larapinta Trail. "It's an ancient track that links Bilgalera (Fisheries Beach in Twofold Bay) with Targangal (Mt Kosciuszko), connecting whaling ceremonies in spring with the gathering of Bogong moths in summer in the high country," said Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council (ELALC) chair "BJ" Cruse.

Much work is still to be done but Mr Cruse hopes the track will be officially opened later this year. "Walking it is just magnificent," he said. "It's a different sort of track in that it covers lots of different wilderness country – from coastal lands, to plains, to snowfields."

The now heritage-listed 265 kilometre Bundian Way crosses public land from Twofold Bay along the Towamba River through Delegate to the Snowy Mountains, some of it along travelling stock routes. One spur goes to Omeo and the Gippsland areas.

It was once one of a network of routes used by Aboriginal people

over thousands of years between different parts of the coast, tablelands, Snowy Mountains and beyond for practical, ceremonial, trade and other reasons.

Mr Cruse said they then shared knowledge of these routes with early settlers, which enabled pastoral development of the wider region. Many of the old routes now have major roads along parts of them, but the landscape of this route remains largely unchanged.

Yuin Elder Rev Ossie Cruse said it had been named after the "Bundi" people who once lived along the route. "Some of the old people knew of it and occasionally someone would come across a site linked to it," he said.

It took considerable research over many years by ELALC researcher John Blay to rediscover the exact route after consulting early surveyors' notes and explorers' diaries, interviewing Aboriginal people, and conducting a detailed survey over the entire route.

Working in close partnership with ELALC to ensure the project's success is the Bundian Way Management Advisory Committee with representatives from National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests, the

Catchment Management Authority, Lands Department, Eden LALC, and Bombala and Bega Valley Shire Councils. Mr Blay is chair.

The committee was recently recognised as a "heritage hero" by NSW Heritage Minister Robyn Parker in the annual NSW Heritage Volunteer Awards. The committee believes the Bundian Way will boost the region's economy, create Aboriginal jobs and revitalise local Aboriginal culture.

The first major infrastructure project rolled out by the committee was last month's opening of the Bundian Way Art Gallery at Delegate in association with ELALC and the Delegate Progress Association. It is the region's only Indigenous art gallery and will also act as an information centre for the Bundian Way.

Delegate is midway between the high country and the coast and will be the hub of the Bundian Way. Two camp sites are being established along the route and ELALC's Bilgalera and Jigamy Farm on the coast are being enhanced.

Technical information is being finalised and training of young people is underway.

Koori Mail ✪

Perth

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2013

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US goading Japan into confrontation with China

John V Walsh

At the height of the 2012 election campaign in late October, a US delegation tiptoed into Japan and then China with scant media coverage. It was “unofficial,” but Hillary Clinton gave it her blessing. And it was headed by two figures high in the imperial firmament, Richard L Armitage, who served as Deputy Secretary of State for George W Bush; and Joseph S Nye Jr, a former Pentagon and intelligence official in the Clinton administration and Dean Emeritus of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. The delegation also included James B Steinberg, who served as the Deputy Secretary of State in the Obama administration and Stephen J Hadley, Bush Two’s national security adviser.

The delegation was billed as an attempt by the US to defuse tensions between Japan and China over a number of small islands both claim. But was it? What is the outlook of these influential figures? Interestingly, Armitage and Nye provide us with a partial answer in a brief paper published the preceding August by the Centre for International and Strategic Studies (CSIS), entitled “The Japan-US Alliance. Anchoring Stability in Asia”, the carefully crafted fruit of a CSIS Study Group they chaired. The strategy proposed therein, as outlined below, should be very distressing to the Chinese – as well as to the Japanese and Americans.

The Armitage/Nye paper addresses itself to the Japanese themselves, the target audience, in the Introduction as follows:

“Together, we face the re-rise of China and its attendant uncertainties ...

“Tier-one nations have significant economic weight, *capable military forces* global vision, and demonstrated leadership on international concerns. Although there are areas in which the United States can better support the (Japan-US) alliance, we have no doubt of the United States’ continuing tier-one status. For Japan, however, there is a decision to be made. Does Japan desire to continue to be a tier-one nation, or is she content to drift into tier-two status? If tier-two status is good enough for the Japanese people and their government, this report will not be of interest.” (Emphasis added)

Appeal to militarism

Read that carefully. It is a thinly veiled appeal to the worst aspects of Japanese militarism and nationalism, which for good reason are so reviled in East Asia. It is done in the context of the “re-rise” of China, a phrase that invokes China’s past world supremacy and Japan’s inferior status at the time. What sort of beast is this disturbing plea designed to awaken?

Again in the Introduction, the authors make the military dimensions of their appeal quite specific, writing: “Japan’s Self-Defence Forces (JSDF) – now the most trusted institution in Japan – are poised to play a larger role in enhancing Japanese security and reputation *if anachronistic constraints can be eased.*” (Emphasis added) What are these “anachronistic restraints”? As the authors later make clear, they are embodied in Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, written under the tutelage

of MacArthur’s occupying forces following WW2. The Article so irksome to Armitage and Nye reads:

“Article 9: Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. To accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognised.”

This is a breathtakingly appealing, pacifist statement; and there is a brief, worthwhile account of Article 9 here. Article 9 is extremely popular in Japan, and eliminating it from the Constitution would not be easy, as Armitage and Nye recognise. Moreover, Armitage and Nye concede that Article 9 prohibits collective self-defence, which involves joint military action by the US and Japan. As they say in their paper:

“The irony, however, is that even under the most severe conditions requiring the protection of Japan’s *interests*, our forces are legally prevented from collectively defending Japan. ... Prohibition of collective self-defence is an impediment to the (US-Japan) alliance.” (Emphasis added) Note that the authors do not say protection of Japan but of Japan’s “interests.”

Ignoring Japan’s constitution

What then is the US to do? Armitage and Nye see a solution in the joint rescue operations mounted by the Japan Self-Defence Forces (JSDF) and US forces (Operation Tomodachi, meaning “Operation Friends”) in response to the earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima disaster of March 11, 2011, known as 3-11 in Japan.

There, the joint rescue efforts were not opposed by those who favour Article 9 and the spirit it embodies. Armitage and Nye suggest that Operation Tomodachi simply be taken as a precedent to justify future joint operations. In other words, the Japanese Constitution is simply to be ignored, pretty much the tactic that Truman inaugurated in the US to plunge the country into the Korean War and the tactic Barack Obama has used in interventions like the one in Libya. Simply ignore the Constitution and its requirement that the US Congress alone can declare war. This is an example, as if another were needed, of how our elites view the “rule of law” to which they appeal so often. (And one wonders whether from the outset Operation Tomodachi was viewed in part in this way by its architects. How many other US humanitarian missions might have ancillary covert purposes, one might ask?)

Armitage and Nye also mention that the Yanai Committee report of 2006 notes that the prime minister could by fiat put aside the Article 9 prohibition, as in anti-piracy efforts in Djibouti. But this report has been seen as an effort to subvert the Japanese Constitution. As Professor. Craig Martin of Washburn School of Law, an American expert in these matters, wrote at the time, “the exercise of using an extra-constitutional body to advance a ‘revision’ of the interpretation of the Constitution, was illegitimate on a number of levels, the most



A Japanese F-2 takes off during Misawa Air Festival at Misawa Air Base, Japan.

important being that it was an end-run around the amendment provisions in the Constitution.” But then that is precisely what Armitage and Nye are up to.

Article 9 remains popular in Japan although its popularity has been substantially eroded in recent years. The reasons for this and the forces behind it deserve some careful examination in light of the US Empire’s “pivot” to East Asia. But so long as the Japanese Communist Party and Japanese Socialists remain a force in government and society there is little chance that Article 9 will be repealed, making the end run necessary if Japan is to be remilitarised.

The very existence of the JSDF in fact can be seen as illegal under the provisions of Article 9, which is why the JSDF was originally dubbed a National Police Force. Armitage and Nye sum up the military aspects of their report in the following recommendation to Japan: “Japan should expand the scope of her responsibilities to include the defence of Japan and defence with the United States in regional contingencies. The allies require more robust, shared, and interoperable ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance) capabilities and operations that extend *well beyond Japanese territory.*”

“It would be a responsible authorisation on the part of Japan to allow US forces and JSDF to respond in *full cooperation throughout the security spectrum of peacetime, tension, crisis, and war.*” (Emphasis added) For diplomats that is about as specific and concrete as it gets. And

it is very troubling since it is hardly a plan for peace.

The Armitage/Nye paper contains much more. Japan is urged to participate more fully in forums involving the Philippines, India, Taiwan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), i.e. South Korea. China is not mentioned in this regard – not surprisingly. Armitage and Nye know that this is a tough sell for the citizens of the ROK with vivid memories of Japanese conquest and atrocities in WW2. But Armitage and Nye hope it can be engineered.

Economic dimension

The report also has an economic dimension. The idea of using India as a battering ram against China, which was popular in the Bush administration and which was aided by Israel, is not really viable. India is driven by internal disputes, corruption, religious divisions and a Maoist rebellion over a large part of its territory. And economically it is wanting. Military power grows from economic power and so the US needs the aid of a powerful regional economic power in its drive against China. That is the role of Japan in the eyes of Armitage and Nye.

Thus, to be useful to the US, Japan must restore its economy, now in decline. This is really a tall order since Japan’s main trading partner and the principle destination for its exports is China. That became evident in the recent Chinese boycott of Japanese goods as the dispute over the Diaoyou/Senkaku Island intensified recently, which hurt Japan greatly but had little effect on the Chinese economy.

But again Armitage and Nye hold out hope. Their solution is for Japan to restore and expand its nuclear power. (One wonders why the US environmentalists have not spoken out about that and whether the Japanese environmentalists have knowledge of these plans for Japan, hatched in the US.) In addition Armitage and Nye offer Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) and other petroleum products from North America as more largesse to link Japan closer to the US.

As they write: “The shale gas revolution in the continental United States and the abundant gas reserves in Alaska present Japan and the United States with a complementary opportunity: the United States should begin to export LNG from the lower 48 states by 2015, and Japan continues to be the world’s largest

Armitage and Nye concede that Article 9 prohibits collective self-defence, which involves joint military action by the US and Japan.

Palestinian hunger striker "hanging between life and death"



Photo: Chad Strohmeyer



Palestinians in the West Bank city of Nablus demonstrate in solidarity with hunger striking prisoners.

Noreen Sadik

Probably the most heart-wrenching form of non-violent expression that can be taken by any human being is a hunger strike. Two months ago, with a sense of urgency, I wrote about Palestinian hunger strikers held in Israeli jails under administrative detention, a form of imprisonment without charge or trial, and renewable every six months for an indefinite period.

Statistics from Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association show that as of January 1, 2013, there were 4,743 Palestinians being held in Israeli jails. Of these, 178 are administrative detainees, and four are on extended hunger strikes.

But we are not just talking about numbers: the prisoners are not numbers. They are husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, students, workers. They are people with names. The number of days they have gone without food is inconceivable, and the urgency to retell their story has deepened.

According to Addameer, as of February 22, this is the length of time the following prisoners have been on hunger strike:

Samer Issawi – 206 days
Ayman Sharawana – over 200 days
Jafar Azzidine – 87 days
Tarek Qa'adan – 87 days

The four men are not striking for their own personal gain. They are fighting for the freedom of all Palestinians who are living under occupation. Samer Issawi writes:

"My battle is not only for individual freedom. The battle waged by me and by my heroic colleagues, Tariq, Ayman and Ja'afar, is everyone's battle, the battle of the Palestinian people against the occupation and its prisons. Our goal is to be free and sovereign in our liberated state and in our blessed Jerusalem."

Their struggle is also against administrative detention, and Article 186 of Military Order 1651, which allows a military committee to sentence released prisoners to serve the remainder of their previous sentence based on secret evidence without disclosing the evidence to the prisoner or his lawyer.

"I'm one of your sons, among thousands of your sons who are prisoners, still languishing steadfastly in the prisons, waiting for an end to be brought to their plight, their pains and the suffering of their families."

The four men are determined not to give up the struggle, in spite of failing health.

"My health has deteriorated dramatically and I'm hanging between life and death. My weak body is collapsing but still able to be patient and continue the confrontation. My message is that I will continue until the end, until the last drop of water in my body, until martyrdom. Martyrdom is an honour for me in this battle. My martyrdom is my remaining bomb in the confrontation with the tyrants and the jailers, in the face of the racist policy of the occupation that humiliates our people and exercises against us all means of oppression and repression."

While the politicians and citizens of the world have been shamefully slow to react to their silent cries, four young men are facing a slow, cruel death. However, as word of their plight spreads, they have gained thousands of supporters around the world.

Angry demonstrations have taken place in cities worldwide, including in Israel. Daily protests in Palestine have turned into violent clashes with Israeli soldiers.

"The weak and strained beats of my heart derive their steadfastness from you, the great people. My eyes, which started to lose their sight, draw light from your solidarity and your support of me. My weak voice takes its strength from your voice that is louder than the warden's voice and higher than the walls.

"The doctors told me I became exposed to stroke because of the disorder of my heartbeats, the shortage of sugar and the drop in blood pressure. My body is full of cold and I can't sleep because of the continued pain. But despite the extreme fatigue and chronic headaches, as I move on my chair, I'm trying to summon all my resources to continue on the road till its end."

The Issawi family home and the solidarity tent have been raided by Israeli soldiers, and another son has been arrested. Sharawana's mother, a diabetic, has started her own hunger strike. Issawi's February 19 appeal for release was refused, as was Sharawana's the following day.

On February 21, Issawi had another court appearance. It ruled that he be sentenced to eight months beginning from the date of his July 7, 2012 arrest.

This sentence is in addition to the possible sentencing under Article 186 in the Military Order 1651.

Should Issawi be convicted, he will serve the remaining 20 years of his previous sentence.

Issawi is not giving up.

"I say to my people: I'm stronger than the occupation army and its racist laws. I, Samer al-Issawi, son of Jerusalem, send you my last will that, in case I fell as a martyr, you will carry my soul as a cry for all the prisoners, men and women, cry for freedom, emancipation and salvation from the nightmare of prisons and their harsh darkness.

"There is no going back, only in my victory, because I'm the owner of Right and my detention is invalid and illegal.

"Do not be afraid for my heart if it will stop, don't be afraid for my hands if they will be paralysed. I am still alive now and tomorrow and after death, because Jerusalem is moving in my blood, in my devotion and my faith."

Issawi, Sharawana, Qa'adan and Azzidine are symbols of patience, determination and the strength of the Palestinian people. They are the newest Palestinian heroes.

New Internationalist ✪

LNG importer. Since 1969, Japan has imported relatively small amounts of LNG from Alaska, and interest is picking up in expanding that trade link, given Japan's need to increase and diversify its sources of LNG imports, especially in light of 3-11." Again one wonders where the voices of US environmentalists are on this matter.

The idea of Japan outdoing China in East Asia economically is a pipe dream, with or without the US. China has a population of 1.3 billion and Japan 130 million. To expect Japan to emerge as a serious challenge to China in the long term is like hoping that in the immediate future Canada with its 34 million can challenge the US with 315 million. And China has a vibrant economy, an educated workforce and a culture to be reckoned with, from which Japan's emerged and followed until it was "Westernised."

So what is Japan's protection to be in the face of such a large and powerful neighbour? For one thing, Japan certainly has the wherewithal to deter aggression from any quarter with its advanced technology and its potential for nuclear weapons development.

For another, China has no record of expansionism overseas even going back to 1400 when it was the world's premier naval power but never conquered or established colonies or took slaves. But a large part of Japanese security lies in an increasing respect for international law with its emphasis on sovereignty. The concept of sovereignty in international law is the protection of small nations from the depredations of large ones. And ironically the principal threat to the idea of sovereignty comes from the United States and the West with their pre-emptive wars and "humanitarian" interventions, which trash the classical concept of sovereignty. Japan should be wary of dealings with such powers and supporting such ideas.

For Japan to take the bait and be the cat's paw for US schemes in East Asia borders on the insane. And diplomatic exchanges between China and Japan following the Japanese elections show that many Japanese recognise this. They and the Chinese seem increasingly willing to work out differences in a structure of peace. We should hope so – and so should the Japanese. He who takes the bait is often left holding the bag.

Information Clearing House ✪

Melbourne

Protest in Solidarity with Palestinian hunger strikers held in Israeli jails

Join the James Connolly Association, Melbourne, in a rally in support of Palestinian hunger strikers unjustly imprisoned without charge or trial.

The State Library, Saturday March 2 at 2pm.

Israel currently holds 178 Palestinians in administrative detention (held indefinitely without charges or a trial). Four of these detainees are on hunger strike, taking only water. One man, Samer Issawi has been on hunger strike for over 200 days and his condition is now critical.



Resounding victory for Correa and Alianza PAIS in Ecuador

Joaquin Rivery Tur

President Rafael Correa and his party Alianza País obtained a resounding victory in Ecuador's February 17 general elections, leaving the right-wing opposition and fragmented small groups far behind at the polls.

With 70% of the ballots counted, reports indicated that Correa received approximately 57% of the vote, almost 40 percentage points more than his closest rival, banker Guillermo Lasso.

According to the digital daily El Ciudadano, Lucio Gutiérrez, the Sociedad Patriótica candidate, received 6.6%, while Mauricio Rodas, from SUMA garnered 4%.

With minimal support were

Alvaro Noboa (3.7%), Alberto Acosta (3.2%), Norman Wray (1.3%), and Nelson Zavala (1.2%). Invalid votes cast stood at 5.79%.

After a television interview, President Rafael Correa departed from his Carondelet residence and headed for the now-traditional Shyris tribunal, where thousands of supporters celebrated his re-election to office with a mandate from the majority of Ecuadorans. "We accept this great support as a great responsibility," he said in a moving speech.

The President assured the crowd that the challenge will be met with determination, since the people have reaffirmed their support for change in the country, and, "We will change it."

In this context, he explained that the process of freeing Ecuador from

the domination of a powerful few will continue. "We will transform this bourgeois state into a truly popular state, we will never allow the homeland to once again be held hostage and plundered by the circles which dominated it for centuries," Correa said.

He also emphasised the fact that the victory was not solely for the Presidency, but for the entire team which has worked hard.

"No one can stop this revolution," he exclaimed, recalling the principal axis of tasks which his administration will undertake over the next four years, with special emphasis on eliminating poverty.

Correa announced that the Citizens' Revolution intends to change the energy and productive core of the country, with its first objective being National Assembly approval of laws stalled by the opposition. Among these are those addressing water, land and communications, although the President said the first to be emphasised is a new law to replace the 70-year-old Penal Code.

As for regional integration, which has been a priority of his administration, the President stressed, "We always think about the *patria chica* and the *grande*, (the little homeland and the greater homeland). We cannot think about the country without thinking about Latin American integration."

He recalled important steps which have been taken in this direction, the creation of UNASUR (Union of South American Nations), the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

The Banco del Sur, the virtual currency – the sucre – and new regional financial structures will strengthen trade among Latin American and Caribbean countries, Correa said, and



Ecuador's President Rafael Correa.

that the task at hand is deepening this integration which is now much more than a dream.

Legislative victory

Ecuador's right wing forces were defeated in the legislative elections as well, according to preliminary reports disseminated by the non-governmental organisation Participación Ciudadana – with authorisation from the National Electoral Council – projecting that 91 of the 137 seats in Parliament will be held by Alianza PAIS representatives.

This victory adds a great deal of strength to the President's re-election and will allow Correa's proposals to the National Assembly to move forward much more rapidly, with

the consequent strengthening of the Citizens' Revolution and the accomplishment of its objectives.

Correa promptly received congratulations from the leaders of countries within ALBA, UNASUR and CELAC, as well as from several European countries.

The President clarified that there will be no censure of the press which has attacked him with lies, but that he intends to "struggle against corrupt, manipulating, mercantilist media." He stated that the defeat of this type of journalism was another great victory and that the country must become "a society in which the citizens rule, not those who have the money to buy themselves a press." ☘

Coalition sneaks in NHS privatisation

Will Stone

Campaigners said last week that unchallenged regulations published by the Tory-led government last week laid bare its plans to privatise the NHS.

Section 75 of the Health and Social Care Act has the effect of dramatically extending competition and forcing "compulsory competitive markets" on the NHS.

The regulations require that virtually all commissioning is carried out through competitive markets regardless of what patients want. They also contain legal powers for NHS regulator Monitor to enforce privatisation either independently or at the request of private companies that have lost bids.

Keep Our NHS Public's Wendy Savage told the *Morning Star* that the regulations will also tie the health service into EU competition law.

This would cause difficulties for Labour to repeal the Act if it won the next general election as private companies may be able to sue for lost contracts.

Health Emergency's John Lister

said it represents a "massive sneak attack" on the NHS that exposes the government for lying to the public outright. He urged Labour to get onto the case.

And the Unite union fears that cash-strapped NHS providers will struggle to compete with the likes of Virgin Care and Serco in the bidding for contracts, opening up the door for privatisation on a massive scale.

The union's head of health Rachael Maskell said: "This is proof, if proof were needed, that David Cameron and his cronies have misled both Parliament and the public about their plans to sell off the NHS."

"The regulations have nothing to do with patient choice, but are about enforcing privatisation on the NHS." She warned that MPs must "stop privatisation creeping in through the back door" and have until March 31 to force through a debate in Parliament on the regulations and get them overturned.

The Department for Health failed to respond to requests for comment. *Morning Star* ☘

Israel "officially allows" oil drilling in the Golan Heights

Israel has authorised drilling for oil on the disputed Golan Heights, local media reports. The first licence has been awarded to the US-Israeli energy company Genie (GNE).

The process of granting the licence began following geological tests, which indicated a large potential oil discovery in the southern Golan Heights – an area of thousands of hectares. The license covers half the area of the Golan from the latitude of Katzrin in the north to Tzemach in the south.

Media tycoon Rupert Murdoch, former US Vice-President Dick Cheney and banker Jacob Rothschild are among the shareholders of GNE, a New Jersey-based company. It is headed by Effie Eitam, a Golan settler and former hardline rightwing Israeli cabinet minister.

Genie Energy is the

parent company of Israel Energy Initiatives Ltd. (IEI), which is moving forward on a venture to develop shale oil deposits in the coastal plain.

Another company which took part in the bid for the oil extraction licence was local Ultra Equity Investments Ltd. Israel's Ministry of Energy and Water Resources' Petroleum Council reportedly recommended awarding the licence to Genie Energy for "professional reasons" several days ago.

Israel's move, reported by Tel-Aviv's *Yediot Aharonot* newspaper is likely to draw international protest.

"Awarding a drilling licence on the Golan could cause an international fracas, given the Golan's status as occupied Syrian territory under international law," wrote business journal *Globes*.

Israel captured the Golan

Heights from Syria in the 1967 Middle East Six-Day War and annexed it in 1981. The move wasn't recognised by the international community, but the strategic plateau has been extensively settled by Israelis.

The Golan's status has been at the heart of past Israeli-Syrian peace talks, with Damascus demanding its full return. Oil exploration for the area was halted 20 years ago, as Israel hoped for a deal with Syria, but the accord is yet to be signed.

Permission for oil drilling on the Golan Heights was granted a month before US President Barack Obama is due to pay a visit to the Hebrew state. In November 2012, Washington swiftly condemned the move as unhelpful, ahead of a visit by Vice-President Joe Biden.

Russia Today ☘

Sydney Central Branch

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Sunday March 10 starting at 1.00pm
33 Levey St, Chippendale

All Comrades and friends are welcome.
There will be lashings of good food
and the cost will only be \$25 a head
(\$15 concession for pensioners and unwaged).



George Bush, Tony Blair and the century's greatest crime

Linda S Heard

It's been almost 10 years since the US and Britain unleashed "Shock and Awe" on the Iraqi capital Baghdad ostensibly to punish a rogue dictator for hoarding weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in non-compliance with binding UN Security Council resolutions. In reality, Saddam Hussain had shut down his nuclear program and destroyed Iraq's chemical and biological weapons more than a decade earlier.

UN weapons inspectors were almost certain of this fact and were on the point of giving Iraq a clean bill of health until they were leant-on by Uncle Sam. Indeed, the man who had supervised Iraq's WMD program for a decade Saddam's son-in-law Hussain Kamal confirmed as much to CIA intelligence officers and UN officials following his defection to Jordan in 1995.

What was done to Iraq was nothing short of state terrorism beginning with 10 years of crippling sanctions that brought Iraq to its knees and was believed to have been responsible for the deaths of up to 500,000 children who died from malnutrition, lack of medicine and disease from polluted water supplies.

Rather than heed growing international calls to lift those

sanctions, George W Bush and his neo-conservative band chose war which they and their British cohort Prime Minister Tony Blair then sold to gullible Western populations on lies too numerous to list. They were aided by a complicit right-wing media with Rupert Murdoch leading the charge, according to the diaries of Blair's former spin doctor Alastair Campbell.

Blair was aware that the war would be illegal in the absence of an explicit UN resolution, as his legal advisor attorney general Lord Goldsmith had determined, but he went ahead regardless even as millions of anti-war protestors thronged London's streets. He didn't hesitate to sign-off on an intelligence dossier for public consumption falsely claiming that Iraq could deploy WMD against British interests within 45 minutes of receiving the order to do so – and another containing tracts from a student's thesis published on the internet, typos and all.

Credible insiders who dared to challenge such nonsense such as weapons expert Dr David Kelly, who challenged the 45-minute claim, Ambassador Joseph Wilson, who refuted Bush's allegation that Iraq had sought to purchase uranium from Niger, and British translator Katherine Gunn who disclosed that the US was spying on UN Security Council members, were discredited.

Kelly was found dead in suspicious circumstances; Wilson's wife Valerie Plame was exposed as a CIA agent by a US government media lackey. Gunn was arrested for breaching the Official Secrets Act and sacked.

One of the most respected figures in America, Colin Powell, signed the death of his own career when he spouted trumped-up allegations against Iraq in the UN, a presentation he was to bitterly regret, calling it a painful blot on his record.

World's greatest con

In short, the war was one of the world's greatest cons. It had nothing to do with Iraq's WMD or the removal of a dictator; it was part of a greater neoconservative plan to ensure America's global domination as General Wesley Clark confirmed in his book *Winning Modern Wars: Iraq, Terrorism and the American Empire*.

"As I went back through the Pentagon in November 2001, one of the senior military staff officers had time for a chat. Yes, we were still on track for going against Iraq, he said. But there was more. This was being discussed as part of a five-year campaign plan, he said, and there were a total of seven countries, beginning with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia and Sudan."

Up to a million Iraqis lost their lives as a result of the war and subsequent invasion and occupation; according to the respected journal *The Lancet*, over 600,000 had been killed as of July 2006, not to mention thousands of US and coalition military personnel.

Former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz announced that the war impacted the US economy



What was done to Iraq was nothing short of state terrorism.

to the tune of US\$3 trillion. And for what! The only beneficiaries of this wilful blunder, chiefly perpetrated by Bush and Blair, have been Iran that holds sway over the Shiite-dominated Nouri Al Maliki government and various terror organisations that have used Western crimes against Iraq as a recruitment call. Today, Iraq is poised on the brink of all out civil war.

The Conservative MP and Minister without Portfolio Kenneth Clarke recently told the BBC that Iraq was "the most disastrous foreign policy decision of my lifetime ... worse than Suez". You don't need Einstein's IQ to realise that, but the Iraq Inquiry chaired by Sir John Chilcot, and set up in 2009, has failed in its mission.

It's been characterised by the British prime minister as "an establishment stitch-up".

Where's the public anger? American newspapers are running stories about the death of Bush's pooch Barney and his penchant for painting while a tanned Blair has been busy accepting a Polish Business Leaders' Award and pontificating on David Cameron's plan to hold a referendum on Britain's continued EU membership.

The deadly duo should be sharing a cell in The Hague awaiting trial for war crimes, but as we see time and time again, victors' justice translates to no justice at all.

Information Clearing House ✪

Cyprus election right-wing win

Gary Bono

The first round of the presidential election in Cyprus concluded on February 17 with three candidates emerging out of a field of 10. The overall voter turn out was more than 80 percent.

Expecting an outright victory, right-wing Disy party candidate Nicos Anastasiades was forced into a second round election by two other candidates running as independents, Stavros Malas and Giorgios Lillikas.

Anastasiades is seen as the favoured candidate of big banks and others who want to impose austerity on Cyprus in response to the worldwide crisis of capital.

Malas, who enjoys the support

of left party, AKEL, came in second. Malas and Lillikas' combined vote total topped Anastasiades. Lillikas is backed by EDEK, a party considered similar to former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour Party.

In a recent statement on the elections the AKEL leader Andros Kyprianou called on Cypriots to "defend the public and natural wealth" and to defend against neo-liberal attacks on working people, social benefits, wages and pensions.

The vote of Lillikas' supporters was critical in the second round held on February 24. The right-wing Anastasiades won with 57.5 percent of the vote to Malas' 42.5 percent.

People's World ✪

More than 2,000 friendship groups around the world

Nuria Barbosa Leon

Kenya: Serrano Puig, president of the Cuban Friendship Institute (ICAP) told *Granma International* that Friendship with Cuba organisations exist in more than 150 countries and number more than 2,000. In 2012, these groups undertook various initiatives opposing the US blockade and supporting the release of Cuba's Five anti-terrorist fighters unjustly imprisoned in the United States.

Serrano, also a deputy to the National Assembly, cited various activities held within the US itself, including the financing by more than 300 organisations of an announcement in *The Washington Post* calling on President Obama to free the Five, in addition to an effort to visit the offices of 40 US Senators and Representatives to discuss the case.

Activities focused on solidarity with Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Gerardo Hernández and René González have taken place on the fifth of every month, including marches, protests, cultural events, pickets in front of US embassies

and the distribution of information about the injustice these men suffered as a result of their work to defend Cuba against terrorist attacks.

In 2012, regional meetings of solidarity groups were held in Asia (Sri Lanka), Africa (Ethiopia) and Europe (Germany). During these gatherings, Cuba's defence of its national sovereignty, the support it gives other countries and its leadership in the struggle for a better world were recognised.

"It has been a year during which the entire world has been very attentive to the changes we are making, which has generated much support," Serrano said, as she described the many international brigades of sympathisers which visit the country, adding that in 2012, "People from 91 nations visited us, 75 were represented in brigades, all of whom have helped broaden the solidarity movement, strengthen our friendships and build mutual understanding between Cuba and other peoples of the world."

The 40th anniversary of the Julio Antonio Mella International Camp, the 20th of the Pastors for Peace Caravans, the 35th of the

Antonio Maceo Brigade, the 43rd of the Venceremos and the 21st of the Juan Rius Rivera - composed of Cuban émigrés resident in Puerto Rico and the United States – were all celebrated.

Also making productive visits were brigades from South America, Latin America and the Caribbean, in addition to the Nordic group from northern Europe and the Southern Cross from Australia. International delegations came for May Day and the 45th anniversary of Ernesto Che Guevara's death.

Serrano reported that May 31 through June 5, a series of activities have been organised to take place in Washington, DC demanding freedom for the Cuban Five, while preparations have begun for the 3rd International Solidarity with Cuba Conference, scheduled for the end of 2014. This gathering will allow for the development of initiatives and proposals, as well as the exchange of successful strategies in an effort to perfect activities to more effectively share the truth about Cuba.

Granma ✪

Melbourne

Fight for women's rights

International Women's Day

Violence against women has been in the international spotlight for the last year amid greater publicity of cases of women being raped and murdered. Many events and rallies have been held calling for the end of violence against women. International Women's Day (IWD) was the original day demanding equality for women. The first IWD was held in 1909. It is marked by events all around the world. In Melbourne, there will be a rally and march.

Saturday March 9 at 1pm

State Library, Cnr Latrobe and Swanston Streets



Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

agreement to support Labor in government.

By choosing the big miners, the Labor government is no longer honouring our agreement to work together to promote transparent and accountable government and the public interest or to address climate change.

By turning its back on the people in favour of the miners, Labor has effectively ended its agreement with the Greens. So be it.

For the Greens to be the strongest voice possible in Parliament, we now need to move beyond the agreement.

If the Gillard government is too scared to take on vested interests then it is the people who can't afford ads in the paper or on television, who can't afford expensive lobbyists to walk the halls of parliament house, people who can least afford it – people like single mothers – who end up paying.

Well the Greens aren't afraid. Across the country – from the Kimberley to the Tarkine – communities are already standing up against powerful mining companies. The Greens will stand with them.

In the interests of stable government, we will continue to honour our part of the agreement to

deliver confidence and supply until the Parliament rises.

We will not allow Labor's failure to uphold the spirit of our agreement to advance the interest of Tony Abbott.

We will also push for a full Senate Inquiry into the mining tax to get to the bottom of exactly how flawed this tax is and what needs to be done to fix it.

I hope you will join the Greens this election year as we confront the old parties and stand up to the multinational billion dollar mining corporations.

**Christine Milne
The Greens**

Don't rubbish Australia

Right now, a group of beverage industry giants led by Coca Cola are taking the Northern Territory government to court for starting the territory's first ever "Cash for Containers" recycling scheme. If Coca Cola's lawyers win the case, it could slam the brakes on state and federal leaders elsewhere in Australia starting similar schemes.

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?
Write a letter to the Editor

Cash for Containers has been running in South Australia for over 30 years. By offering a simple 10 cent per container deposit refund for consumers, recycling rates there are now double those across the rest of the country. But Coca Cola wants none of it. They want it thrown on the scrapheap for fear it might affect their billion dollar bottom line.

The only thing that can stop Coca Cola from trashing this proven and popular program is an overwhelming outcry from concerned Australians. Can you raise your voice today and show your politicians you support a national Cash for Containers scheme?

Australians use 14 billion drinks containers every year. Low recycling rates mean bottles, caps and seals end up in landfill, on beaches, in rivers and oceans. Shockingly, this rubbish is estimated to affect up to 85 percent of Australian seabirds,

many mistaking the plastic for food. When they swallow too much, their tiny stomachs become so full they're unable to ingest any food -- literally starving to death on a full stomach.

Container refunds could earn the community service sector as much as \$60 million every year to re-invest into communities.

Garbage collection costs across the country would drop.

We'd have cleaner beaches and waterways for people and animals.

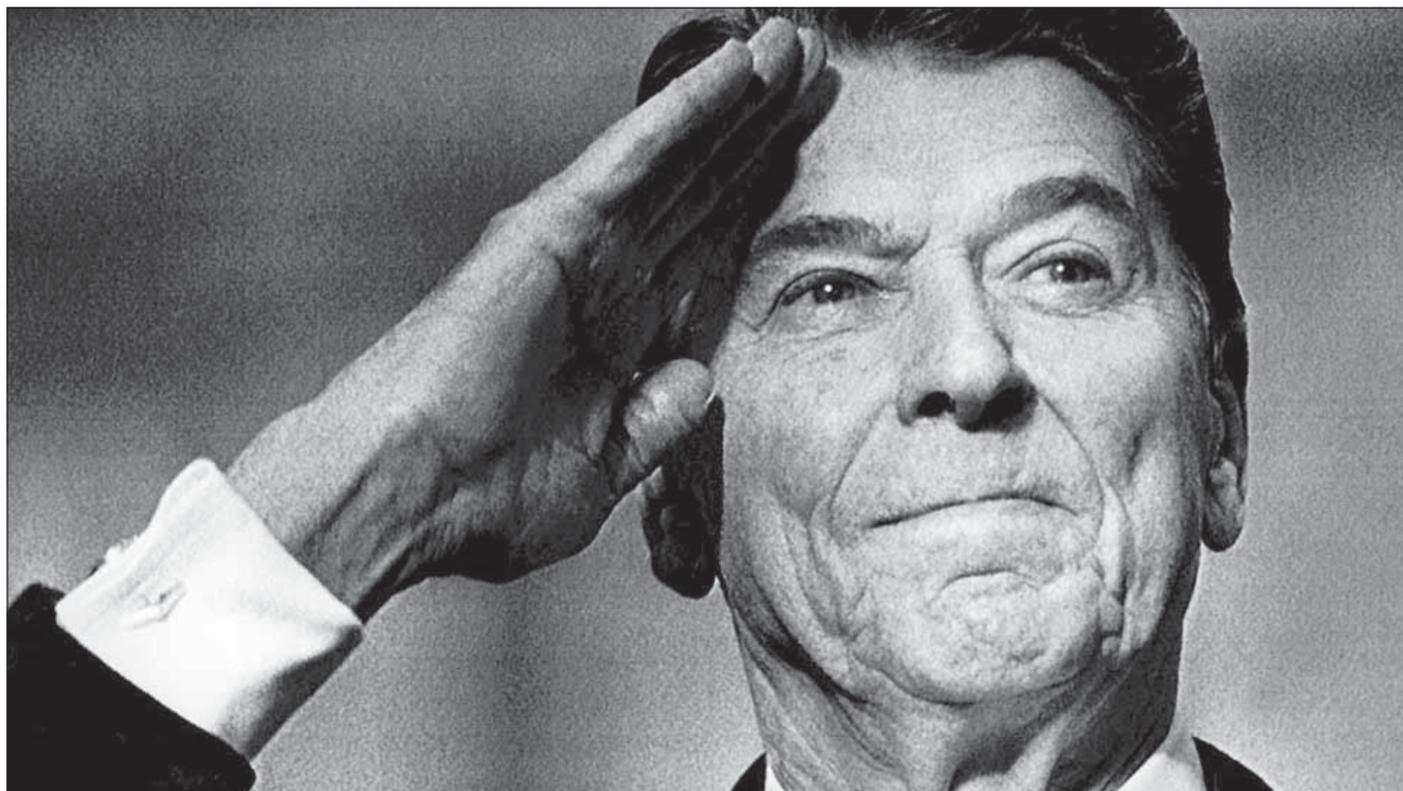
Opportunities like this are rare. Renewed media and political interest in this court case offers us a chance to air our concerns. We've lobbied leaders for this scheme for years with our friends at the Boomerang Alliance, including Clean Up Australia, the Total Environment Centre and more.

**Reece, James,
Jamie, Tom, Alex, Manny
Greenpeace Australia Pacific**

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Two costly fiascos



Ronald Reagan's hideously expensive Star Wars fiasco – a scientifically unworkable planetary "defence" system, captured the imagination of an actor posing as a political leader.

We all know that there are plenty of intelligent, well-educated young people in the USA. We also know that they are taught, constantly and relentlessly, that they live in the greatest country in the world, that the whole world envies them their way of life, their freedoms, their riches. That when there are outbreaks of anti-US sentiment, anywhere in the world, they are caused by jealousy (and Communists). For, as lots of bewildered Americans said after 9/11, "Why do they hate us?"

However, we also know that – taken as a whole – the American people are probably the least knowledgeable, the most credulous and the least sophisticated grouping of people on the planet. That is not their fault: it is the way they have been educated, not just by their education system, but by their culture and their mass media.

They are more superstitious than your average poverty-stricken illiterate Sicilian villager, more church-ridden than your average Polish peasant, more likely to confuse reality with comic strip fantasy than your average Australian or Canadian primary-school child.

Remember Ronald Reagan's hideously expensive Star Wars fiasco? A scientifically unworkable planetary "defence" system derived from fanciful ideas in the script of a popular sci-fi epic, it captured the imagination of an actor posing as a political leader. Unfortunately, thanks to some of the above characteristics,

he actually was elected the US President. (It's worth remembering that only about a quarter of the electorate actually voted for him, such is the nature of the USA's much vaunted democracy.)

Whether Star Wars is workable or not is irrelevant to the US military-industrial complex. What is important is not whether pursuit of such policies will bankrupt the country and leave its people impoverished, but whether the main armaments corporations will get the contracts to try to build the beast. There will be unimaginable profits to be made from developing and launching space-based weapons platforms. And whoever puts such a system in place will be in a position to dictate terms to the rest of the world, and the Pentagon is determined that that privilege and power rightfully belongs to Uncle Sam.

But surely it was shown some years ago that Star Wars was too expensive, too dangerous and too ridiculous to actually still be thought a viable proposition, even for the Pentagon? You would think so, wouldn't you? But apparently not. Some of the best Pentagon brains seem to spend a fair bit of their time clutching at straws, and dreaming of what they would do if they only had some fantastic weapons at their disposal.

They also dream of other routes to world domination, such as gaining control of the world's energy resources, beginning with its oil supplies. They then construct computer models of how they could gain control of the world's fresh water supplies, and after that

world food production. There is nothing new in this: Rockefeller knew the value of gaining a monopoly in some vital commodity. What is new is the scope of their schemes, which have become the stuff of megalomania.

But why bring all this *Star Wars* stuff up now? Because the White House, currently occupied by a man the Republicans identify as a "Muslim Commie", has recently been obliged to reject a petition calling for the construction of a "Death Star".

The petition was launched by someone identified as "John D" from Colorado, and signed by thousands of US citizens apparently as silly as himself. The petition called for the immediate building of a "Death Star" – a "moon-sized space-station and interstellar weapon" – like the one in the film *Star Wars*.

A White House spokesman said the US government "does not support blowing up planets", which is comforting although one would like some reassurance that they include the Earth in that embargo. The spokesman also said that the proposed "Death Star" would cost over \$850 quadrillion. Undeterred, John D gave the classic response: "It would improve national security and create jobs." If any project is not in the interest of the people, we are always told that it will "create jobs".

Can you imagine how many jobs could be created by spending \$850 quadrillion on peaceful job creation projects here on Earth?

Australia doesn't have many state-run enterprises or services left. We used to have lots. Now almost the only things still operating are government buses and passenger trains. Even post offices are being franchised out to private operators. I went into one the other day and found part of the counter space taken up by an American Express currency exchange.

When privatisation is in the wind, the point is regularly made that private is supposedly more efficient and (despite being run for profit) is somehow also cheaper. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the legislation that opened up Britain's national rail system to privatisation (under the government of the justifiably forgotten John Major), British rail union RMT has produced a report noting that "it is estimated that privatisation costs the equivalent of £1.2 billion a year more compared to public ownership.

"The cost of running the railway has more than doubled since privatisation, from £2.4 billion to around £5.4 billion per annum. Since 1995 the average ticket price has increased by 22 percent in real terms.

"Other European countries have better railways and lower fares because on the whole their services are in the public sector."

But publicly owned railways are under threat. EU directives will soon come into effect that will force countries to break up their rail services and put them out to tender.

Then they will all be able to enjoy the "benefits" of privatisation. ☘



Sunday March 3–
Saturday March 16

I have a lady friend (more a friend of my wife really) who is churchy, but not a bad person for all that. She quite likes *Rev* (ABC1 Sundays at 10.00pm second series from March 10), but the show is just too mild for my taste. My idea of a funny show with a religious theme is *Father Ted*. I very much doubt that our lady friend watched *Father Ted* ever.

However, *Rev* must appeal to some people because it won a BAFTA award in Britain. So what do I know?

Not to be confused with the US series for self-consciously modern women, *Sex In The City*, now we have a short British observational documentary series *Unsafe Sex In The City* (ABC2 Tuesdays at 9.30pm from March 12). Shot at the Manchester Centre for Sexual Health, this four-part series takes a close and very personal look at such phenomena as genital warts, weeping pustules, willies dripping puss and all sorts of smelly discharges.

Mancusians, as the inhabitants of Manchester are called by toffee-nosed journalists who want to show off that they went to university, have one of the broadest accents on the mainland of the British Isles, so for a while you might yearn for subtitles, but your ear should attune fairly quickly, and what is lost in clarity is made up for in authenticity.

Each episode deals with three or four individuals. Those who fear they may have picked up a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) through having unprotected sex usually react with shock and declarations that they will never again do it without a condom, but once the crisis is over one feels that many will revert to their previous ways.

In the first episode, 17-year old Courtney shocks her mother by revealing that if a half-way passable looking fellow offers her a lift in his car she will invariably take it and expects to have (unprotected) sex with him as a matter of course. It is disquieting to see the uncomprehending way she reacts to her mother's alarm.

She is in fact a sex crime waiting to happen. But being made to feel special by some casual pickup in the park bushes or the back of a stranger's car is probably the only thing in her life that approximates actual pleasure or makes her feel special.

John Howard used to lament the "left-wing bias" of the ABC, but if you wanted to make a tell-all documentary today about political skulduggery in Canberra's halls of power, the ABC is probably not your best choice to make it. Sure they have plenty of archive material to draw on, but they are so scared of offending authority these days that the chance of them producing something revelatory and powerful is almost fanciful.

For the ABC these days, historical compilation documentaries are simply a grab-bag of old movie clips or old newsreel clips, "hosted" by someone who is supposedly a "personality" and spiced with a few ultra-shallow interviews with people who may have been actually involved in the events being portrayed.

Canberra Confidential (ABC1 Thursday March 14 at 8.30pm) purports to "dish the dirt on a series of almost forgotten scandals, spectacular political skulduggery and espionage sagas". Before you get too excited, this does not mean the true story of the coup against the Whitlam government, but does include a mildly



The Midwives (ABC1 Thursdays at 9.30pm) – trainees Aurelie and Chloe.

disappointing account of the 1983 operation by ASIO to fit up David Combe, Federal Secretary of the ALP, as a Russian spy.

ASIO recorded drunken after-dinner conversations by Combe and Valery Ivanov, a diplomat at the Soviet Embassy. ASIO's transcriptions of the conversations were hysterical, full of obvious errors and almost illiterate: they gave the Press a field day. No secrets were involved and most people wondered what all the fuss was about. Nevertheless, Bob Hawke used the incident to oust Combe from his position and to stoke the fires of anti-Communism once again.

In this program's coverage of that incident, Hawke takes the high moral ground, presenting himself as a steely patriot who put aside sentiment to "save the country" (his actual words – save it from what, one has to wonder. The Accord, perhaps?).

Manchester is also the setting for our other medical series this week, *The Midwives* (ABC1 Thursdays at 9.30pm). Two things emerge at once: the British have a lot more of their babies at home than is the practice in Australia, and the midwife nurses are just as understaffed and overworked as any in Australia. With home births so much more the norm, the nursing staff have to allow time for plentiful travel between clients as well as seeing an astonishing number of mothers and babies each day.

This week's episode, called *Bringing Baby Home*, deals with the program of daily home visits by the midwives to monitor the progress of new mother and her baby, to offer advice and if necessary to intervene in the interests of the health of either. With more babies being born to single mums or to mums with no extended family to call upon for help, the

institutional care and advice provided by the midwives of the local hospital is all the more crucial. Although the program does not comment, it is nevertheless abundantly clear that the spate of cuts to Britain's National Health Service that have been initiated by Cameron's Tory-led government can only have a negative impact on working people and all those who cannot afford private high-priced health care.

A social system that puts babies at risk in the name of "austerity" while aiding corporations to make ever-higher profits is morally bankrupt and has lost all credibility.

For Australians, the other anomaly in this week's episode is the absence of any new mums breast-feeding their new babies or being taught how to do it. To judge by this week's episode the Brits don't do it at all. And that can't be true. ☹



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POLITICS in the pub

March 1

OBAMA'S SECOND TERM – WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

Michael Ondaatze, Dr, School of Humanities and Social Science, Newcastle University;
Brendon O'Connor, A/Professor, US Studies Centre, Sydney Uni;

March 8

CHINA – A NEW LEADERSHIP, A NEW ERA – WHAT WILL IT BRING?

David Goodman, Professor, China Research Unit, UTS;
Kerry Brown, Professor, Professor Chinese Politics & Director China Studies Centre, Sydney University;

March 15

THE CAMPAIGN TO STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – IS IT WORKING?

Kate Gleeson, Fellow, Macquarie University and Australian Research Council;
Ludo McFerran, Project Manager of Safe at Home, at Work Program, Domestic Violence Clearing House UNSW;

March 22

ARE WE WINNING THE WAR ON GLOBAL WARMING?

Andy Pitman, Professor, Director Centre of Excellence for Climate Change Science, UNSW;
John Connor, Director Climate Change Institute;

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Socialism and the path to Socialism - Vietnam's Perspective

Nguyen Phu Trong, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, has paid an official friendship visit to Cuba and given a presentation at the Nico Lopez Party School of the Cuban Communist Party. Following are excerpts from Party leader Trong's presentation.

Socialism and the path to socialism is a fundamental and practical theoretical topic with broad and complicated content, demanding thorough and in-depth study. I hereby mention just a few aspects from Vietnam's perspective for your reference and our discussions. And several questions are focused: What is socialism? Why did Vietnam choose the socialist path? How to build socialism in Vietnam step by step? How significant has Vietnam's renewal and socialism building process been over the past 25 years? And what lessons have been learnt?

As you know, socialism can be understood in three different aspects: socialism as a doctrine, socialism as a movement, and socialism as a regime. Each aspect has different manifestations, depending on the world outlook and development level in a specific historical period. The socialism I want to discuss here is a scientific socialism based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine in the current era.

Previously, when the Soviet Union and its constellation of socialist countries existed, striving for socialism in Vietnam seemed logical and implicitly validated. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union, socialist regimes fell in many countries and the worldwide socialist revolution began to ebb. Now, the cause of socialism has been revived, sparking widespread interest and heated debate.

It is true that capitalism has never been more widely accepted than it is now, and it has achieved great successes, especially in liberating and developing productive capacity and advancing science and technology. Many developed capitalist countries have established

social welfare systems which are more progressive than ever before, thanks to strong economies and long struggles by their working class. However, capitalism cannot overcome its inherent fundamental contradictions. We are witnessing a financial crisis and economic decline which originated in the US in 2008, rapidly spread to other capitalist centres, that has impacted every country around the globe.

In addition to this economic crisis with its related food and energy crisis, a depletion of natural resources and deterioration of the environment are posing great challenges to the existence and development of humankind. These are the consequences of a socio-economic development process which champions profits, considers wealth and material consumption the measures of civilization, and makes individualism the main pillar of society. They are the essential characteristics of capitalism's mode of production and consumption. The ongoing crisis once again proves that capitalism is anti-advancement, anti-humanity, and unsustainable economically, socially, and ecologically. As Karl Marx said, capitalism damages the things that constitute its wealth, namely, labour and natural resources. The current crisis cannot be completely resolved in the framework of a capitalist regime.

Recent social protest movements flaring up in many developed capitalist countries have exposed the truth about the nature of capitalist political entities. In fact, democratic regimes which follow the "free democracy" formula advocated and imposed by the West never ensure that power truly belongs to the people and for the people – the natural factor of democracy. Such a power system still belongs mostly to the



wealthy minority and serves the interests of its major capitalist groups. A very small proportion, as small as one percent of the population, holds the majority of the wealth and means of production, controls the financial institutions and mass media, and dominates the whole society.

We need a society where development is truly for humans, instead of exploiting and trampling on human dignity for the sake of profits. We need economic development in parallel with social progress and fairness instead of a widening gap between the rich and the poor and social inequality. We need a society which yearns for progressive and humane values, a society of compassion, unity, and mutual assistance instead of rivalry for the selfish benefits of individuals and groups.

We need sustainable development and harmony with nature to make our living environment clean for present and future generations, instead of exploiting, appropriating resources, infinitely consuming materials, and destroying the environment. And we need a political system under which power truly belongs to the people, by the people, and serves the interests of the people, instead of a wealthy minority. These are

the authentic values of socialism, aren't they?

As you comrades and friends know, the Vietnamese people have undergone a prolonged, harsh, sacrifice-filled revolutionary struggle against colonialist and imperialist domination to win national independence and sovereignty in the spirit of the slogan "There is nothing more precious than Independence and Freedom".

National independence associated with socialism is the basic guideline of Vietnam's revolution and the essential point of Ho Chi Minh's legacy. His rich experience combined with the revolutionary theories and science of Marxism-Leninism led Ho Chi Minh to the conclusion that only socialism and communism can create a truly free, prosperous, happy life for every person in every nation. Advancing to socialism is the objective and the inexorable path of the Vietnamese revolution, harnessing the people's aspirations and historical trends.

But what is socialism? And how does one advance to socialism? This is what absorbs our thoughts - finding our way step by step, creating orientations and guidelines which fit the specific circumstances of Vietnam.

Political Affairs ✪

"One Woman" to be released on International Women's Day

On International Women's Day, March 8, 2013, UN Women will launch *One Woman: A song for UN Women*, a musical celebration of women worldwide, featuring more than 20 artists from across the globe. As of today, behind-the-scenes videos chronicling the song's year-long production will be available at song.unwomen.org to count down toward the launch. On March 8, the site will feature the full song video and make the track available for download.

One Woman calls for change and celebrates acts of courage and

determination by ordinary women who daily make extraordinary contributions to their countries and communities. The lyrics are inspired by stories of women whom UN Women has supported. UN Women is the UN organisation charged with advancing women's empowerment and gender equality worldwide. It began its work in 2011, the first new UN organisation in decades. *One Woman* is the first theme song for a UN organisation.

Singers and performers from all regions, women and men, donated their time and contributed their

talent. They include: Ana Bacalhau (Portugal); Angeliqne Kidjo (Benin); Anoushka Shankar (India); Bassekou Kouyate (Mali); Bebel Gilberto (Brazil); Beth Blatt (US); Brian Finnegan (Ireland); Buika (Spain); Charice (Philippines); Cherine Amr (Egypt); Debi Nova (Costa Rica); Emeline Michel (Haiti); Fahan Hassan (UK); Idan Raichel (Israel); Jane Zhang (China); Jim Diamond (UK); Keith Murrell (UK); Lance Ellington (UK); Marta Gomez (Colombia); Maria Friedman (UK); Meklit Hadero (Ethiopia); Rokia Traoré (Mali); Vanessa

Quai (Vanuatu); Ximena Sariñana (Mexico); Yuna (Malaysia).

Initially performed during the launch event for UN Women in the UN General Assembly Hall in 2011, *One Woman* aims to become a rallying cry that inspires listeners about the mission of UN Women and engages them to join in the drive for women's empowerment and gender equality.

The music of the song is by Graham Lyle (Tina Turner's *What's Love Got To Do With It* and many other hits) and British/Somali singer-songwriter Fahan Hassan.

Jerry Boys, who has worked with a wide range of artists including REM, Everything But The Girl and was one of the people behind the Buena Vista Social Club recording, produced the song, together with lyricist and executive producer Beth Blatt and her organisation Hope Sings.

The song will be available for purchase on the song website and all common channels like iTunes and Amazon for US\$0.99. All proceeds go directly to UN Women in support of its programs to empower women on the ground. ✪



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