



# Step up the fight back! March on May Day!



Photo: Craig Greer

Across the country, workers are confronted by bosses driving an increasingly hard bargain. Sackings, skimping on safety, restrictions to trade union right of entry, legal proceedings against community activists, abuse of Type 457 visas to drive down wages, and other anti-worker measures are becoming more and more common. It's part of a worldwide drive by the capitalist class and it needs a response from the workers on a worldwide scale. The whips are well and truly cracking and it is time to step up the resistance to the onslaught, to turn the tide in favour of workers and other exploited people. What better occasion than International Workers' Day to recommit to the fight back?

In Australia, employers are salivating at the thought of exerting even more control with the election of a Coalition federal government in September. Abbott and shadow treasurer Joe Hockey have both spoken about the extension of the neo-liberal agenda should they get their

backsides onto the government benches in parliament. Along with right-wing think tanks like the Institute of Public Affairs, they have made long lists of things they would like to see happen in the near future: more privatisation, no role for unions in the workplace, a fortress Australia dominated by monopoly interests.

Workers should take a leaf out of the bosses' book. It's about time workers drew up a list of things they need and set about getting them in a concerted and strategic manner. Such a list would include:

- The right to strike, no restrictions on union right of entry
- Scrap the re-branded ABCC, stop the harassment of community activists supporting workers' struggles
- Stop the abuse of Type 457 visas, train local workers to meet skill shortages
- Create jobs, come clean about hidden unemployment, legislate against insecure work, implement equal pay now for women
- Stop the victimisation of the unemployed,

- single parents and other benefit recipients
- Lift pensions and benefits
- Stop the theft of Aboriginal land and attacks on Aboriginal communities
- Defend and extend Medicare – move to a nationalised health system
- Defend public education – no more funding of elite schools
- Defend TAFE, abolish tertiary education fees
- Put a genuine super profits tax on the exploitation of mineral resources – nationalise the sector and plan for sustainability
- Slash military spending, stop joining US military adventures and stop persecuting the victims – the refugees arriving on our shores
- Take climate change seriously, regulate the big polluters
- Stop using our superannuation for speculation at the whim of the transnationals – put superannuation in

public hands for investment in social needs and create a people's bank

The list is long and could be longer; such is the damage caused by recent decades of "grab back" by the monopolies. Their have been decades of casualisation and de-unionisation of the workplace and brainwashing in the destructive ideology of the capitalist class. Young workers have been raised in an atmosphere of individualism that does not respect working class values of solidarity and collectivism. Socialism has been made a dirty word but the current state of affairs can't and won't last.

People will struggle against injustice. History teaches this. Unfortunately, in recent times people struggling for a more just society have been facing increasingly unfavourable odds. Let this May Day be a turning point for a greater effort to resist the exploitation and disempowerment of working people, for the swelling of the ranks of fighters in the cause of socialism. ✪

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## Guardian

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### A pretext for attack on rights

Australia has a problem with alcohol and the Northern Territory has the worst problem in the country. Territorians spend 4.5 times the national average per person per year on alcohol – \$4,197. There has been a spike in alcohol-related admissions to its hospitals recently and reports of associated violence and harm are also on the rise. To the “rescue” comes the Country Liberal Party government which, when first elected, scrapped Labor’s Banned Drinkers Register and replaced it with ... absolutely nothing.

Now that the Territory government has sensed people are fed up with the spate of anti-social behaviour, it is proposing a system of mandatory detention and rehabilitation that it admits is potentially “offensive” and could be in breach of the Constitution and the *Racial Discrimination Act*. While Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities both have their issues with alcohol, it is recognised that measures of this sort will affect Aboriginal people disproportionately. The results of dispossession, poverty, cultural oppression and racism need to be addressed at their root but that won’t happen as long as capitalism has an interest in Aboriginal land and can make a profit out of people’s misery.

The NT plan would allow three-member alcohol tribunals to order the detention of problem drinkers. They would have powers normally wielded by criminal courts to direct police to hold individuals for up to 72 hours without clinical assessment. If the ultimate assessment is negative, the person could then be locked up for three months while subjected to “mandatory rehabilitation”. The three month period could be extended.

The regime, set for introduction on July 1, could be seen as “extra-judicial detention in breach of the constitutional prohibition on the executive exercising judicial functions,” according to George Newhouse of Shine Lawyers social justice team. The point won’t be lost on reactionary legislators in the other jurisdictions of the Commonwealth. If the institution is allowed to stand, as the Northern Territory Intervention was, it could be a handy precedent for dealing with protest as the capitalist world heads deeper into crisis.

As then PM John Howard put it when asked why the Christmas Island centre, which at the time had just one detainee, wasn’t closed: “It’s for contingencies”.

In the four privately run detention centres, prisoner/patients may get “life skills” and “work rehabilitation” instruction. Upon release, they will be subjected to Compulsory Income Management and other restrictions established during this era of the “new paternalism”.

NT Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation Robyn Lambley says the governments target is to keep 20 percent of those treated off alcohol. Experts disagree with such expectations and some anticipate a “big cycle” of problem drinking for those subjected to such an outrageous violation of their civil rights. The police don’t want a bar of the plan and Aboriginal communities have been, yet again, sidelined in the decision making.

Labor’s Banned Drinkers Register used to have the names of 2,500 problem drinkers, whose purchase of alcohol was restricted. The new detention plan will create 140 “beds”. What will happen to the 2,360 individuals not included in the CLP’s startling crackdown? You could be forgiven for thinking conservative MPs care more about perceptions of doling out “tough love” than actually addressing problems.

Studies show Compulsory Income Management doesn’t work but it is being extended at enormous taxpayer expense across the country. That is sheer political opportunism. No proper assessment of the Banned Drinkers Register was conducted and the concept of “alcohol tribunals” and “mandatory rehabilitation” certainly did not arise from professional circles. It didn’t come from the 44 communities to be affected.

It’s time governments gave ownership of own alcohol management programs to communities; genuine control with adequate resources backed by proper research. The guiding principle would be to empower people in their communities and workplaces. The question of genuine land rights is inextricably bound up in this solution. Until these outcomes are achieved, the struggle remains to prevent developments like the NT system of detention and to squeeze improvements from governments dominated by the big parties of capital. Along the way, however, we should never lose sight of the goal we need to reach if we are to eliminate such sources of human misery.

#### PRESS FUND

The countdown to the federal elections is on, with both parties clinging to failed, unjust policies. What a “choice” for voters! Nevertheless, five months is a very long time in politics. The Liberal/National coalition failed to win a recent by-election, and things might not be as clear-cut in September as they are claiming. Meanwhile, members of left and progressive organisations have a lot of work to do, and that includes us, the *Guardian* production staff. We really need your support, so please send us something for the next edition. Many thanks to those who contributed this week:

James Doyle \$100, Eric Durston \$10, Mark Mannion \$5, “Round Figure” \$13.50, Tatsuo Sasaki \$71.50

This week’s total: \$200 Progressive total: \$1,900

# Clarification and corrections

The article in *The Guardian* 24-05-2013 (# 1590), titled “Australian Cuban Friendship Society Consultation”, reported on the speech made by Cuban Ambassador Pedro Monzon at the Consultation and the question and answer session that followed. In the attempt to summarise quite complex questions some points were not clear or accurate.

The article referred to, “The need to protect their country from a powerful and expansionist neighbour to the west”, it should have said “... and expansionist neighbour to the north and north-west, the US.”

Then he added:

“In order to understand the traditional characteristics of our socialism, the problems we were facing during years and what must be changed now we have to consider that we have been politically and economically besieged for more than half a century by US policy and within it the blockade. This has had implications for our political and economic behaviour. In menacing situations like this you feel the need to encyst [protect] yourself, be cautious and close ranks in order to be stable.

“The added factors constituted by the disappearance of the European socialist countries plus the strengthening of the blockade and, as a result, the so called special period in the ‘90s

led us to avoid at any cost the option of applying shock therapies. That had particular consequences for our economy and society.

“We avoided by all means social polarisation first, because of our predominant concepts of social justice and, second, because of the need of maintain stability and keep our independence. Together with a dose of idealism, these have been responsible for the very good features of our revolution and also for some system dysfunctions that surfaced in this new international situation. Even though, and probably because we are Marxist and followers of Jose Marti, the Cuban National Apostle, we are much more spiritual and romantic than vulgar materialistic.”

The Ambassador did not say, “A high level of socialism produces paternalism”, but drew attention to the dangers of an incorrect model that would produce paternalism. The reference to paternalism stated:

“The quintessence of changes is to find a balanced relationship between social justice and efficiency. The objective of social justice that sometimes (when applied with an egalitarian concept) generates an alteration that is paternalism, affects efficiency in the economy and at the end of the day harms the core or essence of the system.”

Monzon elaborated on the basic ideas behind the changes. The first of these he noted was to “have a more efficient socialism, within an independent nation, not to advance towards capitalism.”

On the question of small business and the relationship between centralisation and decentralisation, Monzon said, “Decentralisation will give flexibility to the economy and the system as a whole, will open even more the doors to the development of the productive forces, individual initiatives and responsibilities, and permit the state to rely on a central plan and to concentrate on the fundamental industries that are the foundation of national development and the security of the country.”

The Ambassador, made the additional point that they would take into account the workings of the law of value but would not give in blindly to it.

He said that the reason for the complaints of some self-employed businesses is that Cubans are not used to taxation, but that the monthly fee of 80 Cuban pesos was not much for a small business considering their normal turnover.

He emphasised that Cuba is updating its system in order to improve socialism not to install capitalism. ☺

## Support genocide survivors Guatemala Human Rights Commission

The genocide case has been stalled, and is at risk of being annulled. Please act now to make a historic stand in solidarity with the Ixil people and all Guatemalans who seek justice! Sign the petition TODAY.

Over the last month, over 100 Ixil Mayan survivors of genocide have testified against former Guatemalan head of state Efraín Ríos Montt and his Chief of Intelligence, José Rodríguez Sánchez for crimes against humanity committed in the 1980s.

At great personal risk, victim after victim took the stand and recounted stories of horrific brutality including bloody massacres, torture, rape, displacement, and

wholesale destruction for the simple “crime” of being Mayan.

However, just as the trial reached its final days, it has screeched to a halt. A lower-level judge, while ruling on a legal challenge filed in 2011, unexpectedly declared the entire process null and void, and demanded that the trial start over from the very beginning. The decision was audaciously illegal and threatens to unravel all the advances made towards justice, historic memory, and reconciliation.

The fate of the genocide case now rests with the Guatemalan Constitutional Court. Five justices hold the power to put the trial back on track and let justice have its day. However, if they uphold the illegal

ruling of Judge Flores – or simply stay silent until next week – the trial will be automatically annulled.

The trial is an important step toward breaking almost 30 years of unchallenged impunity, and toward healing the battered soul of a divided nation. And this is the moment of truth.

Please join GHRC today in asking the Constitutional Court to take action to defend the rule of law and ensure the trial can run its course.

Sincerely,  
Kelsey Alford-Jones  
GHRC/USA

To sign the petition go to  
ghrc-usa.org ☺

## Prisoner freed

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine extends its congratulations to Samer al-Issawi on the victory of his free will over the occupation jailer on April 23 (See *Guardian* March 20). The PFLP salutes the imprisoned struggler Samer al-Issawi, his family, and all of the prisoners inside the occupation jails, for his victory in exerting his will over the jailer, winning his release and return to his hometown in the city of Jerusalem, Palestine’s eternal capital.

This victory inspires pride, gratitude and thanks to the struggling hero Samer al-Issawi and all fighters for freedom, justice and democracy in the world who stand with the prisoners with great confidence that the will of the prisoners is stronger than the

tyranny of the occupation and stands taller than the prison walls. The Front has called on all to emulate the spirit of struggle and resistance exemplified by Samer al-Issawi and his fellow prisoners, as their struggle and will and sacrifice continues to defeat the occupation and lead the way in our struggle for freedom, return and self-determination.

The Front emphasised the urgency for all Palestinian leaders and parties to learn lessons from this battle and from the prisoners’ movement and its deep individual and collective experiences to build a united national strategy to struggle for the liberation of the prisoners and the liberation of our people and our land. ☺



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# Two biggest parties stick to cruel asylum seeker policies

Peter Mac

**Twenty-seven asylum seekers in Melbourne's Broadmeadows detention centre have ended a ten day hunger strike after finally having been given official reasons for their indefinite detention.**

The men belong to a group of 55 men, women and children, who have been held captive in detention centres for up to four years. They include people from Iran and Myanmar (formerly Burma), but most are Sri Lankan Tamils.

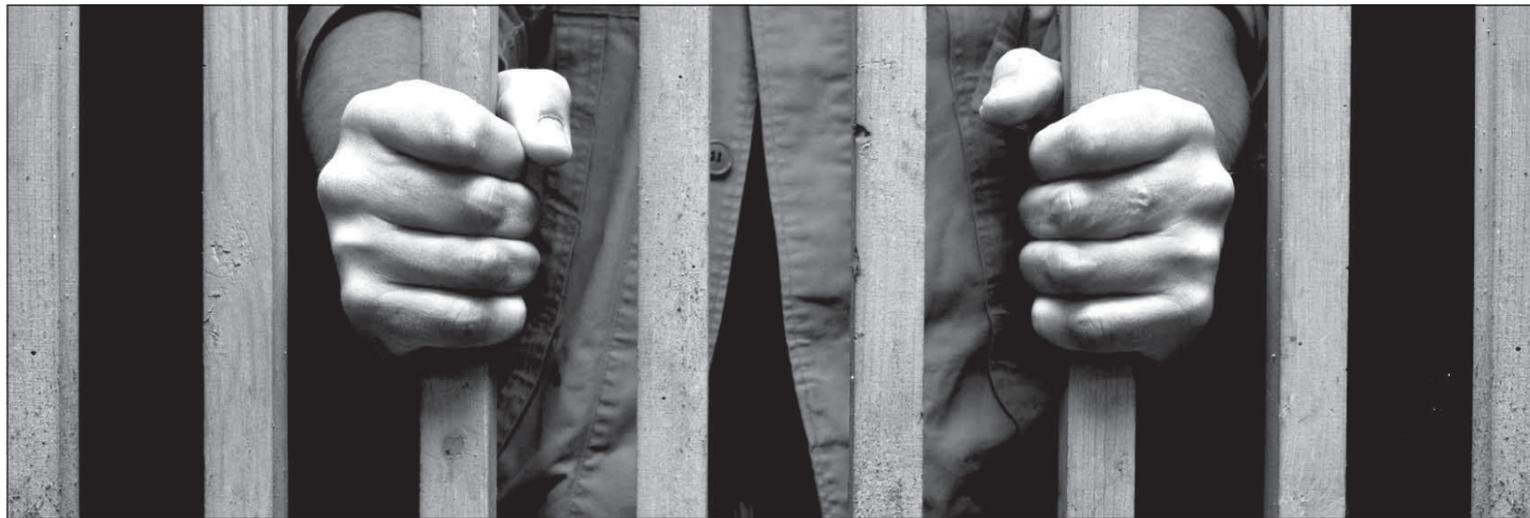
The reasons given for their detention are that they allegedly took part in terrorist actions, forged documents or engaged in people smuggling. These allegations, which have not been publicly substantiated, were made against them by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), and were almost certainly based on information from the Sri Lankan government, which classifies former Tamil Tiger members and supporters as terrorists.

ASIO has now classified the indefinitely detained Sri Lankan asylum seekers as "a threat to national security", yet they have not been proven to be former Tamil Tigers, nor has any Australian government ever classified the Tamil Tigers as terrorists. The asylum seekers are denied access to the confidential ASIO documents which prompted the allegations. No criminal charges have ever been laid against them in Australia, and their continued detention has never been tried in a court of law.

Australia is a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, under which the government cannot forcibly return them to Sri Lanka because they would be at risk of persecution. However, no other country will accept them now, because of the adverse security assessments. As a result, they are trapped in a "legal black hole", under an undeclared sentence of life imprisonment.

They are entitled to request a review of their cases by former Federal Court judge Margaret Stone, who has now provided them with summaries of ASIO's allegations. However, her findings are not binding on the government, nor will ASIO be obliged to modify its conclusions.

Human rights advocate Jane Dixon asked: "If [ASIO has] reliable



evidence of connection to a terrorist organisation why wouldn't they be charging them and putting them up before a court?"

Meanwhile the Australian government has forcibly returned more than 100 asylum seekers to Sri Lanka, on the pretext that they arrived for economic reasons, rather than seeking safety.

To justify this stance, the government has bypassed the normal refugee status determination procedure and resorted to a "screening" process during which applicants are simply interviewed regarding their motives. If they say they expect to benefit economically from living in Australia (a reasonable assumption) they are likely to be classified as "economic" refugees, i.e. not in danger of persecution.

## New developments

The Canadian government is now considering boycotting the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Colombo unless the Sri Lankan government launches an investigation into alleged war crimes carried out by its military forces.

There is now widespread evidence that the Sri Lankan government is subjecting the Tamil community to a brutal terror campaign, using the pretext that some had been members of the Tamil Tigers, or had assisted them.

Last week ABC TV showed horrifying footage of several huge scars on an asylum seeker's back, resulting from his torture with red-hot iron rods by unidentified government agents,

who stalk Tamils in Sri Lankan streets in unmarked white vans.

Former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser has declared that the Australian government should withdraw from the Colombo meeting in protest at the persecution of Tamils.

Last week in another astonishing new development, mining magnate Clive Palmer announced he was forming a new party, with a policy that asylum seekers in other countries who wish to apply for asylum in Australia should be given the opportunity to do so, after which they would then be flown here for on-shore processing of their applications.

Similar policies were previously advocated in *The Guardian* (#1552, 20.6.2012, and #1556, 18.7.2012).

Palmer may want the asylum seekers as a source of labour for his mines. On the other hand, if they could work there by their own choice, under union leadership, and with full rights, wages and conditions, why not?

Palmer has justified his recommendation on economic grounds. He's right. Mandatory detention maximises the number of asylum seekers detained, and off-shore processing vastly increases the average cost of detaining them.

The Fairfax media has revealed that some of the costs incurred for running Australia's detention centres, by private prison company Serco, implementing the off-shore processing policy, including passenger flights, construction costs, staff

accommodation, facilities rental and landing charges, came to more than \$2 billion. The policies might be a disaster for the asylum seekers, but they're certainly good for business.

However, the primary justification for releasing asylum seekers is humanitarian. Indefinite incarceration is a horrible torment, especially for people who have taken terrible risks to escape persecution and live in peace in a new land.

## Taking the right track

Despite previous rejections, the Gillard government is still trying to persuade other nations to accept regional processing centres within their boundaries. At the same time, it has refused to release the indefinite detainees, even under strict control orders.

However, if the government's policy is bad, the position taken by the Liberal/National coalition is positively evil. They are still raving about stopping the boats. Tony

Abbott still claims he will "turn the boats around" despite warnings that this would constitute an act of piracy. The Liberals recently had a billboard declaring "Stop the illegals" erected in Perth. Almost immediately it was covered with graffiti replying "It's not illegal to seek asylum".

The opposition shadow Attorney-General snarled that the indefinitely detained group of asylum seekers "had no one to blame but themselves", and that under their policies ASIO decisions would not be reviewed. In effect, the asylum seekers would be held captive until their death.

These terrible policies will be taken to the September elections by the two biggest parties. However, University of Sydney specialist in international law Ben Saul is taking a case against indefinite detention to the United Nations. A victory in that case, combined with great public pressure, offers the best hope for finally implementing a rational and humane asylum seeker policy. ✪

Pete's Corner



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# NSW ports sale – other assets at risk

Bob Briton

The people of Australia could be forgiven for thinking that the privatising and de-regulating ardour of state and federal governments would have cooled in the wake of the global economic crisis. The lack of government levers over the economy clearly exacerbated the latest cyclical crisis of capitalism that started in 2008 and which still threatens disaster for many countries. But it seems governments are using the economic gloom to justify a new wave of sell-offs of the people's property. Queensland did it in 2010 and now NSW has announced the sale of major ports – Port Botany and Port Kembla – for \$4.3 billion. According to Treasurer Mike Baird, "It's the largest ever NSW government asset transaction in terms of net proceeds."

"The O'Farrell government has sold off the family silver," ALP shadow treasurer Michael Darley said. He didn't mention his own party's record of privatisation while in government and, while the image of a shady deal conducted at a pawn shop is appropriate at one level, it underestimates the damage done. The family silverware has only sentimental value. The ports in question generated income and public ownership enabled some control over container volumes and, hence, traffic around the terminals.

A controversial aspect of the sale is the scrapping of the annual 3.2 million container movement cap at Port Botany. Treasurer Baird insists the resulting congestion will be eased by the construction of WestConnex – a major road transport link to be built between the M4 and Port Botany. This will be paid for in part with the proceeds of the sale of the ports.

Funds are also earmarked for upgrades to the Pacific Highway. The sell-off is being portrayed as a "win/win" for the people of NSW but, increasingly, they are being treated as bystanders.

A startling sweetener for the deal was the granting of planning powers to the new owners. Even pioneering right-wing employer Patrick Terminals is crying foul. Its submission to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure complained that allocating planning powers to a private entity "may raise public interest issues at a future time, given the possibility for the new lessee to have competing interests in port ownership and operations in other locations." Arguments rage about whether sale agreements allow for such unprecedented autonomy in the case of developments carrying a price tag greater or less than \$100 million.

Patrick is worried that a decision to build a cruise ship terminal, for instance, could adversely affect its activities. The public should worry that such a piece of privatising fanaticism was ever entertained in the first place. If the proposition is allowed to stand, it could be a harbinger of things to come; where the capitalist state steps out of even its most token regulatory responsibilities. It is noteworthy that the sale of the ports is being transacted between the publicly-owned Sydney Ports Corporation and Ports NSW – the sort of gimmicky name increasingly favoured by Australian governments for its entities. The proceeds are to be into an investment fund known as Restart NSW.

For workers perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the deal is that four-fifths of the money involved is coming from industry superannuation funds. Industry Funds Management, Australian Super and Queensland's public sector superannuation fund,



Port Kembla up for sale.

QSuper have joined Tawreed Investments Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, in the deal. The use of workers' deferred wages as a pot of speculative investment money for the privatising of people's assets raises the question again about how "super" superannuation is for workers. It underscores the need for a national superannuation scheme under public control.

Technically, the NSW government is selling a 99-year lease over the facilities but, in business terms, a century is rightly considered to be essentially forever. The battle to bring these assets back into public hands will be tough. The O'Farrell government will be hoping the sale is pulled off without a major public outcry. If that happens, the sell-off of electricity distribution can be moved up the neo-liberal agenda more quickly. ✪

## Offshore deaths soar

Deaths and serious incidents in the maritime and offshore facility sectors in Australian waters have skyrocketed in recent years, according to an Australian Transport Safety Bureau report released last week, highlighting the urgent need for action by the federal government.

The ATSB's report found:

- Between 2005 and 2012 there were 254 people killed, missing or seriously injured from reported marine occurrences;
- In 2012, there were 154 marine safety occurrences reported to the ATSB – over 50 percent higher than the 2005 to 2012 average of 100 occurrences per annum.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) said the report highlighted the urgent need for the federal government and its agencies to act to reduce the death and serious injury rates. "These figures about deaths and serious injuries in the maritime and offshore sector are not only shocking, they are a tragedy for the many families and communities who have lost loved ones," MUA national secretary Paddy Crumlin said.

Mr Crumlin, who is also president of the International Transport Workers' Federation said: "The fact that the majority of incidents occurred on flag-of-convenience ships demonstrates the importance of the ITF's campaign to reform international shipping standards.

"These figures demonstrate

why the MUA and its members have been campaigning hard for a robust National Stevedoring Code of Practice and for the offshore sector to be included in harmonised OHS laws.

"There is no reason why safety standards in the offshore sector should be lower than those that apply to workers on similar sites onshore.

"We urge Minister Gary Gray to urgently address this discrepancy and ensure that the Commonwealth's policy for harmonising OHS standards across the country be realised in full by ensuring the offshore oil and gas sector isn't covered by weaker laws.

"Wharfies are 14 times more likely than the average worker to die on the job – a rate that is higher than our troops fighting in Afghanistan. That's why we will continue to fight for a National Code of Practice for Stevedoring workers.

"We also urge the federal government to move quickly to implement the key recommendations of the Seacare review that will improve safety standards," Mr Crumlin said.

Meetings will be sought with the federal regulators, Seacare, AMSA and NOPSEMA, who have responsibility for safety on ships and maritime facilities, to seek to address discrepancies in regulation as soon as possible. ✪

## AEU secures agreement in principle for schools

Victorian public education staff will receive salary increases of up to 20.5 percent under a new proposed pay deal reached by the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the state government. Teachers at the top of the scale will become the second highest paid in the nation.

AEU Victorian Branch president Meredith Peace said the in-principle agreement was a significant win for teachers, principals and education support staff across the state.

"Today's outcome is an historic achievement. For the first time, we have a single in-principle agreement that covers all public education staff, rewards their hard work and improves the conditions of their employment," Ms Peace said.

The proposed deal, which will run from 2013 through to October 2016, includes significant salary increases, competitive with New South Wales and in line with other Victorian public sector deals. It also includes no performance pay, no increase in class sizes or face-to-face teaching hours as well as improvements to the contract system of employment.

Victorian teachers across the scale will receive salary increases of between 16.1 – 20.5 percent, principals from 17 – 19.6 percent and education support staff from 12 – 17.1 percent.

"For the first time, education support staff will benefit from additional leave and contract entitlements, with no un-paid recall during school holidays," said Ms Peace.

"The focus of the AEU throughout this lengthy negotiation period has been to deliver an outcome that increases our ability to attract and retain quality staff and to continue to provide a high quality education system for our public schools students.

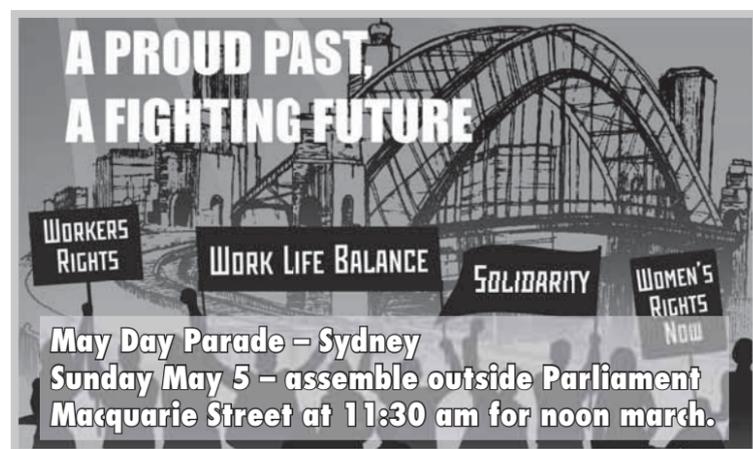
"We are already one of the hardest working, highest performing public educators in Australia and by international standards. We are confident that this in-principle agreement will play a significant role in addressing statewide staff shortages, provide an incentive for teachers to stay in the classroom and reduce the level of contract employment."

The proposed deal has been endorsed by the Joint Primary and

Secondary Council. It now must go to all members for approval and then on to Fair Work Australia for a ballot of the Victorian Teaching Service.

Ms Peace said the in-principle agreement included:

- Salary increases of between 16.1 – 20.5 per cent for all teachers
- 17 – 19.6 per cent for all principals
- 12 – 17.1 per cent for all education support staff
- A one-off lump sum payment of \$1,000 for all staff
- A new process to monitor the level of contract employment across the schools
- Education support staff to now receive an additional two weeks of annual leave per year
- Integration aides can now be employed on contracts of up to seven years
- Education staff positions, with the exception of six week casual vacancies, will now be advertised (currently approximately 50 percent of positions are not advertised). ✪



# Removing the “local” from local government

Anna Pha

**NSW residents face higher municipal rates, increased charges for services, and pensioners stand to lose their council and water rates concessions as the O’Farrell government embarks on a complete transformation of local government. Residents will have even less voice in local developments under new powers being given to the Minister and a new round of council amalgamations. The misleadingly named NSW Independent Local Government Review’s discussion paper released last week is just one step in a process that will remove the “local” from local government.**

“I believe what we are witnessing is a radical change to a neo-liberal state government apparatus and the O’Farrell government has been drowning the electorate in Reviews, Taskforces, consultation papers to an extent that no-one who isn’t totally dedicated to such things could possibly keep up,” Greens Sydney City Councillor Irene Doutney told *The Guardian*.

“The State is drowning us in faux consultation so it can say ‘it has consultation at its heart’ but it is meaningless when it becomes indigestible. It is also worth noting that this discussion paper comes against the background of the Intervention (Local Government) Act, A New Local Government Act for NSW, the Planning White Paper and the Metropolitan Strategy – all complex and far-reaching plans.”

## Appointed administrators

The Early Intervention legislation empowers the Minister for Local Government to issue performance improvement orders to councils, if not satisfied with their decisions or other areas of performance. Failure to meet the minister’s orders can result in suspension of the elected council for three months (renewable for another three months) and the appointment of interim administrator(s) “to exercise all the functions of the council”.

In other words, the minister could suspend a council, appoint an administrator who could then pass all the development applications that council might have rejected.

All it would take is for a couple of pro-developer councillors to disrupt meetings and the minister claim the council was dysfunctional as an excuse for suspension and have a hand-picked administrator proceed with development applications or even amalgamation with other councils.

It should not be forgotten how another Liberal Premier forced amalgamations on Victorian councils ten years ago. Jeff Kennett sacked all the elected councils and hired his own men to take over and do the dirty work, including mass sackings of workers, contracting out services and forced amalgamations.

## No community consultation

O’Farrell has plans to remove any say by residents over what is built in their locality, with a system that takes 10 days for building approvals. That’s what the neo-liberals call bureaucratic inefficiencies!

“This plan will tear the heart

out of community consultation and is a direct betrayal of the O’Farrell government’s pre-election promise to return planning powers to the community,” Greens MP and planning spokesperson, David Shoebridge said.

The review provides the basis for the amalgamation of metropolitan councils into super councils.

“Many councils are performing very well. However, on the whole our investigations and consultations have revealed a local government sector that is weighed down with too many out-of-date ideas, attitudes and relationships. ... at the heart of the problem we still have too many councils chasing too little revenue”, Professor Sansom, the chair of the Local Government Review Panel said.

Such “out-of-date ideas” as community involvement, providing local employment, environmental protection and social justice are definitely on the hit list.

## Amalgamations

“Amalgamations of the sort being suggested in the Future Directions for Local Government Paper, where council areas are increased to cover around 800,000 residents, will distance local government further from the communities they were elected to represent,” Greens Councillor Irene Doutney told *The Guardian*.

“It is hard enough to deal with a quarter of that many people in a dense environment let alone to cover huge areas of vastly different environments. In the case of Sydney this would take in everything from the harbour to the coast including Port Botany and Sydney International Airport, a huge area with greatly different demographics, economics, environments and needs. How this will work is barely understood.”

It can only work in favour of the big developers and the transnational corporations that pick up fat contracts to provide council services, maintain roads, etc.

Beyond metropolitan Sydney, the plan is for 30 county or regional councils. The Panel claims that mergers would promote stronger local communities. At the same time, it gives de facto recognition to that lie, by proposing Local Boards to replace small councils which would be closer to the people.

The Review states clearly that these Local Boards would not constitute a fourth layer of government. They would be “a new type of elected, community-based local government unit with limited responsibilities delegated from a local council or County Council.” In other words, Clayton’s councils with no real power to determine developments in their locality, designed to give a warm fuzzy feeling of closeness while being kept in the dark.

The Panel asserts without any evidence that super councils are required to create stronger, more capable councils and financial viability. Yet, economies of scale can be and are already being achieved through forms of co-operation between smaller councils without the necessity to merge.

## Further from the people

Councils have traditionally been closer to the people than other forms of government. It has been possible for working class people to be elected



Willoughby Council Library – how will the amalgamation of councils affect local services.

with a relatively small budget, on the basis of their local work and reputation.

Each round of amalgamations reduces the number of councils in an area and increases dramatically the ratio of people to councillors. Instead of 600 or 1,000 votes to represent a community, it could require 30,000 or even 50,000 votes to be elected.

The costs, financial and social, of amalgamations are quite considerable – replacement and integration of IT systems, relocation of staff, sackings, closure of facilities, loss of local services, etc.

In the 1993 council amalgamations there was a tendency to make regulations uniform. For example, the enlarged Sydney City Council ran roughshod over existing building regulations in the suburbs it took over. Building height restrictions were lifted overnight.

## Charges to rise

The Panel recognises that councils need more funds. Government policy has forced a number of councils into a precarious situation by making more demands of them at the same time as limiting rate increases. The rate pegging cap under the 1993 Local Government Act limits the annual increase in rates to a certain percentage determined by the government. In 2011-12 it was 2.8 percent and 2.6 percent the previous year.

While the Review suggests easing this cap, it expects the newly amalgamated councils to raise more funds than before. The additional money will not come from state government grants but from increasing charges (eg use of sports facilities, community services, waste management, water, sewerage, use of roads, parking metres), and imposing charges on free services (eg libraries).

Pensioners and other concession cardholders will lose their current concessions on council rates, waste management, water and sewerage – costing them up to \$425 more per

annum. It even makes proposals for how they can go into debt – that’s if they are not driven out of their homes!

## Dispelling the myths

What these amalgamations have in common is the reduction in local involvement, the advancement of developers’ interests with scant regard for the consequences for local communities, the environment, traffic flows and people’s needs and decline in quality and availability of services.

The contracting out of services, introduction of fees and other measures in the name of efficiencies and sound management have failed to serve the community. They have lined the pockets of corrupt councillors and the corporations being given the contracts.

Thousands of local jobs have been lost and deunionised. The transnational corporations contracted to provide services do not necessarily employ local labour or use local businesses. They cut conditions, lock out the union where they can and take short cuts.

Where the Greens, and left and progressive councillors have stood up to the developers and attempted to meet the needs of their constituencies they have often been thwarted by state government intervention in favour of the ruling party’s developer mates who line their electoral coffers.

Services have become less personal, the councils are not as responsive to people’s needs and general managers are gradually taking on many of the decision-making roles of elected councillors. This is set to worsen.

## National agenda

Developments in NSW follow on from a first round of amalgamations in 1993. The process is part of a wider agenda, which is being implemented across Australia. Other state governments are preparing to launch a second round of amalgamations and reforms.

So where is all of this heading? The long-term aim is to create large regional bodies which alongside federalism would eventually see the replacement of the states by these large regional bodies (super councils or provinces).

## Electoral reforms required

The Sydney City Council mayor is elected directly by residents. This is the path being pushed by the Panel. With super councils, the chances of workers and candidates from smaller parties being elected are considerably diminished. They might be well known in their locality but to compete across such large electorates, could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars – the sort of money only those with big business backers can raise.

That is one of the reasons why electoral reform is required to ensure that a proportional system of representation is used, with preferably three or more councillors elected from each ward or district. This also results in a better reflection of diversity in the council area.

The right of recall of councillors, as well as state MPs, would provide a means to act against corruption, incompetence, bad policies and broken pre-election promises.

Stricter controls over developers are required, including a greater say by local communities and their elected representatives. Local government is a crucial voice for local communities, particularly in rural and regional areas. It deserves real empowerment and independence.

Residents of NSW have an opportunity to send in their views on the Local Government Review. The Panel’s Future Directions consultation covers visits to 29 regional cities and towns and 8 locations in the Sydney metropolitan area from May 9 to June 14. For details visit: [localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au](http://localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au)

# No bank deposits will be spared confiscation

Matthias Chanq

**Before I explain why confiscation of bank deposits in the UK and US is a certainty and absolutely legal, I need all readers of this article to do the following:**

Ask your local police, sheriffs, lawyers, judges the following questions:

1) If I place my money with a lawyer as a stake-holder and he uses the money without my consent, has the lawyer committed a crime?

2) If I store a bushel of wheat or cotton in a warehouse and the owner of the warehouse sold my wheat/cotton without my consent or authority, has the warehouse owner committed a crime?

3) If I place monies with my broker (stock or commodity) and the broker uses my monies for other purposes and or contrary to my instructions, has the broker committed a crime?

I am confident that the answer to the above questions is a Yes!

However, for the purposes of this article, I would like to first highlight the situation of the deposit/storage of wheat with a warehouse owner in relation to the deposit of money/storage with a banker.

First, you will notice that all wheat is the same i.e. the wheat in one bushel is no different from the wheat in another bushel. Likewise with cotton, it is indistinguishable. The deposit of a bushel of wheat with the warehouse owner in law constitutes a bailment. Ownership of the bushel of wheat remains with you and there is no transfer of ownership at all to the warehouse owner.

And as stated above, if the owner sells the bushel of wheat without your consent or authority, he has committed a crime as well as having committed a civil wrong (a tort) of conversion – converting your property to his own use and he can be sued.

Let me use another analogy. If a cashier in a supermarket removes \$100 from the till on Friday to have a frolic on Saturday, he has committed theft, even though he may replace the \$100 on Monday without the knowledge of the owner/manager of the supermarket. The \$100 the cashier stole on Friday is also indistinguishable from the \$100 he put back in the till on Monday. In both situations – the wheat in the warehouse and the \$100 dollar bill in the till, which have been unlawfully misappropriated would constitute a crime.

Keep this principle and issue at the back of your mind.

Now we shall proceed with the money that you have deposited with your banker.

I am sure that most of you have little or no knowledge about banking, specifically fractional reserve banking.

Since you were a little kid, your parents have encouraged you to save some money to instil in you the good habit of money management.

And when you grew up and got married, you in turn instilled the same discipline in your children. Your faith in the integrity of the bank is almost absolute. Your money in the bank would earn an interest income.

And when you want your money back, all you needed to do is to withdraw the money together with the accumulated interest. Never for a moment did you think that you had transferred ownership of your money to the bank. Your belief was grounded in like manner as

the owner of the bushel of wheat stored in the warehouse.

However, this belief is and has always been a lie. You were led to believe this lie because of savvy advertisements by the banks and government assurances that your money is safe and is protected by deposit insurance.

But, the insurance does not cover all the monies that you have deposited in the bank, but to a limited amount e.g. US\$250,000 in the US by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Germany €100,000, UK £85,000 etc.

But, unlike the owner of the bushel of wheat who has deposited the wheat with the warehouse owner, your ownership of the monies that you have deposited with the bank is transferred to the bank and all you have is the right to demand its repayment. And if the bank fails to repay your monies (e.g. \$100), your only remedy is to sue the bank and if the bank is insolvent you get nothing.

You may recover some of your money if your deposit is covered by an insurance scheme as referred to earlier but in a fixed amount. But, there is a catch here. Most insurance schemes whether backed by the government or not do not have sufficient monies to cover all the deposits in the banking system.

So, in the worst case scenario – a systemic collapse, there is no way for you to get your money back.

In fact, and as illustrated in the Cyprus banking fiasco, the authorities went to the extent of confiscating your deposits to pay the banks' creditors. When that happened, ordinary citizens and financial analysts cried out that such confiscation was daylight robbery. But, is it?

Surprise, surprise!

It will come as a shock to all of you to know that such daylight robbery is perfectly legal and this has been so for hundreds of years.

Let me explain.

The reason is that unlike the owner of the bushel of wheat whose ownership of the wheat WAS NEVER TRANSFERRED to the warehouse owner when the same was deposited, the moment you deposited your money with the bank, the ownership is transferred to the bank.

Your status is that of A CREDITOR TO THE BANK and the BANK IS IN LAW A DEBTOR to you. You are deemed to have "lent" your money to the bank for the bank to apply to its banking business (even to gamble in the biggest casino in the world – the global derivatives casino).

You have become a creditor, AN UNSECURED CREDITOR. Therefore, by law, in the insolvency of a bank, you as an unsecured creditor stand last in the queue of creditors to be paid out of any funds and or assets which the bank has to pay its creditors. The secured creditors are always first in line to be paid. It is only after secured creditors have been paid and there are still some funds left (usually, not much, more often zilch!) that unsecured creditors are paid and the sums pro-rated among all the unsecured creditors.

This is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The law has been in existence for hundreds of years and was established in England by the House of Lords in the case *Foley v Hill* in 1848.

When a customer deposits money with his banker, the relationship that arises is one of creditor and debtor, with the banker liable to



repay the money deposited when demanded by the customer. Once money has been paid to the banker, it belongs to the banker and he is free to use the money for his own purpose.

I will now quote the relevant portion of the judgment of the House of Lords handed down by Lord Cottenham, the Lord Chancellor. He stated thus:

"Money when paid into a bank, ceases altogether to be the money of the principal... it is then the money of the banker, who is bound to return an equivalent by paying a similar sum to that deposited with him when he is asked for it.

"The money paid into the banker's, is money known by the principal to be placed there for the purpose of being under the control of the banker; it is then the banker's money; he is known to deal with it as his own; he makes what profit of it he can, which profit he retains himself,...

"The money placed in the custody of the banker is, to all intent and purposes, the money of the banker, to do with it as he pleases; he is guilty of no breach of trust in employing it; he is not answerable TO THE PRINCIPAL IF HE PUTS IT INTO JEOPARDY, IF HE ENGAGES IN A HAZARDOUS SPECULATION; he is not bound to keep it or deal with it as the property of the principal, but he is of course answerable for the amount, because he has contracted, having received that money, to repay to the principal, when demanded, a sum equivalent to that paid into his hands." (quoted in UK Law Essays, Relationship Between A Banker And Customer, That Of A Creditor/Debtor, emphasis added.)

Holding that the relationship between a banker and his customer was one of debtor and creditor and not one of trusteeship, Lord Brougham said:

"This trade of a banker is to receive money, and use it as if it were his own, he becoming debtor to the person who has lent or deposited with him the money to use as his own, and for which money he is accountable as a debtor. I cannot at all confound the situation of a banker with that of a trustee, and conclude that the banker is a debtor with a fiduciary character."

In plain simple English – bankers cannot be prosecuted for breach of trust, because it owes no fiduciary duty to the depositor/customer, as he is deemed to be using his own money to speculate etc. There is absolutely no criminal liability.

The trillion dollar question is: Why has no one in the Justice Department or other government agencies mentioned this legal principle?

The reason why no one dare speak this legal truth is because there would be a run on the banks when all the depositors wise up to the fact that their deposits with the bankers CONSTITUTE IN LAW A LOAN TO THE BANK and the bank can do whatever it likes even to indulge in hazardous speculation such as gambling in the global derivative casino.

Depositors always consider the bank the creditor even when he deposits money in the bank. No depositor ever considers himself as the creditor!

Yes, Eric Holder, the US Attorney-General was right when he said that bankers cannot be prosecuted for the losses suffered by the bank. This is because a banker cannot be prosecuted for losing his "own money" as stated by the House of Lords. This is because when money is deposited with the bank, that money belongs to the banker.

The reason that if a banker is prosecuted it would collapse the entire banking system is a big lie.

What is worrisome is that your right to be repaid arises only when you demand payment.

Obviously, when you demand payment, the bank must pay you. But, if you demand payment after the bank has collapsed and is insolvent, it is too late. Your entitlement to be repaid is that

***The moment you deposited your money with the bank, the ownership is transferred to the bank. You have become a creditor, AN UNSECURED CREDITOR.***

# Arch Coal wants permission to blow up West Virginia mountain

Puck Lo

**A subsidiary of Arch Coal of St Louis, Missouri, wants permission to dump nearly three billion cubic feet of dirt into local headwater streams after blowing up a mountain in West Virginia. The object is to extract coal from a project known as the Spruce No. 1 Surface Mine.**

"The damage from this project would be irreversible," said Shawn Garvin, the Mid-Atlantic regional administrator for the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which has issued an order to stop the project. "EPA has a duty under the law to protect water quality and safeguard the people who rely on these waters for drinking, fishing and swimming."

Arch Coal, which is the second largest coal producer in the US, has sued the EPA in order to move ahead. A court decision is expected eventually but the case may well end up in the US Supreme Court, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*.

## Mountaintop coal removal

What Arch Coal is proposing is a relatively new technology called mountaintop coal removal which has often been described as "strip mining on steroids." Forests are razed and burned. Age-old rocks are blasted through. Giant, 20-story tall shovels and bulldozers tear into the remaining mountain, filling one 240-ton dump truck at a time. Once exposed, the embedded coal seams are carted off for processing.

The remaining rubble is dumped into surrounding valleys, submerging streams and rivers. Toxic chemicals used in the mining process, as well as naturally occurring minerals that are dangerous for wildlife and human consumption, leach out from the debris into the waterways. So far, at least 5,632 square kilometres of the Appalachian mountain ranges have been obliterated, and 1,920 kilometres of streams have been buried, according to the EPA.

Mountain top coal removal has been fiercely opposed by local and national environmental groups precisely because of its devastating impact on local water quality. "Many folks here in Appalachia have streams or creeks running through their back yard. Kids from Kentucky to Tennessee grew up fishing and many of us still enjoy heading out with the pole for a lazy Sunday afternoon hoping to snag a trout," writes Mary Anne Hitt, the director of Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign. "Sadly, for many people in Appalachia that pristine ideal no longer exists."

## Permit wars

The Spruce No. 1 Surface Mine was first given permission to go ahead in early 2007 when the US Army Corps of Engineers granted Mingo Logan Coal Company, (owned by Arch) a permit for the mining operation. According to the EPA, the Spruce mine would have disturbed 9 square kilometres in the heart of Appalachia and removed up to 137 metres off the top of a mountain. The waste is to be dumped in almost 12 kilometres of local streams.

As the largest permitted mountaintop mine in West Virginia at the time, Spruce No. 1 quickly became a rallying point for opponents of the practice. In 2007, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Coal River Mountain Watch and other environmental groups sued the Corps for issuing the permit, and Mingo Logan agreed to operate only in a portion of the proposed project area, filling only one out of the original six valleys proposed. Although the EPA expressed concern



during the corps permitting process, it did not actively oppose the permit at the time.

Locals like Dustin Steele, of Mingo County, West Virginia, began to actively organise protest actions to try to stop the project. Recently a group of activists disguised themselves in business suits and delivery uniforms and attempted to occupy the company headquarters in Missouri.

"I have seen coal wreck everything around me. Arch (has) spent the last 125 years destroying (my) home," Steele said when he locked himself to a potted tree inside the company's headquarters during the protest. "The struggle continues today as we take action to hold Arch Coal and other coal companies accountable for the damage that they do to people and communities in Appalachia."

In early 2010, the EPA intervened and vetoed Spruce No. 1's permit to use the requested valleys and streams as disposal sites, citing violations of the Clean Water Act. The veto shut down 88 percent of the proposed operation, excepting only the areas where the company was already mining. It was the 13th time since 1978 that the EPA had exercised its veto authority. Only twice before has the agency ever revoked a permit, and never for a coal mine.

"EPA has exercised its post-permit authority sparingly over the past four decades," the agency said in a legal brief. "These streams represent some of the last remaining, least-disturbed, high quality stream and riparian resources within the Headwaters Spruce Fork sub-watershed and the Coal River sub-basin and contain important wildlife resources and habitat."

The agency said that additional data and scientific studies published after the permit had been issued compelled the agency to step in. Some of the studies reflected Mingo Logan's impact on the area and showed that the project would have an "unacceptable adverse effect" on wildlife, the EPA said.

## Court battles

In April 2010 Mingo Logan sued the EPA over the veto. It said that the agency had the opportunity to intervene during the regulatory process but had no right to rescind the Army Corps of Engineers permit after it was granted. "EPA was involved every step of the way," Mingo Logan said in a legal brief.

Judge Amy Berman Jackson, who heard the case in 2011, agreed with Mingo Logan. The Clean Water Act, she ruled, did not give post-permit veto power to the EPA. Using caustic language, she accused the EPA of "magical thinking" when they interfered with Spruce No.

1's water permit. "It posits a scenario involving the automatic self-destruction of a written permit issued by an entirely separate federal agency after years of study and consideration. Poof!" she wrote in a 2012 opinion.

In 2012, she ruled that the EPA had overstepped its authority.

The state of West Virginia, the US Chamber of Commerce and 34 industry groups applauded her decision. They filed friend-of-the-court briefs stating that every year some US\$220 billion worth of industry enterprises require permits from the Army Corps of Engineers to discharge pollutants in waterways.

"If EPA has this authority to revise or revoke Corps permits after they issue, over the objections of the Corps and the State, Corps permit holders can no longer be sure that their current or future projects are safe from a similar fate," the brief stated. "Inevitably, that uncertainty will translate into higher risks in borrowing, less investment, lost jobs and slower growth throughout the US economy."

The EPA appealed Judge Jackson's verdict. "Absolute certainty for polluters was not the motivating goal behind the Clean Water Act," it said in court papers prepared for a March 2013 hearing. "It would be inconsistent with the Act's primary objective of protecting waters to decide that the mere issuance of any permit by the Corps – no matter how much harm it authorises – prevents EPA from issuing a veto determination."

The EPA and environmental groups say that Section 404 (c) of the Clean Water Act grants the agency power to revoke permits "whenever," as needed, in order to do its job. The proposed Arch Coal project required an extraordinary response because it is exceptionally hazardous to the environment, they said.

At a 30-minute hearing on March 14, Judges Karen LeCraft Henderson, Thomas Griffith and Brett Kavanaugh listened carefully to arguments on what the US Congress intended when they wrote Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

The court decision may take a while. Meanwhile the protestors have vowed to continue their struggle to stop the mine. "Today, tomorrow, and every day for the rest of my life I will disrupt business as usual," Steele wrote on his blog. "From St Louis to the strip site, from the city to the hollers, wherever they are I will be there fighting for every inch, fighting for every permit, and I won't stop until Arch is nothing more than a collective bad memory."

Corpwatch ✪



of a lonely unsecured creditor and only if there are funds left after liquidation to be paid out to all the unsecured creditors and the remaining funds to be pro-rated. You would be lucky to get ten cents on the dollar.

So, when the Bank of England, the FED and the BIS (Bank for International Settlements) issued the guidelines which became the template for the Cyprus "bail-in" (which was endorsed by the G-20 Cannes Summit in 2011), it was merely a circuitous way of stating the legal position without arousing the wrath of the people, as they well knew that if the truth was out, there would be a revolution and blood on the streets. It is therefore not surprising that the global central bankers came out with this nonsensical advisory:

"The objective of an effective resolution regime is to make feasible the resolution of financial institutions without severe systemic disruption and without exposing taxpayers to losses, while protecting vital economic functions through mechanisms which make it possible for shareholders and unsecured and uninsured creditors to absorb losses in a manner that respects the hierarchy of claims in liquidation."(quoted in FSB Consultative Document: Effective Resolution of Systemically ...)

This is the kind of complex technical jargon used by bankers to confuse the people, especially depositors and to cover up what I have stated in plain and simple English in the foregoing paragraphs.

The key words of the BIS guideline are:

- "without severe systemic disruptions" (i.e. bank runs),
- "while protecting vital economic functions" (i.e. protecting vested interests – bankers),
- "unsecured creditors" (i.e. your monies, you are the dummy),
- "respects the hierarchy of claims in liquidation" (i.e. you are last in the queue to be paid, after all secured creditors have been paid).

This means all depositors are the losers!

Please read this article carefully and spread it far and wide.

You will be doing a favour to all your fellow country men and women and more importantly, your family and relatives.

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# US turns the screw

Matt Willgress

**The ongoing struggle of Venezuela to determine freely its own destiny stepped up again last week. Foreign Minister Elias Jaua said that the country would not accept threats from anybody "much less the threats of the decadent empire such as the United States."**

President Nicolas Maduro added: "The US intervention in Venezuelan internal affairs in recent months, and particularly during the election campaign, has been brutal." He said: "The Pentagon, the US State Department and the CIA govern the US. Here, in Venezuela, it is the people who govern."

US Secretary of State John Kerry, testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee last week, referred to Latin America as "our backyard" – revealing the Obama administration's prevailing imperial attitudes that have led to widespread intervention throughout the last two centuries.

The reason Jaua spoke out was the need to publicly reject statements by Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America Roberta Jackson, who has joined Venezuela's right-wing opposition in insisting on a full recount of the April 14 elections which Maduro won. In post-election remarks Kerry questioned "the viability of that government" if there were "irregularities."

When looking at this issue of a "recount" it is important to know that under Venezuela's electoral rules, before releasing any results, the independent National Electoral Council automatically audits 54 percent of all votes cast by checking the electronic vote tally against the paper receipt each voter receives.

This process is known as the Citizens Audit and involves verification from witnesses of all the parties as well as members of the public at every polling station. A sample of over half the votes is many times higher than statistically necessary to ensure the accuracy of the vote count.

It has been calculated that the probability that extending the audit to the remaining 46 percent could

change the result of the election is infinitesimal.

In total 15 audits took place and all were witnessed by representatives of all parties including those of the opposition.

In addition, the election was also monitored by 150 international witnesses including a delegation from the prestigious Carter Centre.

By calling for a "full recount," when the National Electoral Commission has decided to audit the remaining 46 percent of ballot papers, the US government is emboldening the ongoing campaign by Venezuela's right-wing opposition to destabilise the country and overturn the will of the majority.

This is similar to the support US gave to Pedro Carmona's illegal presidency during the 2002 coup attempt against Chavez. Carmona who at the time abolished all constitutional bodies was – like the defeated candidate Henrique Capriles – a member of the Primero Justicia (Justice First) party that today dominates the right-wing opposition alliance.

The US's attitude is not only in contrast to that of the whole of Latin America but also France, Britain, Portugal and Spain who have recognised Maduro's victory.

The Spanish government said that "as all constitutional and legal procedures have been carried out, the government of Spain respects the proclamation by the National Electoral Council of Nicolas Maduro as the elected president of Venezuela."

So what lies behind Washington's attitude? US expert Mark Weisbrot has seen these "efforts to de-legitimise the election" as "a significant escalation of US efforts at regime change."

He notes that "not since its involvement in the 2002 military coup has the US government done this much to promote open conflict in Venezuela."

Weisbrot persuasively argues that the call for a total recount in reality "amounted to telling the government of Venezuela what was necessary to make their elections legitimate."

As if the failure to recognise the



Venezuela's Foreign Minister Elias Jaua.

election results was not bad enough, when asked if the US is considering applying sanctions if a recount does not occur, Jackson said: "We cannot say if we are going to implement sanctions."

Like Capriles, Jackson had tried to call the legitimacy of the election into question in advance, in order to legitimise destabilisation after the poll.

Jackson specifically said it would be "difficult" to have "open, fair and transparent elections" in Venezuela.

This was despite all the evidence to the contrary, including former US president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Jimmy Carter calling the Venezuelan election process the best in the world.

And what of the right wing within Venezuela itself, seemingly emboldened by the US stance? The day after the results were announced Capriles called on his supporters to go to the streets and "discharge your anger".

This was accompanied by doctored pictures on newspaper front pages and deliberately misleading

media claims about improper storage of ballot boxes.

The result of this was a wave of violence which saw eight deaths and attacks on the houses of the families of prominent politicians and the head of the electoral council.

Local headquarters of the PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela), health clinics and other social services buildings built by the government were attacked.

The response in Venezuela and Latin America has been to rally in support of Maduro's democratic government and condemn US intervention.

"Americans should take care of their own business a little and let us decide our own destiny," said former Brazilian president Lula, while Bolivian president Evo Morales said: "So you think that we're your backyard? I condemn, repudiate that. We will never again be your backyard."

Within Venezuela, meanwhile, a cabinet reshuffle has been announced as the Maduro-led government seeks

to continue the social progress of recent years and address the problems that contributed to reducing the electoral majority.

The importance of international support was highlighted in a recent message to the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign from Juana Garcia of Venezuela's National Women's Institute who wrote: "Thanks, comrades, for the solidarity you have shown with our people and their revolution."

"Today, more than ever, your solidarity plays an important role in our defence and the dissemination of what is happening in our country," she wrote.

"Thanks on behalf of the revolutionary people of Venezuela to all those who support your work."

She could not be more right – progressive forces in Venezuela are in need of our solidarity and support. Matt Willgress is National Co-ordinator of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Details at [venezuelasolidarity.co.uk](http://venezuelasolidarity.co.uk) ✪

## Another Bangladesh factory collapse

John Wojcik

**A huge building housing Walmart, Disney and New Wave garment factories collapsed last week in Savar, Bangladesh killing more than 350, injuring hundreds and trapping perhaps several thousand under tons of concrete.**

According to survivors, several thousand workers were in the building when it collapsed, but only 600 were rescued in the following hours. It is feared many more are dead. Up to 6,000 people worked in the building. The building's owner, Moha'mmed Sohel Rana, has been arrested.

Witnesses at the scene said they could hear people trapped under the rubble reciting prayers.

Survivors said that they had been evacuated from the building after several cracks appeared but their bosses had ordered them to return to work that morning just one hour before the building collapsed. All the upper floors were

flattened in the collapse and only the ground floor remained intact.

The website for one of the Bangladeshi garment factories, New Wave, which occupied part of the building says that at least half the dead were women and children. The children were in day care facilities on the second, sixth and seventh floors of the building.

Clothing bearing the Walmart label was found in the rubble.

Less than five months after a Walmart factory fire killed 112 people the disaster again underlines the unsafe conditions at Walmart and other factories in Bangladesh's massive garment industry.

Abdur Rahim, a worker on the fifth floor, told the Associated Press that a factory manager assured workers there was no problem so they went inside despite having been evacuated the day before. "We started working. After about an hour or so the building collapsed suddenly," he said. He next remembered

regaining consciousness outside the building.

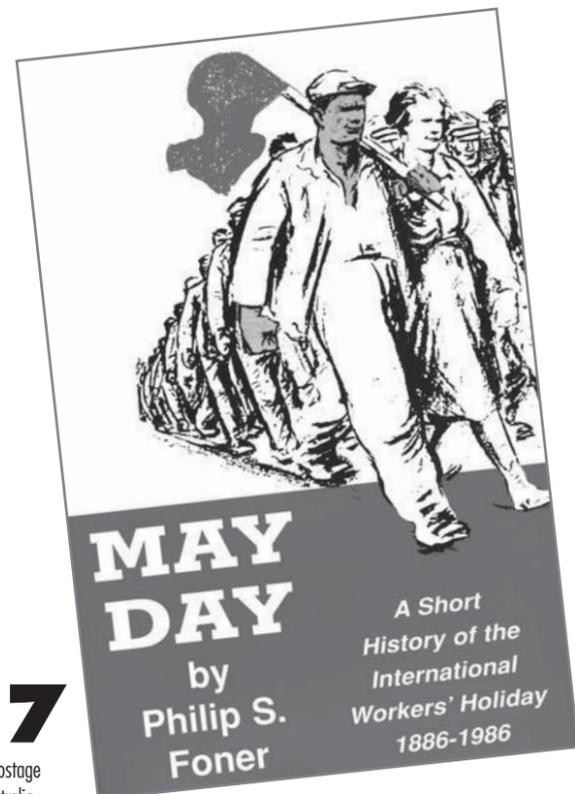
The country's Home Minister told reporters at the disaster site that the building had violated construction codes.

Sumi, a 25-year old worker who goes by just that name, said she was sewing jeans on the fifth floor with at least 400 other workers when the building fell. "It collapsed all of a sudden," she said. "No shaking, no indication. It just collapsed on us."

Officials said they expected the death toll to rise.

The collapse, like the November fire at the Tazreen garment factory, drew international attention to working conditions at Walmart and other factories in Bangladesh. The Walmart factory at Tazreen lacked emergency exits. Survivors at that collapse said the regular gates had been locked and managers were telling them to go back to work even after the fire alarm went off.

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# Paraguay: Rightist wins, Left advances in Congress

Emile Schepers

**On June 21, Paraguayan voters elected Horacio Cartes Jara, candidate of the right wing Colorado Party as president. However, the left made some modest but significant advances in legislative seats, especially in the Senate. All neighbouring states immediately recognised the results of the election.**

Cartes is a wealthy tobacco farmer and businessman who had not even voted until 2008, and at one time or another has been under investigation for involvement with drug traffic and financial offences. His Colorado Party was for decades the political base for General Alfredo Stroessner, who ruled Paraguay from 1954 to 1989 as a repressive dictator.

Cartes decided to run as a way of countering the left-wing political trend that has been sweeping many Latin American countries in recent years, and has been noted for his lurid homophobic statements. He got 1,095,469 or 45.8 percent of the vote. Far behind him was Efraim Alegre of the "Paraguay Alegre" (Happy Paraguay) Front, which includes the Liberal Party of the incumbent President Federico Franco with 36.94 percent of the vote, Mario Ferreira of the left-centre Avanza País (Forward Country) alliance with 5.88 percent, and Anibal Carillo of the left-wing Guasú Front, with 3.32 percent. The Guasú Front is a group of 11 parties including the Communist Party of Paraguay, and was supported by former President Fernando Lugo. Six other parties also competed. Guasú representatives complained that they

were not allowed full access to media and that their poll watchers were impeded in their work.

The death of another right-wing candidate, former General Lino Oviedo, in a helicopter crash in January probably helped Cartes to win; Oviedo's voters evidently swung over to the Colorado candidate.

In the 45 seat Senate, Cartes' Colorados failed to achieve a majority, though they did get 19 seats. The Liberals (Authentic Radical Liberal Party) which in Paraguay is a conservative party, got the next highest number of seats with 12. The leftist Guasú front made an important advance, winning 5 seats, or 9.6 percent of the Senate vote. One of the Guasú seats will be held by former President Lugo. Ferrerío's Forward Country will have 2 to 3 seats. The left-centre Democratic Progressive Party will have 3 seats.

In the 100 member Chamber of Deputies, or lower house, seats have not yet been distributed among the parties pending a finalisation of the vote counting. According to preliminary results, the Colorados have won 37.3 percent, the Liberals 13.0 percent, National Union of Ethical Citizens 8.8 percent, Beloved Fatherland Party 8.8 percent, Forward Country 8.1 percent and the Guasú Front only 2.8 percent.

The lead up to this election began in June of last year when the Paraguayan Congress impeached the leftist President Fernando Lugo and removed him from office.

The reason given was that earlier that month, there had been a clash between landless labourers and police at an estate at Curuguaty in the East of

Horacio Cartes Jara elected as president.



the country, in which 17 labourers and police lost their lives. The labourers had been occupying an estate owned by Blas Riquelme, an important Colorado Party politician, which they claimed (it would appear, correctly) had been acquired illegally. Many people think the Curuguaty incident was a provocation or setup designed to discredit the Lugo government.

Lugo was elected in 2008 on a platform which included defence of the rights of poor farmworkers. However, he never had a supportive Congress and had to rule through shaky alliances with the Liberal Party and others well to the right of him. WikiLeaks cables show that important figures such as the late general and arch-conspirator Lino Oviedo had been planning for a while to find a pretext to remove Lugo.

The Liberals immediately ditched Lugo and set the impeachment process in motion. It went forward with lightning speed; Lugo was given only 24

hours to prepare his defence against the charges and was removed from office by the Senate with only 4 votes dissenting. Many Paraguayans as well as the governments of neighbouring countries felt that this was a coup d'état with a thin veneer of constitutional legality, and Paraguay was suspended from the MERCOSUR trade group pending a clean new election. Ironically the suspension of Paraguay made it possible for MERCOSUR to approve the application for membership of leftist Venezuela, the outcome that the Paraguayan right least wanted.

Paraguayans are now wondering what kind of president Horacio Cartes will turn out to be. His platform called for increasing direct foreign investment by the implementation of neo-liberal methods, including especially reducing employment in the public sector. His election will come as pleasant news to those foreign based monopolies that have already been grabbing up properties in Paraguay,

specifically the Monsanto agribusiness giant which is eager to turn even more Paraguayan farmland over to vast soybean production, and the Canadian mining giant Rio Tinto-Alcan, which is also eagerly expanding its Paraguay operations against considerable popular opposition.

The neo-liberal program of President elect Cartes (who will be sworn in in August) and the projected plans of Monsanto and Rio Tinto-Alcan translate into more displacement of poor farmers and more environmental damage. This will create more uproar in the Paraguayan countryside, as urban citizens find that Cartes' promises of more jobs brought by foreign investment turns out to be the pipe dream that other poor countries have already experienced. But the leftist Guasú Front promised that with their increased representation in the Senate they are ready to fight for the interests of the poor.

*People's World* ☘

## Fracking won't deliver cheaper fuel bills

Luke James

**Soaring energy costs plunging families into fuel poverty won't be brought down by fracking for shale gas, miners MP Ian Lavery argues. Mr Lavery is part of Westminster's energy and climate change committee which has published its report into the controversial practice of drilling into rocks beneath the Earth's surface to capture gas.**

Committee chairman and Tory MP Tim Yeo claimed that a fracking "revolution" had already

driven down energy costs in north America.

He urged fracking companies to "get on and drill" despite admitting shale gas isn't the "silver bullet" that will solve Britain's long-term energy needs.

"The government has dithered on this issue and should now encourage companies to get on and drill, to establish whether significant recoverable resources exist" he said.

Tory Energy Minister Michael Fallon labelled the report a

"helpful analysis" on shale gas, which he said had "potential to play a role in our energy security and to create valuable jobs."

Mr Lavery said shale gas "may have a role to play" in meeting Britain's energy needs although he was clear fracking alone won't "keep the lights on." He said: "I understand people have got grave concerns about fracking but if we have got this kind of resource beneath our feet then as a nation we should certainly look to secure that.

"The costs of exploiting shale gas may be prohibitive and the emission levels created by shale gas may also mean we may not be able to meet our carbon reduction targets."

And the left Labour MP insisted that benefits from all of Britain's energy projects "should be for the nation and not private companies. Consideration should be given to the total nationalisation of energy," he said.

"Regulation has failed – the big six energy companies are

creaming off massive profits at the same time as people are being driven by their thousands into fuel poverty."

Meanwhile Greenpeace climate campaigner Leila Deen insisted fracking remains a "dangerous distraction from renewables."

Ms Deen said: "The only thing most experts agree on is that it won't reduce bills. The government needs to start backing energy winners."

*Morning Star* ☘

## Cuban Workers Confederation restructures leadership

**The Cuban Workers' Confederation (CTC) has relieved general secretary Salvador Valdes Mesa from his position after his election as vice-president of the Cuban Council of State by the National Parliament on February 24.**

Addressing a plenary session of the Confederation's National Council, the second secretary of the Cuban Communist Party Jose Ramon Machado Ventura stressed the work carried out by Valdes Mesa in the consolidation of the workers' movement and explained that the top union leader will continue to attend

to the CTC from his new post at the request of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party.

Machado Ventura announced that CTC's second secretary Carmen Rosa Lopez, also elected to the Council of State, will lead the organisation until a new general secretary is elected during the upcoming CTC Congress, slated for November.

Addressing union leaders from across the country, Valdes Mesa said that increasing unionisation stands as the top and most important task in the framework of the political and

ideological struggle being waged by Cuban workers.

At the meeting, participants analysed the report submitted by the general secretary on preparations for the congress, the ongoing assemblies at work centres on their plans and budgets for this year, as well as the election or ratification of their leaders.

The plenary session of the CTC's National Council also considered upcoming consultations with Cuban workers of a new Labour Code, which will be submitted to debates at the 20th Congress. ☘

Sydney

### Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) Rally

Time to say Fair Deal or No Deal in TPPA

The TPPA is a free trade agreement being negotiated between Australia, the US, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam. US global corporations are driving the agenda to expand their rights at the expense of peoples' rights.

May 11 is International Fair Trade Day

Join the protest in Sydney

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Letters to the Editor  
The Guardian  
74 Buckingham Street  
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email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

## Assault on Mother Earth

**The assault on the fragile ecology of the earth is unrelenting. In Australia, Koalas are endangered from forest destruction, habitat fragmentation, dogs, cats and cars. Tasmanian Devils are threatened with extinction, from disease and loss of habitat. The Tarkine wilderness is at risk from mining operations and the Kimberley wildernesses from gas extraction projects.**

Clear felling of our precious native forests goes on, resulting in the loss of more native animal species. Such logging practices are pushing Leadbeaters Possums to the brink of

extinction. The Great Barrier Reef is in dire jeopardy from ports and shipping developments associated with coal and gas.

And in the world at large, we are overusing the earth's limited resources.

Our oceans are polluted and over fished. Landclearing is creating deserts and droughts. The Amazon and other rainforests are being destroyed along with the habitat of the wondrous wildlife there. Orangutans are in danger of extinction due to logging, rapidly destroying their forests and from the pet trade. Poaching and loss of habitat threaten Tigers and Rhinos. Climate change goes on inexorably.

I could keep going on. The continuous neglect of our amazing world and the over-consumption of its finite resources is the path to complete environmental disaster and the death of life on earth. The only thing to do is to continue striving for a better, healthier, saner, safer, sustainable world, learning to live simply, so we can all simply live a decent life. The choice is really stark and the renewable alternative is viable.

Steven Katsineris  
Vic

## Blame game

**The back-page article by James Corbett in the April 24 issue of The Guardian headed "The Boston bombings in context" appears to perpetrate the same kind of "knee-jerk tendency" that he accuses "millions of Americans" of having. Except that they blame everything on Islamic radicals and he blames everything on the FBI.**

Corbett fudges his case more than somewhat by limiting himself to terrorist atrocities after 9/11. That leaves out the Oklahoma City bombing, in which the target was the FBI HQ in that city.

He also leaves out the major well-known terrorist acts that can be confidently sheeted home to the FBI, such as the 1990 bombing of Earth First activists Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney. While campaigning against the destruction of the California Redwoods by commercial logging interests, Bari and Cherney were blown up by a pipe bomb placed under Bari's seat in their car. She was very seriously injured.

Almost instantaneously, a swarm of FBI agents materialised around

her car, claiming to have been on an "exercise" in the vicinity. In fact, the exercise included lessons on how to make pipe-bombs and how to place them to best advantage in a target's car.

Almost certainly, the plan had been for the bomb to kill Judi Bari (a known left-wing union activists as well as environmentalist), and the prompt appearance of FBI agents at the site would prevent any local law-enforcement officers from interfering. But she survived, so the FBI tried to charge her with bombing herself. But they just couldn't sell it.

The FBI had an entire program of "counter-intelligence" activity aimed at civil rights, environmentalist, Native American, Puerto Rican and other rights activists. Part of FBI director Hoover's plans to foil the "red plot against America", this program was known by the acronym COINTELPRO. It became notorious – and the FBI with it – for using everything from frame-ups to murder to disrupt the Left.

So why am I dissatisfied with Corbett's article? What worries me most about the Corbett article is the narrow focus. There are *lots* of

intelligence agencies in the USA. They are all willing and able to protect business interests against the American people. Why single out only the FBI?

In fact, although Corbett charges that "the FBI is the prime suspect in any terrorist atrocity that takes place on American soil", the very useful list that he provides of recent FBI "fit-ups" show only people convicted and sentenced to long jail terms for "conspiracy", for planning or even just discussing terrorist actions. Notably absent are any actual atrocities.

The FBI emerges as a leading practitioner of the lying art of the *agent provocateur*. And meanwhile, the real US terrorists, the home-grown Christian fundamentalist loonies who hate and fear Commies, bomb abortion clinics, and have no qualms about bashing or even killing blacks or gays, can go about their business apparently free from any worries about disruption by the FBI.

Rob Gowland  
NSW Central Coast

# Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

## Bombs in Boston



**Amidst the seemingly endless repeats on television of the scene of the bombs going off at the finish line of the Boston marathon, one important aspect of the case has received relatively scant attention: why did the Islamist Chechnya terrorists from the USA attack civilians in the USA?**

After all, support for the Chechnya terrorists in the past has most readily come from the USA and US client states like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Now a US Congressional Committee is trying to ascertain why the US Intelligence services apparently chose to ignore warnings from their Russian counterparts that these people posed a threat to the USA itself.

Arrogant overconfidence perhaps? Or the smug belief on the part of US agencies that the nationalist/Islamist terrorist gangs in Chechnya were firmly on the American side (they were certainly on the anti-Russian side). During the Second World War, the Islamist fundamentalists of Chechnya aligned themselves with the Nazi invaders of the Soviet Union, eagerly attacking Soviet troops with a barbarity much admired by their Nazi mentors.

Or is the notion that the Boston bombings had anything to do with Chechnya itself just another smokescreen? Could the youthful bombers have been a pair of indoctrinated patsies, who acted in the belief they were striking a blow for Chechnya's independence when in reality they were tools in a bigger plot? It certainly would not be the first time such a thing has happened, but the question then would

be, what purpose could have been served by bombing the Boston marathon?

One scenario suggests itself at once. The US ruling class is at present engaged in a full-frontal assault on democratic rights in "the land of the free" (and has been for some time now). But curtailing democratic rights, and beefing up the powers of the security forces, is easier to achieve under conditions of fear, when people think the country is under attack or threat of attack.

The terror attack of 9/11 was followed not just by an escalation of war by the US in central Asia and the Middle East, but by a simultaneous assault on and curtailment of democratic rights and protections within the USA itself. Capitalism in the US was able to get away with anti-democratic and anti-people laws and actions that would never have been countenanced in normal peacetime conditions.

Similarly, amidst the upsurge in patriotism and while the crowds are still joyously celebrating the neutralising of the Boston bombers with chants of "USA! USA!", US authorities are already planning ways to make outdoor gatherings "more secure", more under the control of the police and more exposed to surveillance by cameras equipped with facial recognition software, to keep a very watchful eye on "potential terrorists" (but not, of course we are assured) on legitimate political or trade union activists going about their lawful business.

The so-called "War on Terror" has proven to be an invaluable aid to US imperialism, providing it with a "legitimate" reason to

interfere in or even commit aggression against smaller countries without the inconvenience of having to have proof or even genuine evidence to support such actions.

The tactic is not new of course. The USA has used it at least as long ago as the Spanish American War. Hitler used it to justify his invasion of Poland, and the USA (again) fabricated an attack on their naval forces in the Gulf of Tonkin to justify a massive escalation of the war in Vietnam. In more recent years however, we have seen an increasing trend to dispense with the need for an excuse for military action, in favour of simply "intervening", most recently in Mali. Clearly, where imperialism's profitable resources like oil and gas, diamonds and minerals are concerned, no excuses are needed for waging war.

The fly in US imperialism's ointment, however, is that it prefers to present itself to the American people as the champion of democratic rights, the world's glowing example of democracy in action, the living proof that government of the people, by the people and for the people actually works. The fact that anything up to half the eligible electors in the US are so turned off by the country's warped system of democracy that they don't even bother to vote does not stop US leaders from parading around as arbiters of democracy all over the world.

If the image of the USA as leader of the democratic nations were to be exposed as a figment of US presidential speechwriters' imaginations, the country would suffer a

profound shock. It might even do something rash like turning to the Left. And imperialism cannot have that!

The comfortable myths that sustain the people of the US in the face of ever-present poverty, rampant crime and drug abuse, absence of accessible health care, and pervading ignorance about the world they live in, are sustained by an army of spin-doctors and propagandists backed by the most all-pervasive media control ever devised.

This propaganda monolith is designed to keep the bulk of the American people from even noticing the constant reminders that their country is in trouble: the fact that large numbers of the country's citizens survive on food-stamps, have nowhere to live, will never have a job because there are none for them to have, and – particularly if they have the misfortune to be black – will probably find themselves in prison.

That is, if they are not shot dead first, for the violence that so many Americans are perversely proud of is in fact proof that the country is to a large extent unfit even to be regarded as civilised.

And I haven't even touched on religious fundamentalism, the bastard child of ignorance and racism, which influences the thinking of so many Americans. But whoever planted the Boston marathon bombs, one thing is certain: US imperialism will endeavour to use the bombings to stampede the US people into giving up more of their democratic rights in the name of "security". ☛



Sunday May 5 –  
Saturday May 11

I have sounded off more than once in these columns about those awful alleged “wildlife” programs that Americans seem to produce with such dreary frequency – you know, the ones that try to dress up the wildlife with show-business “raz-zamataz” to make it more exciting. “At any moment this animal could spring up and rip my arm off” yells the presenter, or else the commentator says something equally improbable while the “fierce jungle killer” can’t be bothered to even look at the human who is supposedly in grave danger.

It’s a tradition that dates back to the early wildlife documentaries like Frank Buck’s *Bring ‘Em Back Alive* of the 1930s and should have been left there, but the insatiable appetite of television for thrills has given it a new lease of life, especially on US cable channels.

The third series of *Nick Baker’s Weird Creatures* (ABC2 weekdays at 7.40pm from Tuesday May 7) starts this week and begins like the worst of this type of program: “I’m going to take you to see some of the weirdest creatures on the planet!” loudly declares our hero, but then he drops most of the bull and becomes a competent naturalist who can hold his own with most scientists when discussing wildlife seriously.

The first episode is about the leafy sea dragon who has adapted so well to

its environment it is almost impossible to see, so perfect is its amazing camouflage. But as human activity interferes with its environment its inability to adapt quickly to new conditions could mean its extinction after all.

It is a surprisingly watchable program.

**The Boarding School Bomber** (ABC2 Wednesday May 8 at 8.30pm) is being advertised by the ABC with the line “How did a middle class English schoolboy turn into a suicide bomber?” As though somehow being English and attending a good school and above all being middle class should preclude one from anything so unsporting as terrorism.

Lenin’s elder brother plotted to blow up the Tsar, and was shot for his pains. The execution of his brother was one factor that helped to convince Lenin that acts of individual terrorism were in fact useless, that the only effective way to change society was through mass action by the people, especially the working class.

However, among middle class “revolutionaries”, impatient of the often slow and uneven pace of development of mass movements, angry at the injustices visible on every hand under capitalism, and anxious to “do something”, the appeal of the individual act of terror is still potent. So much so that the bourgeoisie often use it to lure radical youth into acts calculated to damage the people’s movement rather than enhance it.

During the height of the Vietnam War, FBI agents infiltrated radical student groups in the US and argued in favour of “escalating” the anti-war struggle. They offered to find explosives and recommended a campaign of terror bombings. The anti-war movement split, the “Weathermen” faction succumbing to the lure of positive action against US imperialism unaware that they were being used by the US government to smear the anti-war cause.

In Ireland, at the height of the struggle for civil rights in the north, the most reactionary element in the



Nick with pygmy sloth – Nick Baker’s *Weird Creatures* (ABC2 weekdays at 7.40pm from Tuesday May 7)

Irish ruling class offered to finance the purchase of arms by part of Sinn Fein if the movement would drop its left-leaning social concerns and focus instead solely on waging a civil war against British rule. The majority rejected this offer, but a militant minority fell for it, and the well-funded Provisional IRA was formed. The national liberation movement in Ireland was split yet again, this time specifically on the issue of terrorism.

The youth at the centre of *The Boarding School Bomber*, Andrew Ibrahim, is half English and half Egyptian. He is radicalised via internet websites that use graphic images of the horrors perpetrated by imperialism combined with very sophisticated methods of mental manipulation to indoctrinate young people to believe that only terrorism will bring about change.

Although made by the British capitalist establishment, this mixture of documentary and dramatisation is worthy of close study.

The second series of the exotic cop show *Death In Paradise* (ABC1 Saturdays at 7.30pm from May 11) begins this week. Shot on the island of Guadeloupe, standing in for the fictional island of Saint Marie, the series stars Ben Miller as straight-laced English copper DI Richard Poole more or less shanghai’d out of his proper element (London) and parachuted into a tropical paradise where his sergeant is the frequently half undressed Camille Bordey (Sara Martins) and his skeleton staff of two local coppers follow his often inspired leadership with total dedication.

This new series starts with a murder, the solution to which leaves the police and principal witnesses

sad rather than elated. Without giving anything away, suffice to say that the usual suspects in a program like this *didn’t* do it.

The ABC’s new comedy *Tskain, Funny As*, looks set to brighten Saturday nights quite effectively, judging by this week’s opening item. *Alan Carr: Spexy Beast* (ABC2 Saturday May 11 at 9.30pm) is very funny. It takes some special talent to do stand-up before an arena audience of 13,000, and Alan Carr – whose *Chatty Man* interview show does little for me – shows why he is a headliner. He is funny, self-deprecating, versatile, physical and above all witty. This is particularly evident in the clever way he switches from his usual high-pitched “camp” delivery to a deep baritone, and makes it very funny. ✪



## May Day Adelaide

### On Sunday, May 5, come to the PORT ADELAIDE WORKERS MEMORIAL

10 a.m.—Memorial Ceremony at the Workers Memorial, Black Diamond Corner, Port Adelaide. Then afterwards at the Council Rooms for morning tea.

12 noon—Barbecue and Refreshments at the Semaphore Workers Club, 93 Esplanade, Semaphore. All welcome

Authorised by D. Roberts President S.A. May Day Collective



## 2013 MAY DAY MARCH

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and march to Torrens Parade Ground via North Terrace

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Editorial Office  
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Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833  
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Tom Pearson

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# Honouring our working class heroes

Anna Pha

**“The day will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you are throttling today.” Haymarket martyr August Spies, his last words from the gallows on November 11, 1887. They have been inscribed in the base of the Haymarket Martyrs Monument at the Forest Home Cemetery in Chicago.**

“No single event has influenced the history of labour in Illinois, the United States, and even the world, more than the Chicago Haymarket Affair,” writes William J Adelman in *The Day Will Come: Honouring our working class heroes*.

“It began with a rally on May 4, 1886, but the consequences are still being felt today. Although the rally is included in American History textbooks, very few present the event accurately or point out its significance.”

William J Adelman was a labour historian and teacher who worked tirelessly to increase public awareness of the historical roots of May Day and the so-called “Haymarket riot”. He died in 2009 and his ashes have been scattered in the Forest Home Cemetery.

The Federation of Organised Trades and Labour unions, the predecessor of the American Federation of Labour (AFL), had called for May 1, 1886, to be the beginning of a nationwide movement for the eight-hour day. There were demonstrations across the country, the largest in Chicago where more than 80,000 workers marched carrying union banners. There were smaller actions in the days that followed.

On May 3, police attacked and killed picketing workers at the McCormick Reaper Plant in Chicago. There was a protest meeting the next day over the killings, and towards the end of it, the police turned up carrying Winchester repeater rifles and attacked the remaining protestors. Someone threw a bomb, the police panicked and in the darkness shot some of their own men as well as some of the protestors. Four workers and seven policemen died.

Eight men, randomly selected trade union leaders and eight-hour day activists, were rounded up and seven of them sentenced to death by hanging and one given a life sentence. Not all of them were even at the scene, let alone guilty of throwing a bomb. Four of them were hanged, including August Spies, another mysteriously had half his head blown half-off by a dynamite cap in his cell. They were hanged for being labour activists.

The other three eventually received a pardon in 1893 from a

Governor who condemned the entire judicial system that had allowed this injustice.

In July 1889, a delegate from the American Federation of Labour recommended at a labour conference in Paris that May 1 be set aside as International Labour Day in memory of the Haymarket martyrs and the injustice of the Haymarket Affair.

*The Day Will Come* provides a brief outline of these events and the origins of the Cemetery, an interesting story itself. The booklet provides a map of where the martyrs and many other well known and not so well known political activists and other figures are buried or have had their ashes interred or scattered there.

“The real issues of the Haymarket Affair were freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to free assembly, the right to a fair trial by a jury of peers and the right of workers to organise for things like the eight-hour day,” Mark Rogovin, editor of *The Day Will Come*, notes in the introduction. Mark was a muralist and co-founder of the Peace Museum and the Historical Society of Forest Park.

The Illinois Labour History Society has done considerable work researching and collating the biographies of those whose remains and memorials are in the cemetery. It is a work in progress. In fact most of the publication is dedicated to these short biographies and they make fascinating reading.

August Spies had come from Germany in 1872 and eventually settled in Chicago. He was active in the causes of workers, joined the Socialist Labour Party and was editor of the anarchist daily *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. He was the first speaker on that fateful night.

Adolph Fischer and George Engel, also anarchists, were not at the meeting when the bomb exploded, but were still convicted and hanged. They are buried at the Cemetery, along with the ashes of the other martyr Albert R Parsons.

The biographies provide a rich vignette of more than a century of US working class history. They include:

- Communist William Z Foster (1881-1966), who took part in many trade union struggles, stood as the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) presidential candidate in 1924, 1928 and 1932, and played a key role in the reconstituting of the Party following the Browder period.

“In 1917, Foster worked with others to organise workers in the meat-packing industry – the first mass-production industry to be organised. This industry was the most difficult to organise because of its multi-national and multi-racial work force. Soon after, with the reluctant

help from the AFL leader Samuel Gompers, Foster tried to organise the steelworkers...”

- Peggy Dennis (1909-1993), who worked with her husband Eugene Dennis on international assignments for the Communist International. “Peggy worked in Europe with underground Communist Parties, including in Nazi Germany, bringing them outside assistance.” She later wrote for the *Daily Worker*.

- “The Rebel Girl”, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (1890-1964), whose exposure to the poverty of textile workers had a profound effect on her. She was a member of the Socialist Party and the International Workers of the World. In 1937 she joined the CPUSA. In the McCarthy period she was convicted under the Smith Act and received a three-year prison term. In 1961, after the death of Eugene Dennis, she became the chair of the CPUSA.

- Albert Moreau (1897-1977) whose activities in the working class and revolutionary movements spanned more than six decades. “He figured prominently in the US anti-imperialist movement of the 1920s, and helped to found the influential Obrero Español (Spanish Workers) Club in New York in 1927 with Cubans, Spaniards, Venezuelans and Puerto Ricans. As a member of the Central Committee of the CPUSA, Moreau gave special attention to the struggle for Puerto Rico’s independence and against US domination of Cuba.” He worked in collaboration with the Communist International to help the early Communists in Cuba and elsewhere.

- William “Big Bill” Haywood (1869-1928), a cowboy and miner, who “in 1986 became a charter member of the Western Federation of Miners and led his fellow miners in a bitter and often violent class war against the mine operators. He helped found the IWW.”

“Savage government repression of the IWW escalated when it opposed US involvement in WW1. The national headquarters was raided, and Haywood and 105 others were jailed ... Found guilty of seditious activities, Haywood was sentenced to 30 years in Leavenworth and a \$30,000 fine.” He escaped to Moscow in 1921, when on bail. Half of his ashes are interred in the Kremlin Wall, the other half in the Forest Home Cemetery.

- Joe Hill (1882-1915), whose name has been immortalised by the song “I dreamed of Joe Hill Last Night”, written by Alfred Hayes and Earl Robinson and sung by Paul Robeson. He was a working class cartoonist and troubadour, whose songs are also widely sung. They include “Casey Jones – the Union Scab”,



“Rebel Girl”, and “The Preacher and the Slave” (also known as “Pie in the Sky”).

He was framed on a murder charge by the copper bosses and executed by firing squad on November 9, 1915, despite a worldwide campaign for his release. His ashes were scattered on every continent and some were scattered at the Haymarket Martyr’s monument.

- Clarence Schwid Kailin (1914-2009) was the first American to be made a citizen of Spain, in 2009, under the Law of Historical Memory for his service as a Volunteer of International Brigades. “As a volunteer of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, he came to Spain in 1936, which was the front line of the struggle against fascism at the time. In August, 1938, Kailin helped to hold Hill 666 in the nearby Sierra de Pandols during the Battle of the Ebro.”

On his return to the US he was involved in many campaigns, including the anti-apartheid movement, struggle for peace, and as a Jew he championed the rights of the Palestinians and his book *Black Chronicle*, became a primer for school teachers and inspired a national dialogue on the hurtfulness of racism.

A number of the of the biographies feature leading trade unionists, their struggles in setting up unions in meat packing, waterfront, mining and other industries. They were brutally repressed by police and armies of company hired thugs, served long sentences in jail, were

blacklisted and subjected to other forms of persecution.

The biographies include a number of other communist leaders and members not mentioned above – include Gus Hall (1910-2000), Sue Kling (1912-2008), Geraldine Lightfoot (1912-1962), Frank Lumpkin (1916-2010), Ruth Schaffner (1910-1995), Art Shields (1900-1989), James West (1914-2005), Charles Wilson (1910-1984), Henry Winston (1911-1986), Carl Winter (1906-1991), Helen Winter (1908-2001), Eugene Dennis (1905-1961).

They are just a few snippets of the many interesting lives recorded in the Cemetery. There is such a rich collection – members of the IWW, anarchists, communists, socialists, unionists, fighters for peace and other social causes, writers, etc. There is so much to absorb, and there is the constant temptation to stop with each brief biography and search for more information on the internet.

If you are planning a visit to the US, then add the Cemetery to your itinerary. Otherwise, you can still take a virtual tour with a copy of *The Day Will Come* or by visiting the Illinois Labor History website, [illinoislaborhistory.org](http://illinoislaborhistory.org).

*The Day Will Come* was published by the Illinois Labor History Society to commemorate the 125th anniversary of May Day in 2011 and was edited by Mark Rogovin. A4 paperback, 40 pages with graphics. The Day Will Come \$15 plus \$2 p&p from CPA. 📖



Communist Party of Australia

Website: [www.cpa.org.au](http://www.cpa.org.au)  
Email: [cpa@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpa@cpa.org.au)

**Central Committee:**  
**General Secretary:** Dr Hannah Middleton  
**Party President:** Vinnie Molina  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010  
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833  
**Sydney District Committee:**  
Brian McGee  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010  
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833

**Newcastle Branch:**  
PO Box 367  
Hamilton NSW 2303  
Ph: 02 4023 8540 / 0401 824 386  
[newcastle@cpa.org.au](mailto:newcastle@cpa.org.au)  
**Riverina Branch:**  
Allan Hamilton  
2/57 Cooper St  
Cootamundra 2590

**Melbourne Branch:**  
Andrew Irving [viccpa@netspace.net.au](mailto:viccpa@netspace.net.au)  
Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall  
Lygon St Carlton Sth 3053  
Ph: 03 9639 1550 Fax: 03 9639 4199  
**West Australian Branch:**  
Vinnie Molina [perth@cpa.org.au](mailto:perth@cpa.org.au)  
PO Box 98 North Perth WA 6906  
Ph: 0419 812 872

**Brisbane Branch:**  
PO Box 33, Camp Hill, Qld 4152  
Ph: 0449 202 189  
[cpabris@live.com.au](mailto:cpabris@live.com.au)  
**South Australian State Committee:**  
Bob Briton, PO Box 612, Port Adelaide BC,  
SA 5015 Ph: 0418 894 366  
[www.adelaidecommunists.org](http://www.adelaidecommunists.org)  
Email: [sa@cpa.org.au](mailto:sa@cpa.org.au)

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Website: [www.cpa.org.au/guardian](http://www.cpa.org.au/guardian)  
Email: [guardian@cpa.org.au](mailto:guardian@cpa.org.au)