



## Budget 2013-14

# Mean, cruel and dishonest

Anna Pha

**Behind the façade of sound economic management and social reform lies a mean, cruel and dishonest austerity budget. The pre-election centrepieces are DisabilityCare Australia (the national disability insurance scheme – NDIS) and the so-called Better Schools – National Plan for School Improvement (Gonski education reforms). It is touted as a budget for jobs, stronger growth, a smarter nation and a fairer society. Its main victims are the unemployed, single parents, asylum seekers, the poor and homeless, the chronically ill, families, public servants and the environment.**

“We make these historic investments from a position of economic strength,” Treasurer Wayne Swan said in his budget speech. “Australia chooses a stronger, smarter and fairer Australia.”

“We’ve made a values judgement and I’m happy to be judged by it myself,” says Prime Minister Gillard, in a similar vein.

What are the values of a government that cannot increase the dole by \$50 a week? That continues to punish children by not restoring cuts to single parent payments? That can spend close to \$3.2 billion incarcerating, traumatising and destroying the lives and health of asylum seekers (refugees)? That plans to increase spending on war preparations by close to 25 percent in the coming years while redirecting almost \$1 billion of overseas aid over the next four years to incarcerating refugees?

A government that cuts more than \$1 billion from renewable energy, energy efficiency and the environment, but can find \$2 billion for the diesel fuel rebate for mining companies.

These read more like corporate values.

### Unfair

St Vincent de Paul Society chief executive John Falzon said the budget failed to recognise that the paltry level of Newstart has become a path to despair instead of a path to employment.

“We do not accept the falsehood that people

in poverty have only themselves to blame or that you can help a person find work by making life harder,” Dr Falzon said.

“The unemployment benefit has not seen an increase in real terms since 1994. In an effort to catch up, we implored the government to lift Newstart by \$50 a week. The failure to do this is yet another kick in the guts of the people who are doing it tough.”

The Society’s national president Anthony Thornton, pointed out that “Along with the human tragedy of abandoning people to poverty comes the economic cost of squandering, rather than harnessing, the enormous productive potential of 800,000 people.”

Abandoned they were, despite the campaigning and pleas from welfare organisations, churches and other groups for a modest \$50 a week increase in the unemployment benefit.

### Unemployment set to rise

The budget is noteworthy for its lack of serious measures to create jobs. Swan’s claim that more than 950,000 jobs have been created since Labor came to office in 2007, neatly overlooks that this figure has not kept up with population and workforce growth. The number of officially unemployed has risen by almost 200,000. Underemployment has risen along with the increase in casualisation and part-time jobs. Close to half of those new jobs were part-time.

They were also let down by the failure of the government to come up with a serious, sustainable job creation program and to provide the necessary training and skills development for (re-)entry to the paid workforce. TAFE is being decimated by the states as the federal government promotes inferior private training colleges and fees continue to rise.

The government admits that unemployment is set to rise, but still persists with what is a contractionary budget and one that neglects the lessons that could be learnt from the failure of tax revenues to meet its expectations.

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## Guardian

Issue 1594

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## Robbing Peter to pay Paul

The ratings agencies are thrilled. The stockmarket is satisfied. The financial institutions and Big End of town have no complaints. Even the Murdoch media had kind words to say about Labor's 2013-14 Budget. Little attempt has been made to make mileage out of the failure to reach a budget surplus. Even the Coalition found it hard to disagree with its contents. All of that should ring alarm bells. A quick look beyond the two "big ticket" items – NDIS and Gonski – explains why.

Treasurer Wayne Swan defends billions of dollars in cuts – cuts that target the most needy and vulnerable – arguing that they are needed because circumstances have changed dramatically. "They started to change at the end of last year and they changed more dramatically this year and we're looking at a \$17 billion revenue write down in 12/13 and we had a clear choice," Swan told Leigh Sales when interviewed on the ABC 7.30 program (14-05-2013).

This question of choice is also taken up in Swan's budget speech, "We face a clear choice. Radical cuts to the bone that would risk jobs and our economy. Or a sensible, calm and responsible approach that puts jobs first. We have always put the interests of working Australians first. In this budget, we do so again. Just because the global economy took an axe to our budget, does not mean we should take an axe to our economy," Swan proudly proclaims, stretching the truth.

Firstly, no axe was taken to government income. Its income has continued to flow in at a similar rate to recent years but fell \$17 billion short of an over-optimistic forecast. (See page 1 article.) Its economic strategy was centred around the resources sector and still is. The government's bloated estimates of taxation revenue were never realistic. The economic crisis in Europe and the US, their potential impact on China, the high Australian dollar and the inevitability that commodity prices would fall should have suggested a little caution in forecasting economic outcomes. Although commodity prices have fallen, they are still at relatively high levels. With the exception of mining and finance sectors, most of the economy is stagnating or even recessed. One of the main reasons is insufficient demand.

The tragedy is that Australia is being de-industrialised, deskilled and job creation is left to the environmentally destructive mining sector with heavy reliance on exports and Asian growth, in particular China and India. Australia requires an expansionary budget that will increase demand for goods and services and create jobs for workers in Australia. This budget is not expansionary. Failure to increase unemployment benefits, the punitive reduction in single parent payments, privatisation, public service sackings, higher medical costs, massive investments in the military and the rise in casual and part-time employment all result in less income to spend on goods and services.

"Since mid-2009 we have fully offset all new spending with savings measures and that continues tonight," Swan says. These offsets mean that any new spending is funded out of cuts to some other area. For example, funding schools by cutting university funding and student assistance. In fact some offsets are larger than new spending and will ultimately have a contractionary impact on the economy. The budget surplus still remains paramount in government thinking, it has just been deferred in a pre-election budget.

Wait for Abbott if he gets in! The government has been forced to put on hold corporate tax cuts for a few years but the cuts to social spending pave the way for further corporate tax cuts. The budget is neo-liberal through and through. No wonder Abbott is having trouble attacking it. Again the government is assuming there will be no downturn in the economy.

Returning to the choices offered by the Treasurer – putting jobs first or cutting to the bone, Labor has not chosen jobs first. For workers, pensioners, the unemployed, students and the most disadvantaged, this budget cuts to the bone, following on from cuts in previous budgets. Job creation is largely left to the resource sector and luck. The economy and people of Australia need an expansionary budget based on planning for balanced and diversified development of manufacturing and other sectors with well thought through job creation.

## PRESS FUND

British PM David Cameron says that part of Antarctica will be named Queen Elizabeth Land. What a crawler! Unfortunately, he overlooked the fact that because of climate change (which he and other western leaders are doing very little to mitigate) the Antarctic ice cap is shrinking and the sea level rising, so by 2100 much of Betty Windsor Land will have disappeared. Never mind, it was a lovely idea! Actually, a much better idea prior to the next edition would be for you to send us a contribution for the Press Fund, which we rely on to cover our operating costs. Thanks in advance, and many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

Louise Molloy, in memory of Eddie Clynes \$50

Terrence Boseley \$100, R Girvan \$20, Noel Hazard \$50, Judy Anne Leggets \$10, May Day collection \$50, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$15

This week's total: \$300 Progressive total: \$2,820

# AMWU supports rally call to preserve fruit industry

**Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) fruit processing workers and growers are calling for tougher labelling laws and strong trade action to stem the flood of supermarket imports threatening to destroy their communities.**

Anger at the threat of job losses and social breakdown was rife at a protest rally in the Victorian fruit city of Shepparton last week, organised by Lee Luvara, an AMWU delegate at SPC Ardmona, and local woman Teena Knight.

SPC Ardmona, Australia's largest fruit preserver, has halved its quota orders to fruit growers amid mounting losses as Coles and Woolworths put extreme pressure on the local industry by filling their shelves with cheap foreign produce.

The high Australian dollar has also crippled the fruit export markets.

A crowd of nearly 2,000 locals who fear for their livelihoods as fruit trees are ploughed into the earth supported AMWU and company demands for emergency tariffs on the deluge of Thai, South African and Chinese product.

AMWU Victorian state secretary Steve Dargavel told them the high Australian dollar and currency devaluation by the US, China and Europe to protect their export industries had sent Australia's competitiveness down by 60 percent in recent years.

Mr Dargavel said consumers were being exposed to foreign food products including fruit with lower safety and hygiene standards, due to confusion created by poor labelling laws on what is Australian made and grown.

He said AMWU members from SPC at Shepparton would work with the company, Goulburn Valley community leaders and growers in heading to Canberra to back moves to reform labelling laws and secure tariff protection.

The AMWU has stressed that Country of Origin Labelling must make it clear to consumers not only what ingredients are grown in Australia, but whether the food is



processed here under high Australian standards.

The rally also applauded the AMWU's move to urge the government to increase tariffs or place quotas on imported fruit and canned tomato products as is its right under World Trade rules.

"It's high time that the government took all available steps under World Trade Organisation rules to protect our regional jobs, just like our trading partners are doing for their industries," Mr Dargavel said.

SPC Ardmona has asked for the same action. The emergency measure, under WTO Safeguards "critical circumstances" orders, is aimed at giving the besieged industry breathing space while the government conducts a safeguards review into whether permanent protection is justified.

But Mr Dargavel said there was widespread concern the move would fail if the Productivity Commission did the review, as it had decided against helping Australian manufacturers on two previous occasions.

SPC Ardmona's earnings are believed to have halved in the past few years with parent Coca-Cola

Amatil booking \$227 million in goodwill writedowns since 2011, when it closed its Mooroopna plant.

Shepparton Mayor Jenny Houlihan urged politicians to assist SPC Ardmona, which had 874 staff and generated \$63 million a year for the local economy, indirectly supporting 2,700 jobs.

AMWU delegate Lee Luvara told the crowd: "SPC Ardmona hurts, we all hurt."

He said SPC Ardmona had increased training and technology to improve fruit product quality to the exacting standards demanded by the supermarket duopoly.

"Big retailers then allow in product from overseas with questionable quality standards and control," he said. "Do they (overseas companies) have to jump the same hurdles Australian growers and manufacturers have to in order to get their products on the big retailers' shelves?"

Mr Luvara lashed out at loose, confusing country-of-origin food labelling and roused the crowd to chant three times: "Toss a tin in your trolley, Australia." ❖

## A week of hunting crime

**A series of hunting related activities over the past week have highlighted safety and nature conservation risks related to amateur, recreational hunting.**

"Over the past week, there have been reports of three incidents involving one hunter nearly being shot, a park user being threatened by bow hunters and a hunter being found to be transporting feral pigs which increases pig populations in areas where they are released," says Justin McKee of the National Parks Association of NSW.

"Consistent with controlling pest animals, the NSW government needs to invest for the long term in a sustained, well resourced program to combat illegal hunting activity. Until then, the government is in no position to be making deals that garner more responsibilities

for amateur hunters or the Game Council."

An incident in Alpine National Park, Victoria involved a hunter discharging his gun in the direction of another hunter, narrowly missing him. This highlights that there is broad range of skill sets among recreational hunters, and, that there should not be hunters and other park users in the same space.

A second incident in a national park in the Hunter, NSW involved a park user having his life threatened by a group of archers if he did not leave the area. The Coalition government's own risk assessment identified that there would be confrontation between hunters and other park users, and before hunting programs in national parks have begun, this has occurred.

It was reported in the *Lithgow*

*Mercury* that a man pulled over for a breath test is now facing charges for illegal transporting feral pigs from one area to another. This is how some hunters spike populations of feral pigs in areas they wish to hunt and has nothing to do with controlling pest animal populations or conservation hunting.

"The safety and conservation risks identified by the government in relation to recreational hunting are very real," Mr McKee said.

"The predictability of outcomes from a professional program is far more reliable and beneficial than any amateur based program can ever be. We ask the Premier not make the mistake of proving that and pull the pin on the program swiftly," concluded Mr McKee. ❖

## Tragic asylum seeker farce

# Australia excises itself

Peter Mac

**Last week in a bizarre move the Gillard government excised the whole of the Australian mainland from its own immigration requirements, in order to deter asylum seekers from seeking refuge here.**

That initiative went much further than the Howard government's excision of Australian islands. Now anyone arriving unannounced by boat on the shores of any Australian territory can be incarcerated in an offshore detention centre while awaiting processing of their applications for asylum. In contrast, anyone arriving by plane will be subject to minimum processing delays before being released into the community.

An asylum seeker arriving by boat on the shores of Sydney's Botany Bay would therefore be subject to the much harsher system, would be held for a much longer period, and would have a much higher chance of rejection than someone whose plane lands 100 metres inland at Mascot Airport.

This move is just the latest in a seemingly never-ending series of attempts by both Liberal/National and Labor Party governments to reap electoral advantage from the increasing flow of asylum seekers, while claiming that their real reason for treating them so harshly is to protect them from drowning at sea.

### Financial and political costs

Since February the estimated cost of detaining asylum seekers and processing their applications between July last year and June 2016 has increased by some \$3.2 billion, to \$8.1 billion. The government has stripped almost a billion dollars from foreign aid budget allocations to help cover these costs.

It has also allocated another \$16.6 million over the next two years to help the Immigration Department fight legal cases brought against it by asylum seekers who, not surprisingly, object to being indefinitely detained for arriving here seeking our help.

The government's actions are inconsistent with its obligations under the UN Refugee Convention, to which Australia is a signatory. Between July

last year and March this year the government lost approximately three quarters of all cases brought against it by asylum seekers.

The federal government and opposition have both blamed the current huge cost for dealing with asylum seekers on the increasing number of people arriving by boat. However, the primary reason actually lies in the twin policies of mandatory detention and off-shore processing.

Offshore detention is proving to be a colossal failure in both economic and human terms. Nauru currently accommodates 420 men and Manus Island 270 men, women and children. However, they have proved inadequate to deal with the numbers involved, so some asylum seekers have been shipped back to mainland detention centres.

Those remaining offshore want to know why they must endure greatly reduced access to communications, legal and medical services, and accommodation in far more primitive facilities, compared with those enjoyed by mainland centre detainees. Manus Island is notorious for its incidence of malaria. Nauru inmates are even confined to the camp and cannot roam the island or mix with local residents, as they could under the Howard regime.

The government has a close relationship with the Sri Lankan government, which provides advice to ASIO and the Australian government as to which Sri Lankan asylum seekers they consider to be security risks. As a result 55 people are now effectively under a life sentence in Australian detention centres.

The Australian government also "screens out" Sri Lankan asylum seekers whom it deems to be "economic refugees", and forcibly repatriates them. The government wants to have a similar relationship with other countries in our region, as well as similar arrangements for dealing with asylum seekers, and has allocated \$65.8 million over four years to help other nations conform to our requirements.

Moreover, the government has allocated \$205.8 million to help our border agencies cope with increasing asylum seeker inflows, \$88.6 million for cooperation with neighbouring border agencies, and \$84.8 million for maritime and aerial surveillance – in total, nearly \$380 million.



### And now the good news

There are small signs that a more humane approach is emerging in government ranks. Federal Immigration Minister Brendan O'Connor has declared that the current rate of people arriving by boat is "not acceptable in terms of the risks to human life, or the impact of the budget."

He has stated that some asylum seekers would be released on bridging visas into the community, albeit with no right to work and with little or no financial support, while their applications for asylum are heard.

In an amazing admission he added: "The alternative to putting asylum seekers in the community is to detain people while their claims for protection are assessed. This is not only expensive; it takes a toll on people's mental health and well being."

Exactly! O'Connor's statement immediately brings into question the whole validity of the mandatory detention policy, which maximises the number of detainees and the length of their detention, and the offshore processing policy, which maximises the average cost of detaining them.

Senator Trish Crossin, recently dumped by the Prime Minister for preselection as a Northern Territory Senate candidate, has chaired a parliamentary inquiry that found there was no reasonable justification for excluding refugees from appealing adverse security assessments by ASIO, a right

that citizens and permanent residents enjoy.

That finding will be welcomed by 55 asylum seekers who are currently under indefinite detention. Some have been detained for more than four years, with no prospect of ever being released, like the prisoners held in the notorious US Guantanamo Bay centre.

But perhaps the best news of all is that a team of four key lawyers led by human rights barrister Julian Burnside is to launch a legal challenge in the Nauru Supreme Court regarding the constitutional validity of detaining asylum seekers on Nauru.

A previous legal challenge narrowly prevented the government from detaining asylum seekers in Malaysia. If the current challenge is successful, the government will be prevented from sending detainees to Nauru and the off-shore detention policy will be thrown into doubt.

Let's hope the case is dealt with speedily. The Liberal/National Coalition has expressed no compunction about forcibly repatriating asylum seekers, "turning the boats around", or keeping children in detention.

Liberal shadow attorney-general George Brandis recently condoned the continued imprisonment of the ASIO-branded detainees, remarking with a vicious sneer that they "had no one to blame but themselves" for their plight.

Both the major parties have endorsed our participation in wars which have caused hundreds of thousands of people to seek refuge in other countries, including Australia. Regardless of who wins the September elections, it would be wonderful to have the odious and shameful policy of offshore detention laid to rest by a judicial review. ☺

Perth

### Eyewitness Report

## Gaza under Siege

a public meeting with Dr Mona El Farra

6.30pm Tuesday June 4

Alexander Library Theatre Cultural Centre Northbridge

Israel's Operation Cast Lead was described by a UN fact-finding mission as "a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorise a civilian population." The 2008-09 assault claimed the lives of 1,400 Palestinians and thrust the crisis in Gaza into the centre of the debate about the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The crippling siege continues to block access to much needed construction materials and denies people access to vital healthcare. Life for the people of Gaza is punctuated by regular military incursions. Gaza has come to be known as the world's largest open-air prison.

Come and hear Dr Mona El Farra, a physician by training who has dedicated herself to developing community based programs that aim to improve health quality and link health services with cultural and recreation services across Gaza. Dr El Farra is Vice President & Health Chair of the Red Crescent Society for Gaza and Gaza Director of the Middle East Children's Alliance.

Entry by donation: \$10 / \$5 conc.

Organised by Friends of Palestine WA and supported by Students for Palestine (UWA) & the Palestinian Community of Western Australia.

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Pete's Corner



# Defence White Paper

Anna Pha

## Part 2

### Indo-Pacific arc

**The White Paper states, "China's continued rise as a global power, the increasing economic and strategic weight of East Asia and the emergence over time of India as a global power are key trends influencing the Indian Ocean's development as an area of increasing strategic significance. In aggregate, these trends are shaping the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a single strategic arc."**

Hence the adjustment of "Australia's priority strategic focus to the arc extending from India through Southeast Asia to Northeast Asia, including the sea lines of communication on which the region depend." This adjustment in priorities is to bring Australia into line with the US's pivot.

The Paper notes that the sea-lanes are vital trade routes for China and India as well as for Japan, Singapore, India, South Korea and Australia.

The inclusion of India reflects growing concerns that India "is expected to become the world's third largest economy by 2025, by when it will also become the most populous state."

India is modernising its military. The US, with the assistance of Australia, is doing all it can to draw India into the US camp as an ally and pit it against China and Russia. Australia's sale of uranium should be seen in this light. There is also the risk of war between India and Pakistan which could serve US interests by weakening or even seeing India broken up.

Yet India is rapidly becoming more important to Australia as a trading partner and there has been a recent surge in migration from India.

The US's longer term plans for India are similar to those for China – to break the country up so that it cannot pose a threat to US economic domination. In the case of China, there is the question of counter-revolution and turning China into a "democracy".

The military agenda is only one facet of the US's attempts to contain China's economic development and prevent it overtaking the US. It is waging political and ideological battles within China, promoting disruptive forces and ethnic and religious divisions.

The Paper emphasises that the strategic environment will be shaped largely by the relationship between the United States and China while noting the importance that India will play in the longer term.

The government also expresses concern over the growing influence in the region of Russia and the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). It makes particular reference to "Russia's economic potential, as a supplier of oil and gas,

nuclear technology and conventional arms."

At the same time it promotes the formation of multi-lateral and bilateral alliances in the region and escalation of military exercises with the US's (and so Australia's) military partners.

### Economic domination

"Because the adverse impact of the Global Financial Crisis has been comparatively heavier on Western economies, it is accelerating the shift in economic and strategic weight to our region."

This is true. It is also accelerating the relative and absolute economic decline of the US, which the White Paper does not say explicitly. What the US cannot achieve by economic or political means, it pursues using military might and other forms of sabotage.

The US, NATO and other Western governments preach the rule of law, but shamelessly arm terrorist groups, do business with drug traffickers carry out assassinations, orchestrate coups, as well as bombing infrastructure to gain access to natural resources and pursue their economic interests.

Libya, Syria, Egypt, Afghanistan, Iraq and Yugoslavia, to name a few of their victims, have all been subjected to such exercises.

"Australia has direct interests in stable trade routes through the Indian Ocean. Some of Australia's major trading partners – China, Japan, Singapore, India and the Republic of Korea – are heavily reliant on these routes for energy and raw material resources," the Paper says.

It is clear that the US is seeking to control these routes with the assistance of allies like Australia. The aim is to contain China economically and militarily and the Indian Ocean is a critical component. The White Paper makes the point that "Over 80 percent of China's oil imports transit the area." Is the US planning to blockade China's sea lanes?

Brian Toohey writing for the *The Australian Financial Review* raises concerns that Australia is being diverted from its core objectives if planners allow operational doctrine to be dominated by the US's important new Air-Sea Battle Plan ("Spend less more wisely", 4-5 May 2013).

"The plan assumes the ADF will always be available to help impose a proposed naval blockade on exports of raw materials from reaching China, Australia's biggest market," Toohey says.

"It will need an extraordinarily compelling case before Australia participates in a blockade that will collapse the global economy. Nevertheless, the US military is pushing Australia to give higher priority to preparing for such a blockade as part of a high intensity war with China."

### War preparations

The 2013 Paper is the culmination of a series of reviews including the *Australian Defence Force Posture Review* (03-05-2012); *Australia in the Asian Century* (28-10-2012); and

the *National Security Strategy* (23-01-2013). Each of these papers spelt out aspects of the Australian government's and the US's "rebalancing" of economic, military and political focus towards Asia and the Indian Ocean.

Looking beyond the spin in the 2013 Paper, it is clear that the US and Australian governments are escalating their war preparations and China is still the principal target.

The paper is essentially a political statement for public consumption that attempts to sell a massive build-up in Australia's war preparations. It outlines the expansion of "joint" US bases in Australia, purchase of materiel, development of electronic, cyber and space warfare capacity and the expansion of maritime capability in particular.

As previously announced, Australia will continue with its plans to host permanently 2,500 (on rotational basis) US marines in Darwin and expand its bases for the use of the US at Tindal and Darwin.

It will go ahead with 12 new submarines (to be assembled in South Australia), new amphibious ships, ten C-27J Battlefield Airlift aircraft, Air Warfare Destroyers and other purchases that will extend its marine capability and striking power. Twelve EA-18G Growler aircraft will add to their Hornet range to "provide the ability to dominate the battle space electronically" – i.e. shut down electronic equipment.

Australia will play a major role in the US's space war and missile "defence" plans with the deployment of the C-band ground-based radar at the Harold E Holt Naval Communications Station at North West Cape in WA and the Space Surveillance Telescope elsewhere in Australia.

This will strengthen the US's capacity to attack satellites and space-based systems and monitor launches by other countries.

Australia is also planning to use unmanned surveillance systems including unmanned aircraft (drones). It is silent as to whether the drones would be used for military attacks.

Australia's build-up in offensive military capacity only serves to fuel the arms race in the Asia Pacific region. The White Paper appears to support the growing militarisation of the region and the expansion of the military industry in Australia. It is sold as job creating, whereas the same money put into such projects as public transport and alternative energy would create many more jobs, serve other social needs, do less damage to the environment and reduce the risk of war.

Instead of advocating nuclear disarmament, it talks in terms of "the deterrent value of the strategic nuclear forces of major nuclear powers."

Regardless of all the rhetoric, the main thrust of the White Paper – the strengthening of the US alliance, "rebalancing" of Australia's military, expansion of US bases and training on Australian soil and blind subservience to the US – means the agenda of the



Photo: Avante Media Australia

2009 White Paper has not changed. The main target remains China.

### Budget

There has been considerable criticism from the war hawks in the media that the government is not making enough cuts to other budget items to fund the massive shopping list of aircraft, submarines, warships and weaponry.

They seem to have overlooked that it is a pre-election budget and that the government plans to increase Defence spending from 1.5 to about two percent of GDP. The 2013-14 Budget Papers provide for ongoing increases from \$29 billion in 2013-14 to a whopping \$36 billion in 2016-17.

This is consistent with the Rudd government's policy of a real increase in military spending of three percent per annum which was put on hold by Gillard as the government attempted to restore the budget to a surplus.

The so-called cuts to military spending have largely come from delays in purchases and internal restructurings and efficiencies – the defence forces did not get all they wanted immediately, but they have not been hit hard like the unemployed, single parents or others on the receiving end of real cuts.

Regardless of whether Liberal or Labor wins office, with the elections over, military spending will once again be a sacred cow, shielded from axe-wielding treasurers. Australia is still preparing for war.

### Alternative path

China's White Paper, *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces*, published by the State Council in April, 2013, states: "It is China's unshakable national commitment and strategic choice to take the road of peaceful development. China unswervingly pursues an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defence policy that is defensive in nature."

"China opposes any form of hegemonism or power politics, and does

not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. China will never seek hegemony or behave in a hegemonic manner, nor will it engage in military expansion. China advocates a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and pursues comprehensive security, common security and cooperative security.

"It is a strategic task of China's modernisation drive as well as a strong guarantee for China's peaceful development to build a strong national defence and powerful armed forces which are commensurate with China's international standing and meet the needs of its security and development interests."

The US-Australia Alliance might be "indispensable" to the warmongering imperialists in Washington but for the people of Australia its cancellation is a necessity. Ending the Alliance, removal of US bases and other military facilities would be a huge political and military step towards peace and security.

As stated in "Australia in Asia" (*Guardian* 14-11-2012, #1573) "Australia does have another option: to develop genuine, friendly relations with China and other Asian neighbours based on respect, equality and recognising sovereignty and independence. This would necessitate the adoption of an independent foreign policy, removal of all US bases and other military installations and personnel and an end to the US alliance."

"This would not only bring peace and stability to the region, it would serve the interests of the people of Australia. The additional bonus is that billions of dollars would be saved that could be directed towards job creation and pressing social needs." It is scandalous that Australia spends over \$70 million a day on war preparations and cannot find the money to increase unemployment benefits by \$50 a week.

See last week's *Guardian* for Part 1 of this article ☺

**Instead of advocating nuclear disarmament, it talks in terms of "the deterrent value of the strategic nuclear forces of major nuclear powers."**

## Budget 2013-14

# Mean, cruel and dishonest

Continued from page 1

The tragedy is that Australia is being deindustrialised, deskilled and job creation is left to the environmentally destructive mining sector and resource exports, in particular, to China and India.

Of course, all of this is dependent on Labor being re-elected. There is little in this budget to suggest that Labor's prospects will be turned around. The prospect of an Abbott government is even more worrying.

No one would be surprised (other than the PM and Treasurer) that a mining tax designed by the Big Three global mining corporations only brought in a few hundred million dollars. Rio Tinto didn't pay a cent!

### Mean

The government's treatment of the unemployed is humiliating and punitive. How can anyone survive on \$35 a day. The unemployed will be allowed to earn up to an additional \$19.23 a week before their dole is reduced! That will raise the amount from \$31 to \$50 per week – or an extra \$2.75 on top of their \$35 a day. How generous!

Despite enormous outrage across the community the government refused to back down on its punitive treatment of single parents.

### Hitting the sick

The deferral of indexation of the Medicare rebate for doctors is petty and hits those on lowest incomes the hardest. Doctors will charge more, some will abandon bulkbilling and more patients will either not seek treatment, risking a more serious condition and more expensive treatment later, or turn to the public hospital system. It aims to save \$664.4 million over four years.

The government is raising the Medicare safety net threshold from \$1,221.90 to \$2,000. At present when the gap between doctors' fees, Xrays, pathology etc and Medicare refunds reaches \$1221.90, the gap becomes much smaller, usually leaving the patient a few dollars out of pocket. This means that people with chronic illness or receiving regular treatment for a condition and are not bulkbilled will be another \$778.10 out of pocket. Fortunately, the government is not raising the concessional (card holders) threshold of \$610.70 which should be abolished.

In the overall picture, the money saved, \$105.6 million over four years, is peanuts, but for its victims it is cruel and could result in treatment and tests being delayed or not carried out at all.

This comes on top of the cancellation of dental treatment under Medicare which benefited people with chronic illness – the majority on low incomes.

And as medical costs are set to rise, the government is phasing out the tax offset (rebate) of 20 percent of net medical expenses above \$2,060. (Eligible medical expenses include pharmaceuticals, dental, medical, hospital, optical, physiotherapy and a number of other services and expenses.)

Swan claims "more people go to the doctor". Of course more people go to the doctor. The population is growing and people are being encouraged to have health check-ups and see doctors instead of going to a hospital. He has not produced an iota of evidence that the system is being abused by patients.

On the positive side there is some more money for cancer prevention, treatment and research.

"Simple reform of primary care with more care provided in the community by better paid and supported GPs, would have saved the health budget billions and have been a win-win, i.e. reducing government spending on expensive hospital care and resulting in more and more appropriate health care for our patients in the community," Dr Con Costa from Doctor's Reform Society told *The Guardian*.

The cuts are cruel and unnecessary. The \$5 billion plus subsidy for private hospitals through the private health insurance rebate should be abolished. That would provide more than enough to fund a universal dental scheme under Medicare.

Unfortunately, dental care, housing and the homeless seemed to have dropped off the agenda.

The \$5,000 baby bonus, of most benefit to the poor, is being abolished but its means tested replacement for those on Family Tax Benefit Pt A is reduced to \$2,000.

### Deception

The actual details of how much the government will be spending in 2013-14 are buried in the fine detail. They often bear little resemblance to the headline amounts which may be estimates over three years, four years, seven years or even 10 years. There is no consistency nor is there much publicity as to how the additional spending might be allocated over a particular period.

For example, references to billions in additional spending give little indication of what is going to happen in the year or two ahead. It might be a few million or a few billion. In some instances the initial flow is a trickle.

The impression is given that the cuts (referred to as "savings" or "offsets") in the 2013-14 budget are funding large increases in other more important areas.

With a headline figure of \$9.8 billion in new spending on the Better



Schools program anyone could be forgiven for thinking that the nasty cuts were to fund billions of dollars for schools. New spending on the program over the next four years is \$2.8 billion. Over \$2 billion of that funding will come from "redirection" of existing school programs. Another \$2.6 billion (over 4 years) will be sourced by hitting universities and students. This will result in course closures, larger classes, sackings and will put uni out of reach of more working class kids and workers.

Likewise, the \$14.3 billion for DisabilityCare, is deceptive. Over the next four years (2013-14 to 2016-17) the government has allocated a total of \$1.65 billion for the scheme.

Perhaps the biggest deception of them all is the Treasurer's claim: "We've seen almost \$170 billion wiped off our tax receipts since the GFC [global financial crisis – Ed]." And the media ran with it as though it were the gospel truth!

Tax revenues have continued to rise at a steady rate. The only writedowns are in last December's pie-in-the-sky, grossly inflated government/Treasury estimates. Government receipts are expected to increase by 5.8 percent in 2012-13 and are forecast to rise by 7.3 percent in 2013-14. Admittedly it is down from 9 percent the previous year during the peak of the mining boom. But hardly a wipeout!

When measured in terms of a percentage of GDP, government income is 23.5 percent (this year) and forecast at 23.9 percent (next year), higher than in the previous five years. (This figure is preferred by some economists as it measures the government's income as a percentage of national income for the year.)

The "writedown" makes a great excuse for continuing to advance the neo-liberal agenda of public servant sackings and the abominable treatment of single parents, the unemployed and other austerity measures. Medicare and Centrelink offices, already overstretched, have been told to reduce their workforces

by the equivalent of 1,341 full-time employees.

### Not very smart

The \$2.3 billion cuts to universities and student support are hardly a step towards becoming the "smart country" that Swan talks about.

Australia's public investment in universities already ranks 25<sup>th</sup> out of the 29 advanced economies. The Greens and independent MP Andrew Wilkie have announced their support for the National Tertiary Education Union's "uni cuts - dumb cuts" campaign and declared their intention to vote against any enabling legislation.

Around 70 percent of the \$24 billion allocated for road and rail infrastructure to tackle "traffic congestion", is to be spent on roads. Instead of encouraging more cars and trucks onto the roads it would be smarter to invest in greener rail freight and public transport.

One of the craziest decisions is to restrict spending on measures and programs that promote renewable energy and energy efficiency to the amount raised by the sale of carbon permits. As a result of this "revenue neutral" approach, funding for environmental programs has been cut in this budget! This is at time when scientists have revealed that the earth is warming at a much faster rate than previously understood.

"Since 2010-11, Labor has paid \$5.7 billion to the states to support disaster relief," said Swan.

"We expect to pay a further \$6.2 billion over the five years from 2012-13." The government is making (inadequate) provision for future extreme weather events which again scientists warn are going to increase.

The carbon price under Australia's emissions trading system is due to be linked to Europe's in 2015-16. The European system is in crisis, with questions being raised about its future. It has failed to deliver and the price has plummeted to \$4.30 a tonne. This is a real "writedown". The Treasurer, however, is confident that by 2015 the carbon price will be around \$12 a tonne.

"As is widely accepted, putting a price on carbon pollution is the lowest cost and most efficient way to tackle dangerous climate change," claims Swan. The "widely accepted" is a bit rich, and the rest of his claim is outright dangerous and irresponsible.

In Europe there are no such illusions: "since the adoption of the EU ETS, emissions have risen; there is increased reliance on coal; the price of consumer energy has risen along with the profits of many industrial actors (as a direct result of the EU ETS) and millions of euros

of public money have been lost in VAT [GST – ED] fraud," according to the publication, "EU ETS myth busting: why it can't be reformed and shouldn't be replicated", published by more than 40 organisations, including Corporate Europe Observatory. (corporateeurope.org)

### Billions for war preparations

If Australia faced a military threat, there might be some justification for the massive amounts being thrown at enhancing the US Alliance and war preparations. (See *Guardian*, 15-05-2013, #1593, "Defence White Paper – Toning down the rhetoric while still preparing for war"). By the government's own admission it does not.

While pensioners, the unemployed and the sick are on the receiving end of the cuts, military (referred to as "Defence") spending is set to rocket. The headline figures are far more modest than the actual spending buried in the budget papers.

The Department of Defence is being allocated an extra \$10 billion over the next three years – \$113.1 billion from 2013-14. Then in the following six years the department can expect \$220 billion!!

Total resourcing for 2013-14 will be \$29 billion rising to \$36 billion by 2016-17.

The aim of this increase is to prepare for war, for the US imperialism's wars.

### Alternatives

While Gonski and the NDIS enjoy considerable support in the community, the budget has failed to address the rising level of poverty and the pressing needs of the unemployed, pensioners, struggling families, single parents, migrants, Indigenous Australians, higher education students, the chronically ill, the homeless and small family farmers. It also failed dismally on climate change and the environment.

The promise of more money for schools and disability support (albeit in six or eight years time) is very popular, but at this stage does not look like enough to buy off an electorate, especially when the Coalition supports them.

Swan talks about "choices", but confines his choices to within a narrow, neo-liberal big business-driven framework. Australia needs a People's Budget, a budget that puts the needs of people and the planet first. That looks at savings such as cutting the diesel fuel rebate, reducing military spending and raising more income by taxing the big corporations. More on that in a future issue of *The Guardian*. ☺

**The "writedown" makes a great excuse for continuing to advance the neo-liberal agenda of public servant sackings and the abominable treatment of single parents, the unemployed and other austerity measures.**

# FMLN continues on the path of progress in El Salvador

**Damian Alegria is a deputy in the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of El Salvador. He is a member of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), which is the main left-wing organisation in the country and currently the biggest party in the parliament. The FMLN was formed from the union of the Communist Party and several other left groupings that fought a long civil war against the regime dominated by pro-US elites. The war ended with the Chapultepec Peace Accords of 1992 and since then, the FMLN has been building its grass-roots presence and influence at the various levels of government in the country. FMLN candidate Mauricio Funes was elected president of El Salvador in 2009 and campaigning is already underway for the election of 2014 when FMLN member Sánchez Cerén will be the candidate.**

Damian Alegria (a name adopted during his time as a guerrilla) has a strong academic background in law and economics with hands-on experience working with the most disadvantaged people in El Salvador. He is on Commissions of Treasury and Budget, Foreign Affairs, Central American Integration, Salvadorans Abroad and Municipal Affairs. He recently visited Australia to meet El Salvadoran communities and to talk to solidarity activists in several Australian cities. In Adelaide he took time out of his busy schedule to talk to Bob Briton from *The Guardian*.

**Guardian:** Is the FMLN satisfied with the pace of change in El Salvador since the Peace Accords? What do you consider to be your greatest achievements in that time?

**Damian Alegria:** We are happy with the process of change in El Salvador. Maybe we could have expected more but we understand the process is unfolding well. Maybe the most important change since the peace agreements is that the military is not the biggest power as it was previously. They don't rule the country as before. They are an aid to civil society and they respect the constitution. They don't carry out any *coups d'état* as they did previously and they have changed significantly due to a number of processes that have put them in a very different category. So, the first thing we can say is that we have put the threat of military dictatorship in the ground.

The other most important thing we have achieved, the second most important change in El Salvador, is that now left-wing parties can be legal. The main symbol of that change is the FMLN; a former guerrilla force that has turned into a party. It is a legal party that is working very openly around the country. This means there is no longer political persecution in El Salvador. We can work wherever we want; we do it openly with the four letters "FMLN" on display and nobody says anything against us. There is a process underway in which more and more people are coming to know what the FMLN is and what we are doing and planning for the future. More and more people are coming to work and struggle with the FMLN to achieve these goals.

In this way we take part in the exercise of political power now. We started with a very small number of counties in which we were governing the cities. We are now increasing that number; we are now governing in 96 counties, which have some of the most important cities

in El Salvador. We have a number of deputies in the parliament. There are 31 comrades in the Assembly. We are the biggest party now in terms of the number of representatives and this grants us a useful level of power to propose and approve a good number of laws. Even though we don't hold a simple majority of votes in the Assembly, we enjoy good relations with other parties, even right-wing ones that differ with ARENA, which remains the main obstacle to the development and modernisation of the country. With these other parties we have cooperated to pass many laws in favour of the El Salvadorian people. We feel we can work with these other political parties. We are trying to build a different, more democratic country.

Maybe the other big issue in terms of political power is that in 2009, after a tough struggle during the elections, we won the executive branch of government. This is another very important change because, for almost 200 years, only right-wing individuals and parties have ruled the country. Now, for the first time in almost 200 years, we are ruling the country. It hasn't been easy. It has been a matter of governing with a lot of problems of debt and other finance problems and a lack of resources. Even so, we used the limited budget in a very different way; investing a lot in education, health, supporting small business, small farmers and many other initiatives.

This is another important change made possible by having the executive branch. We are investing a lot in the people, trying to make changes that benefit the poor and to make our country in the long term, via strong investment in education, one of the most advanced countries in terms of the skills and academic level of the population.

So, the change that the army is no longer the main power it was before, the legalisation of the FMLN as a political party, the part we have in the administration of the counties and the National Assembly and in the executive branch, and the launching of a lot of progressive programs – these are the most important changes that have taken place in El Salvador.

**G:** How does the party rate its chances in the election of 2014? Where do the main dangers to progress come from?

**DA:** I think the chances for victory in 2014 are very strong because in many ways we are showing we are committed to the people, the poor, the people who need more and need the support of the government. I'm referring to workers, peasants, small farmers, small business, students – they all feel we are the party that can continue the changes we have started with this government. The polls are showing day-by-day that the FMLN has an advantage over the right-wing party and that the popularity of our candidate is growing. The right-wing candidate is losing support with every poll they take.

Through our group of parliamentarians and as a party we are launching programs to support agriculture, scholarships and other things that people need. For example ALBA Petróleos is an enterprise in which the FMLN participated with the idea that the profits of the company are used to finance other programs of use to the people. We are using other ALBA\* programs to support farmers, to produce more energy in the country, trying to stop the rising price of oil and many things people understand will help them to have a better life.



Damian Alegria (centre) with representatives of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in Adelaide.

The main dangers to progress continue to be the right-wing parties and the media. They are lying, confusing people, trying to distort information about how things are developing. Maybe the media is the main problem we have now in El Salvador. There is also an effort on the part of the some sectors in the US to interfere in the internal affairs of the country. We are trying to stop that. We insist we are an independent country.

The interference is probably not as strong as when the Republicans were in government in the US. But every time that somebody from the US government or its embassy says something about what we must do, we say "This is our country and we are going to rule it in the way we decide. Thank you for your opinion but this is an issue that we care about."

I think there are fewer dangers than before but perhaps the media is the most important danger now because it has a capability to confuse people and to set them against the FMLN. We are doing our best to avoid this by going to talk with the people directly, to make them understand what we are really doing.

**G:** How important to the process unfolding in El Salvador are the changes underway in other parts of Latin America?

**DA:** We feel we are part of the process of having more independence, self-determination and sovereignty in Latin America. We are

happy to be part of that wave of change taking place in Latin America. We admire things that are happening in other countries such as Venezuela, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil and Argentina.

We feel we are doing our part by introducing a lot of these changes and by participating in some of the forums – the Sao Paulo forum, the Latin American Parliament and, from last year, the Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC), which is an alternative to the Organisation of American States (OAS). For a long time OAS has been used by the US as a tool against the interests of the people of Latin America.

We are part of all of this and we are on the way to a changed situation in Latin America. We are happy to be part of that and we feel we are giving a bit more strength to that process.

**G:** Are there any other comments you would like to make for the readers of our newspaper?

**DA:** I would like to say to all the readers that we are having an election next year in February 2014. I would like to invite everybody not only to pay attention to what is happening in El Salvador but also to take part as an electoral observer. I'm sure that a good number of people from Australia can go and be part of this celebration that we are going to have on February 2 when the election is held.

That's because we are sure the people

**Maybe the most important change since the peace agreements is that the military is not the power as it was previously.**

# ador

# No justice for Martin Corey

Barry Kearney

**Martin Corey is a 63 year-old-man imprisoned in the north of Ireland.**

On April 16, 2010, Martin's house in Lurgan was visited by members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Martin was arrested.

When he queried what the charges were, Martin was told that the police officers "did not know". And that all they were told was to arrest Martin.

Martin Corey is a Republican who, in his youth fought against the foreign occupation of his native land. It was during this struggle for freedom that Martin Corey was charged with the murder of two members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the forerunner of the PSNI. Martin was found guilty of the charge and sentenced to life imprisonment in December 1973.

Martin served just short of the next 19 years behind bars; he was released in June 1992.

Martin Corey did not sign any documents imposing conditions on his release.

Martin returned to Lurgan, where he set up a successful business as the local grave digger, formed a long-term relationship and settled down to a peaceful life. That was until his arrest in 2010. Martin Corey is still in prison and he still does not know what the charges against him are. Martin's legal team also do not know what the charges are and neither does any judge hearing the case against Martin, because according to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), he is being held on "Undisclosed or Secret Charges". A special advocate, appointed by the NIO, can view the evidence and tell the judge what they can do. This makes a mockery of the judicial system when a politician, unelected in the North of Ireland, can make the rules regarding a person's freedom. Martin Corey

is selectively interned by an unjust British system.

Martin Corey is entitled as a life sentence prisoner to a parole hearing every 12 months; this is continually adjourned or not even scheduled. And the conditions that Martin is being kept under are a disgrace. Mail being kept from him for weeks at a time, prison craft that he has made, smashed by vindictive prison officers, as well as being denied proper medical or dental treatment in a reasonable time.

In May 2012, Martin appealed his imprisonment based on the fact he had not been charged with any crime nor had he been brought before a judge. Justice Treacey heard the appeal and in his verdict stated that Martin's human rights had been breached and ordered Martin Corey be released immediately and placed no conditions on the release.

Martin returned to Maghaberry Prison to pack his belongings, his family travelled from Lurgan to pick him up and to take him home. It was whilst Martin was waiting in the prison reception that prison officers informed him that the Secretary of State had ordered him returned to the cells. The NIO had appealed Justice Treacey's decision, but only after the Justice had boarded a plane and was about to leave the country, otherwise Justice Treacey would have had to hear any appeals. With Treacey out of the way a patsy of the British NIO upheld their appeal and hence Martin was returned to the cells.

When Martin's legal team found out they immediately launched legal action against the appeal by the NIO, but to no avail. Martin finally got to appeal the decision in the High Court on July 11, more than six weeks after the decision by Justice Treacey, and that appeal the NIO overturned in hours.

The Lord Chief Justice upheld the ruling and stated that Martin's case should be reheard on November 26, 2012. At the

rehearing a panel of three appeals judges upheld the decision of the NIO to keep Martin incarcerated.

Martin's legal team then applied to the High Court for permission to take their case before the Supreme Court in London. Martin's legal team were very confident of winning in the Supreme Court, but in early May 2013, their euphoria was short lived as the appeal was denied without any valid reason being given. If you look beyond this denial, you will see British intransigence at its best.

By denying Martin the right to appeal to the Supreme Court, they have effectively blocked his application to the European Court of Human Rights, as he has not exhausted all domestic avenues. British politicians are very quick to point the finger in regards to human rights abuses around the world, but even quicker to put the blinkers on when it is occurring in their own backyard and perpetrated by their own people.

The Good Friday Agreement promised Equality, Justice and Human Rights for all. This obviously does not include Republicans who do not agree with the way the peace is being portrayed or do not agree with the ruling parties. Martin Corey is but one of these people who are suffering from a great injustice at the hands of a vindictive British government.

Martin Corey is an innocent man; he is innocent of any wrong doing. If the authorities believe that Martin is guilty of a crime, then the law of the land must prevail, charge him and bring him before a court of law, where he has the right to defend himself, not having to fight an invisible foe in the guise of undisclosed charges.

No Charges! No Evidence! Not Guilty!  
Release Martin Corey.  
James Connolly Association Australia,  
Melbourne. ✪

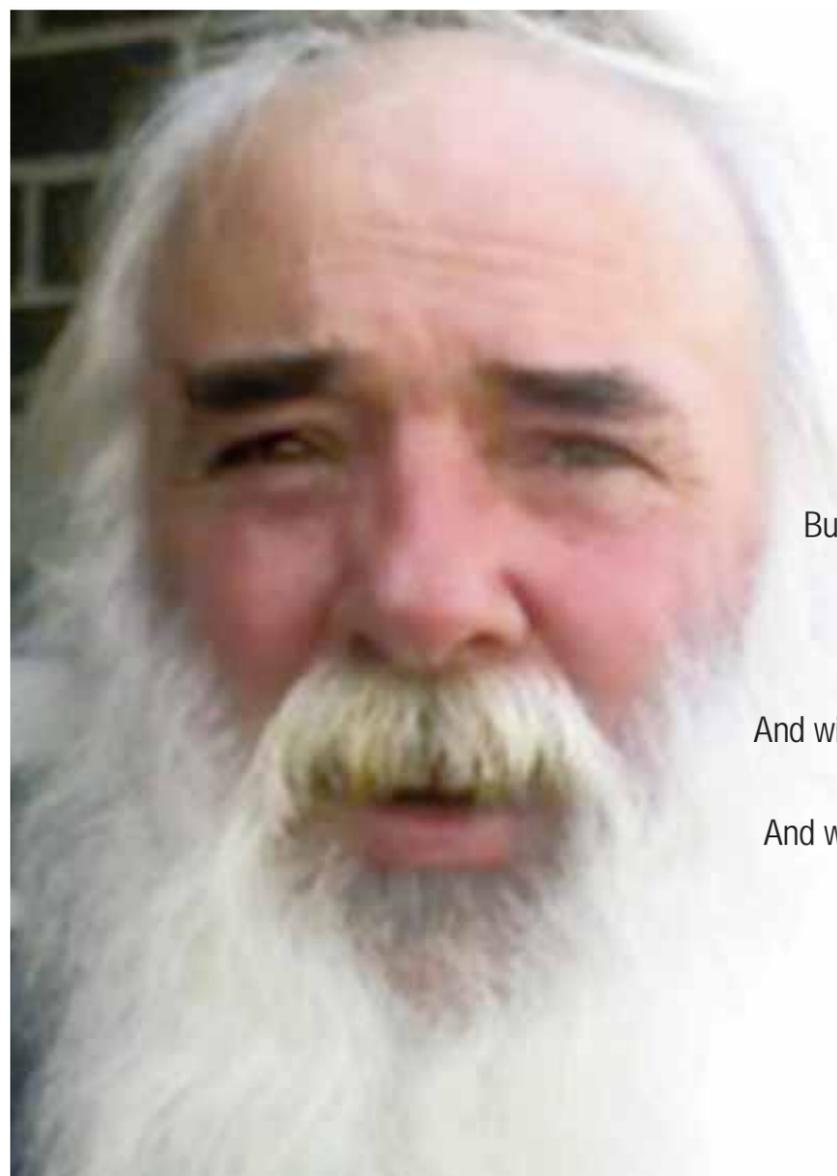
are going to support the FMLN to continue deepening the process of change in El Salvador. I'm inviting everybody to be aware of what is happening in El Salvador and support our process by going to El Salvador to take part in observing the elections at that time.

I would like also to thank all the organisations, the Communist Party, Socialist Alliance, Socialist Alternative, the unions in different sectors, the governments in different states, the federal government and the Australian people in general for all the support you have been giving to our people. They have been coming for 30 years, to help us have a different life. My thanks, my gratitude for all the things that you do to help our people.

I want to say thank you especially in the hope that that we can strengthen the relations between El Salvador and Australia in terms of an alliance of the populations, in terms of the peoples, in terms of the governments. I believe a future of better cooperation between Australia and El Salvador is possible.

\* ALBA – the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America is an international economic cooperation organisation for Latin America based on the goal of integration, mutually beneficial trade and solidarity. It has eight full members including Cuba and Venezuela, which was the driving force for its establishment. ✪

# e the peace e biggest



## The Flag

Although we no longer can carry the flag,  
The poor old legs are beginning to sag.

But our hearts and our minds are still with those,  
Who take to the streets and dare to oppose.

Wrongs that are done in society's name,  
And with banners and placards apportion the blame.

And with chants and songs like "We will overcome",  
Imagine the world that the workers have won.

A world that Marx and Engels foretold,  
A world where mankind will live as one.

# The three heroines of Guatemala

Amy Goodman

**Former Guatemalan President Efraín Ríos Montt was hauled off to prison Friday before last. It was a historic moment, the first time in history that a former leader of a country was tried for genocide in a national court. More than three decades after he seized power in a coup in Guatemala, unleashing a US-backed campaign of slaughter against his own people, the 86-year-old stood trial, charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. He was given an 80-year prison sentence. The case was inspired and pursued by three brave Guatemalan women: the judge, the attorney general and the Nobel Peace Prize laureate.**

"My brother Patrocinio was burnt to death in the Ixil region. We never found his remains," Rigoberta Menchu told me after Ríos Montt's verdict was announced. She detailed the systematic slaughter of her family: "As for my mother, we never found her remains, either. ... If her remains weren't eaten by wild animals after having been tortured brutally and humiliated, then her remains are probably in a mass grave close to the Ixil region. ... My father was also burned alive in the embassy of Spain [in Guatemala City] on January 30, 1980."

Rigoberta Menchu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, "in recognition of her work for social justice and ethno-cultural reconciliation based on respect for the rights of indigenous peoples." She continued telling me about her family's destruction: "In 1983, my brother Victor Menchu was also shot dead. His wife had her throat slit, and he was fleeing with his three children. Victor was jailed in the little town, but his three children were kept in a military bunker. My two nieces died



Efraín Ríos Montt – the first time in history that a former leader of a country was tried for genocide in a national court.

of hunger in this military base, and my brother Victor was shot. We still have not found his remains."

According to the official Commission on Historical Clarification, which undertook a comprehensive investigation of Guatemala's three-decade genocide, at least 200,000 people were killed. Menchu brought one of the original lawsuits against the perpetrators of the genocide, which resulted in the trial that ended with Ríos Montt's conviction.

Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey was appointed as Guatemala's first female attorney general in December 2010, and has earned wide acclaim for her pursuit of perpetrators of crimes against humanity. The judge in the case is another woman, Yassmin Barrios. In a country where, historically, people who challenge those in power are often killed, Paz y Paz and Barrios demonstrated tremendous courage.

Journalist Allan Nairn, who has

covered Guatemala, among other conflict zones, since the early 1980s, observed the trial. In mid-April, the trial was ordered shut down by another Guatemalan court, presumably under the influence of President Otto Pérez Molina. From Guatemala City, Nairn reported then: "The judge, Yassmin Barrios, and the attorney general, Claudia Paz y Paz, both say they're going to defy this order to kill the case, which is extraordinary."

They continued the trial, and eventually Ríos Montt was found guilty. Nairn said, after the verdict: "Judge Barrios ... ran the trial. She was the one who had to deliver the verdict. As she left the courthouse every night, you could see her wearing a bulletproof vest. The judges and prosecutors involved in the case received death threats. In one case, a threat against a prosecutor, the person delivering the threat put a pistol on the table and said, 'I know where your children are.' It takes a lot of courage to push a case like this."

Menchu said: "This verdict is historic. It's monumental. The verdict against Ríos Montt is historic. We waited for 33 years for justice to prevail. It's clear that there is no peace without justice." It is all the more so because it occurred in a national court in Guatemala.

She noted that the International Criminal Court, as currently empowered, could not have taken the case, saying: "It's not retroactive. It doesn't address those cases that were committed before the court was created. So the statute of limitations on the International Criminal Court should be lifted."

Nairn was supposed to testify at the trial. One interview he conducted in 1982 has attracted widespread attention. On camera, he spoke with "Major Tito," who said entire families of indigenous villagers worked with the guerrillas. Tito's troops told Nairn that they routinely killed such civilian villagers. "Tito," it turns out, is none other than the current

president of Guatemala, Otto Pérez Molina.

Nairn sees the guilty verdict against Ríos Montt as an opening to potential prosecution of Pérez Molina and others: "There would be hundreds of US officials who were complicit in this and should be subpoenaed, called before a grand jury and subjected to indictment – including [President Reagan's Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights] Elliott Abrams.

And the US should be ready to extradite them to Guatemala to face punishment, if the Guatemalan authorities are able to proceed with this. And General Pérez Molina is one who should be included."

Regardless of where the case goes from here, Guatemala has set an example for the world, away from violence and impunity. Or as Nairn puts it, "Guatemala's Mayans have reached a higher level of civilization than the United States." *NationofChange* ✪

## Dead kids' IDs "commonly" used by cops

Paddy McGuffin

**BRITAIN: The use of dead children's identities by undercover police officers was "common practice", a chief constable investigating the matter has told MPs. Mick Creedon made the comment in a letter to Parliament's home affairs committee.**

Mr Creedon is leading Operation Herne, a probe into Scotland Yard's Special Demonstration Squad (SDS). A series of allegations has been made since former PC Mark Kennedy was exposed in 2011 as an undercover officer who spied on environmental protesters under the alias Mark Stone, during which time he had at least one sexual relationship with a female activist.

A number of women and men

are currently suing the Metropolitan Police over alleged intimate relationships with undercover officers, including cases where children have been fathered.

Derbyshire Police chief Mr Creedon was brought in to take over the inquiry from the Met in February.

"This issue is very complicated and mistakes could put lives in jeopardy."

Mr Creedon was responding to a series of questions put to him by the home affairs committee.

He told MPs that he couldn't estimate how many dead children's identities had been used but stated that "this was common practice within the SDS".

There are currently 50,000 documents yet to be examined.

Committee chairman Keith Vaz

said that it was "vital that Herne does not go the way of the original phone-hacking investigations. It is imperative that a timetable is set for completion of the operation, and the victims informed and apologised to as soon as possible.

"In particular, the families of dead children whose identities were used, the offspring conceived by police officers using their undercover identities and those who had sexual relations with them using their alias must be contacted as a matter of urgency."

Mr Vaz said he remained concerned that a full time police officer was leading the investigation which he said was "essential to the public confidence in the police."

*Morning Star* ✪

## Americans ride to free the Cuban Five

Ismael Parra

**On Sunday, May 5, two Americans rode their bikes in a 40-mile ride that passed through over 20 different towns in the area of Lake Como, Italy.**

This year the annual Garibaldina cycling event, in which hundreds of cyclist participate, was co-sponsored by the Italy-Cuba Friendship Circle of Como City.

The riders called on the US government to set free the unjustly imprisoned five Cubans who were active in the US in 1998 to stop terrorist attacks by anti-Castro organisations that are based in Florida.

The five Cubans had provided information to the Cuban government on US-based terror plots by anti-Communist exiles such as the bombings of hotels.

When the Cuban government gave information to the FBI, the five Cubans were arrested. The terrorist groups were not dismantled and are still active.

The event in Como was followed by a banquet lunch where American and Swiss riders were able to meet and speak with fellow Italian riders as well as with the Cuban Ambassador to Italy, Milagros Carina Soto Agüer, and a representative from the Cuban consulate in Milan, Eduardo Vidal Chirino.

Also present were national regional heads of the Italy-Cuba Friendship Association which has organised groups, called circles, throughout Italy. One of the Five, Rene Gonzalez, has been released and is now back in Cuba. *People's World* ✪

# America's long war

Alex Lantier

**Testifying before the US Senate Committee on Armed Services last week, Pentagon officials claimed that "war on terror" legislation gives them sweeping powers to wage war anywhere in the world, including inside the United States, without Congressional authorisation.**

Assistant Defence Secretary Michael Sheehan argued that the 2001 Authorisation for the Use of Military Force (AUMF), passed by Congress after the September 11 attacks, constituted effective Congressional authorisation for future wars waged under the rubric of the "war on terror." In his view, the Pentagon can continue its global campaign of drone assassination strikes and launch further wars under the heading of the "war on terror," without renewed authorisation from Congress.

"At this point, we're comfortable with the AUMF as it is currently structured," Sheehan said. "Right now ... it serves its purpose."

Sheehan made clear that he believed that this authorisation of war extended into the indefinite future. He said, "In my judgment, this is going to go on for quite a while, yes, beyond the second term of the president ... I think it's at least 10 to 20 years."

Sheehan's position represents a flagrant rejection of the US Constitution. Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution specifies: "The Congress shall have power ... to declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water." However, top Pentagon officials are effectively asserting that Congress' power will be indefinitely superseded by the President and the military, which can launch limitless wars at will.

While the issue is publicly presented as a debate over revising the AUMF, powerful sections of the American ruling class are in fact moving to suspend key provisions of the US Constitution and install a presidential-military dictatorship. In response to questioning from friendly Senators, the Pentagon officials indicated that they believe the AUMF

allows the executive to unilaterally invade other countries and wage war inside the United States.

Senator Lindsey Graham asked whether the current AUMF gave US President Barack Obama the authority to put "boots on the ground" in Yemen in the Middle East, or the Congo in Africa. The Pentagon's acting general counsel, Robert Taylor, said that it did.

"Would you agree with me, the battlefield is anywhere the enemy chooses to make it?" Graham asked.

Sheehan replied, "Yes sir, from Boston to FATA,"—referring to Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, a key target of US drone strikes, and the decision to put the entire city of Boston on lockdown after the April 15 Boston Marathon bombings.

In his prepared testimony, moreover, Sheehan wrote that "being a US citizen does not immunise a member of the enemy from attack" by US forces. With this comment, Sheehan was again aligning the Pentagon with the US drone assassination of Anwar al-Awlaqi, a US citizen, on September 30, 2011. Washington gave no evidence that Awlaqi was planning or executing any attack on the United States before murdering him with a Hellfire missile.

This follows public speculation earlier this year by US Attorney General Eric Holder about possibly extra-judicially murdering US citizens on US soil, during counter-terrorism operations.

The entire framework of the Senate hearing testified to the deep decay of American democracy. The AUMF itself is an anti-democratic document, authorising the President to use force against any "nations, organisations, or persons he determines planned, authorised, committed, or aided terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harboured such organisations."

While the AUMF was cynically presented as being directed against Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, Washington took it as a blank cheque to wage unpopular wars and order assassinations throughout the world.

This pretext was fundamentally fraudulent, in that these policies were not primarily directed at Al-Qaeda.



They aimed to install neo-colonial rule in the Middle East, where most countries played no role in launching the September 11 attacks, in order to seize control of key oil resources and strengthen Washington's geo-strategic position vis-à-vis other major powers. They also were aimed at suppressing popular opposition to such policies in the American working class by installing a climate of fear and intimidation.

The shifting needs of US imperialist policy over the last 12 years have exploded the pretext that its wars are justified by the AUMF. Many Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups Washington is attacking, such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb or Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, did not exist in 2001 and played no role in the September 11 attacks. Washington even uses others, such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group or the Al Nusra Front in Syria, as allies of convenience in its wars for regime change in these countries.

The Pentagon has responded by asserting that the AUMF also grants it the authority to wage war

on "associated forces", referring to Al-Qaeda, though the term does not appear in the text of the AUMF. This provoked questions and even certain criticisms from the Senators.

Senator Angus King noted, "You guys have essentially rewritten the Constitution here ... You guys have invented this term, associated forces, and it renders the war powers of Congress null and void." He added, "I'm just a little old lawyer from Brunswick, Maine, but I don't see how you can possibly read this to be in comport with the Constitution."

Senator John McCain said that, when the Senate voted for the AUMF in 2001, "None of us could have envisioned [granting] authority [for war] in Yemen and Somalia ... For you to come here and say we don't need to change [the AUMF] or revise it, I think is, well, disturbing."

Senator Joe Donnelly raised Al Nusra in the Senate hearing and asked whether by affiliating to Al-Qaeda – as Al Nusra has done – a group automatically could be considered a threat to the United States.

Sheehan replied, "Yes sir, although it's a bit murky, I hate to say, because there are groups that have openly professed their affiliation with Al-Qaeda yet, in fact, as a government we haven't completely grappled with that as of now."

Nonetheless, all the Senators stressed their basic agreement with the fraudulent framework of the "war on terror". King stressed, "I don't disagree that we need to fight terrorism."

McCain told the Pentagon officials, "I don't blame you because basically you've got carte blanche as to what you are going to do around the world."

These comments expose the political reality that the only constituency for democracy in the United States is to be found in the working class. Even as the AUMF and the "war on terror" are publicly exposed as pretexts for the US military to unconstitutionally seize immense powers, the political establishment continues to support the Pentagon, in order to further the strategic interests of US imperialism. [globalresearch.ca](http://globalresearch.ca) ✪

## Tory clowns threaten to set Britain ablaze

Luke James in Blackpool

**BRITAIN: Firefighters have vowed to resist killer cuts after a former fire chief called for services to be slashed. Sir Ken Knight claimed that the government could cut spending by £200 million by sacking front-line firefighters and merging or selling off England's 46 brigades.**

He bizarrely claimed that this would not put the public or firefighters in danger because of a drop in the number of call-outs. The report, which was ordered by Tory Fire Minister Brandon Lewis, was smuggled to the media in the early hours of the morning in an attempt to blindside opponents.

But firefighters immediately warned the public that it was a blatant attempt to soften them up for potentially fatal Tory cuts, set to be announced in next month's spending review.

Fire Brigades Union (FBU) general secretary Matt Wrack said the report was a "fig leaf" that fails to hide the Tories' ideological assault. He told delegates at the FBU's conference in Blackpool that it was the union that won campaigners to improve fire safety and led "genuine modernisation" of the fire service.

He said the same "right-wing, free-market Tories" who opposed safety measures are now using the measures' success as an excuse to make public-sector cuts.

"We won't take any lectures from Tory clowns about public safety," said Mr Wrack. "Sprinklers don't rescue people from fires. Smoke alarms do not put out fires. Firefighters are irreplaceable."

Trade Union Congress leader Frances O'Grady also made clear that "these cuts are a matter of life and death to ordinary people."

"Fewer people are now making

calls to the fire service but this is mostly down to the preventative work that firefighters are doing out in the community," she told delegates. "Further cuts will simply put all this valuable work in jeopardy."

"Cuts cost lives - every part of the country is at risk from this post-code lottery of cuts and closures."

The Con-Dem coalition government has already axed 2,200 front-line firefighters, and has drawn up plans to privatise the service and force firefighters to work until they are 60.

Today's dodgy report puts the government on a collision course with firefighters across Britain, who said that they are ready to strike to save lives.

Pledging TUC support for their campaign, Ms O'Grady added: "Our fire service is not for sale. Fighting fires should be about public need, not private profit."

*Morning Star* ✪

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The Guardian  
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but organisations like the NRA are still promoting guns and violence. No wonder the country is in trouble.

**Mati English  
Sydney**

### Checklist for disability support

**I would like to bring to your readers and friends some handy hints for those who don't fit the criteria of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and who are on a DSP (Disability Support Pension).**

Please ensure your GP bulk bills or takes payment electronically so a refund comes back from Medicare into your bank a/c directly.

Request your GP does a doctor's care plan for you.

Register via your GP to your local public hospital (out patients) to also keep an eye on you with their medical team of all experts again under Medicare if you need to be admitted to a ward hospital bed – request social

worker, OT, physio attend you after discharge from hospital together with RN (Registered Nurse) to visit you in your own home with supports your GP requests.

If you have a serious chronic illness, ask your GP to refer you to the RN for "key safe".

The RN will have this installed together with personal alarm (get permission off your landlord for spare keys cut to put in key-safe) and mounted outside your front door for emergency services to use who only have the code to get keys to get in and help you. Usually it takes 15 to 20 minutes for them to tell your control PA operator what the problem is.

Then all you need will be with you including professional, ambulance, hospital medical team will be waiting for your arrival and be prepared to take over the care for you.

If you have money in your hospital bag – tell ambulance chief and the hospital will lock away with hospital security. You can pay for your own TV, phone or take your own mobile phone and charger in bag with you.

Ensure you also have your pension card and Medicare card in your bag, even if the control people tell hospital. This should all be documented on your records. You will not have to worry other than get better. You will be with highly professional medical people and safe.

Good health care to all.

**Judi Ann Leggetts  
DSP Australia Inc**

### Road accident victims to be hit

**Legislation to change the state's Compulsory Third Party motor vehicle accident insurance scheme is set to be debated in NSW parliament. The Bill significantly alters the rights of people who are injured on NSW roads by cutting what is available for innocent victims of road accidents and extending benefits to include at-fault drivers.**

In the vast majority of cases, compensation for loss of earnings

and future medical bills will be cut off after 5 years, even if a person cannot work as they did before the accident or they need further surgery. It is hard to believe that the government intended anything this harsh when it started a reform process and it is also hard to believe that children who suffer an incapacity for work for life as a result of an accident could be the biggest losers.

I have seen the very real pain and suffering road accidents can have on people's lives and the difference adequate compensation can make to the health and well-being of families and individuals recovering from road trauma.

Whatever your view, this legislation should not be rushed and the community should be fully informed before our state Parliament votes to take away the long-standing rights of innocent motor vehicle accident victims, and in particular the rights of injured children.

**Genevieve Henderson  
Slater & Gordon Lawyers**

### Gun nuts

**How sick do you have to be to produce a shooting target called the "ex-girlfriend" that bleeds when hit. That's exactly what the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the USA had on sale at its convention in Houston.**

Anti-violence groups were not amused and blasted the NRA for allowing Zombie Industries to sell the mannequins. The same group has previously been forced to remove a target which resembled Barack Obama.

The USA has a shocking record of violent deaths of innocent people

## Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

# Female, black and vulnerable



Some 87 percent of the five million individuals stopped by the NYPD were Black or Latino.

**Keith Sulzer, commander of the Cleveland Police force in the US city of that name became highly indignant when a surprising number of critics emerged after three young women who had been kidnapped and held prisoner for ten years in a house in the poor part of Cleveland were finally rescued.**

The critics claimed that the police would have taken the disappearance of the three young women a lot more seriously if they had been white or from well off families. The white police chief found that assertion very unfair, but critics pointed to other cases to prove their point.

Notably, they pointed to the case of Anthony Sowell. He was a serial killer who specialised in raping and killing drug addicts and alcoholics. One woman he attacked escaped and reported the attack to the police, but they didn't believe her, and released Sowell without charge.

When further incidents forced police to finally search Sowell's house in 2009, they found the bodies of no less than 11 women.

Journalist Angie Schmitt wrote a few weeks ago that "what made these women such easy targets was being black, being women and being from the highly segregated and desperately poor east side of Cleveland. ...

"Nobody was going to tear up the city looking for a few black women from the east side with sketchy pasts."

Judy Martin, founder of community group Survivors/Victims of Tragedy, maintains that when poor people – especially poor people

of colour – go missing, the police assume the person has simply walked away and that there is no crime to investigate.

Stung by the widespread criticism, Sulzer hit back: "The Cleveland Police Department doesn't care about someone's economic or social status," he told reporters. "We don't care what status you're from. Everybody gets the same treatment."

Throwing Sulzer a bone, Angie Schmitt also pointed to "significant underfunding of police and city services" in the most affluent nation on Earth as a factor in the police failure to adequately follow up cases of missing poor people. Police Commander Sulzer told a public meeting of concerned east side residents that 2,900 people were missing in Cleveland alone.

But according to Mark Anthony Neal, Professor of African-American studies at Duke University. "We live in a society that places an incredible amount of value on whiteness at the expense of those who can't fit in the box of whiteness." He told the media that "across the US, missing people from Black or Hispanic backgrounds and lower socio-economic status are more likely to get few resources and attention than affluent, white victims."

The inherent racism in the police handling of the cases echoes the findings in court-ordered investigations into racial disparity in instances of "stop and frisk" by the New York Police Department, which found that some 87 percent of the five million individuals stopped by the NYPD were Black or Latino. Now the city is

facing a federal class action suit over the alleged racism in the police actions.

Of course, picking on US crime statistics is an easy target: the country that promotes capitalist greed and being rich as *the* most admirable of all virtues, is also the country that relentlessly promotes crime and criminals via its films, TV shows, novels and newspapers. Even its criminal trials are presented as entertainment, making celebrities of the prosecutor, the judge and of course the criminal.

In US TV shows and movies, it is always the criminals who have the fanciest cars, the classiest mansions, the most upholstered women – as well as the most servants and lackeys, receive the most respect and have the most money.

That reminds me of one of the distinguishing features of the old *Untouchables* series with Robert Stack: the criminals were treated with contempt. It stood out because that attitude is so uncommon on US television. Gangsters might come to a sticky end, but only after they have led an exciting, luxurious, glamorous life of crime.

Meanwhile that utter hypocrite and war criminal, the British PM David Cameron, whose government has joined with its NATO allies in arming and deploying terrorists and religious fanatics to try to destroy the secular, democratic state of Syria, had the barefaced gall to get up in the UN and bleat about the "poor Syrian people" who according to him were being mercilessly killed by their own government.

The shameless immorality of capitalist politicians does not escape public notice and must play a significant part in forming people's opinions about the "rule of law" and whether it is something that they should really care about or not. Clearly, if the rich and powerful don't care about it then why should the common people?

Something else that people care about is who can marry them. In Britain generally there are at present two forms of marriage: religious or church weddings, and civil ceremonies. But in Scotland, the new Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill allows for a third form: a "belief-based" marriage other than the existing religious forms. The Free Church of Scotland was disturbed by this, foreseeing the possibility of belief-based marriages extending beyond the churches to other types of belief.

They foresaw legal weddings by people who believed the earth was flat, people who believed they had been abducted and probed by extraterrestrials or people who believed they were really animals trapped in human bodies.

Frankly, why not? What makes their beliefs more – less – silly than those of Christians or any other faith-based system? In France, you can get married in a church or a temple or a pumpkin, but you must get married first in a civil ceremony at the town hall or it won't be legal. That sounds like a sensible system capable of satisfying everybody, whatever they believe in. ☘



Rob Gowland  
previews  
ABC & SBS  
Public Television

Sunday May 26 -  
Saturday June 1

I have not yet seen the two-part documentary series *Whitlam: The Power And The Passion* (ABC1 Sundays from May 26 at 7.30pm) but will endeavour to review it properly between the broadcasting of parts one and two. In the meantime, I would caution against expecting too much from it. The series is made by a team whose best-known previous effort was a history of Australian surfing. The series' writer-producer Paul Clarke says of *Whitlam*, "Mark Hamlyn [Executive Producer] was clearly interested in a counter-intuitive portrait of Whitlam and his era, one that had a different approach to what might be expected, something more lateral that would break the political discourse." If that gobbledegook whets your appetite go for it, but don't expect real insights or much depth.

Marx and Engels, the founders of Marxism-Leninism, solidly grounded their discoveries and the theories that rose from them in science. Which is why the socio-economic system they described is called Scientific Socialism, and those who advocate and fight for it identify themselves as social scientists as well as revolutionaries.

However, identifying with a scientific theory or argument is not the same as actually applying the scientific method to your work and your thinking. Too many people in our movement - people who regard themselves as Communists

- do not think dialectically. In our philosophy, everything is a process, and understanding and recognising the relationship between those processes, between phenomena, is the key to understanding the nature of society and the universe. The science of that relationship between phenomena is called dialectics.

The person who does not think dialectically is said to think eclectically, to view each phenomenon as a separate, isolated entity, as "a thing in itself". Capitalism goes to great pains to ensure that people do not see the relationships between the phenomena that occur around them all the time. Just watch the TV news any day of the week. An earthquake, an assassination, a fall in the stock-market, an act of aggression, a medical breakthrough - all are reported as separate, isolated events, unrelated to other events or movements. Whether man-made or natural, they are all presented as disconnected phenomena, unconnected to the movements of the masses or the machinations of the ruling class. They are all somehow, random acts of god, over which human beings have no control.

From childhood, capitalism tries to train people to think eclectically, so that they remain oblivious to the reasons why things happen. Capitalism itself, however, uses ideologues and advisors who are well versed in dialectics, for capitalism needs to know precisely why things happen as they do, if it is to stay on top of events (and people).

It is therefore always a pity when Comrades slip - in the face of conflicting ideas thrown up by capitalism - and forget their dialectics and unthinkingly embrace eclecticism in handling some problem that arises in society.

One respected Comrade used to argue that mass immunisation campaigns were 1) ineffective, 2) caused autism, 3) were unscientific, and 4) were invented by drug companies to make money. He even submitted articles to this effect for the *Australian Marxist Review*. At the root of his belief was, I think, the fact



*Whitlam: The Power And The Passion* (ABC1 Sundays from May 26 at 7.30pm).

that drug companies do make money out of the vaccines they manufacture. But that does not invalidate the vaccines, only the way medicine is organised under capitalism. After all, the socialist countries all took part in mass immunisation campaigns, and Cuba in particular manufactures vaccines for much of the Third World.

That the big drug companies have a vested interest in promoting and marketing drug treatments underlies and helps to explain the widespread suspicion of those companies and their products. This healthy suspicion is fostered, distorted and greatly amplified through the Internet, where rumour flourishes and "facts" are bandied about with little or no checking but with maximum impact.

*Jabbed: Love, Fear And Vaccines* (SBS ONE Sunday May 26 at 8.30pm) is an Australian-made feature-length documentary that soberly, unemotionally and above all scientifically tackles the question of whether parents should be afraid of immunising their children.

In Australia, 90 percent of parents support immunisation, but world-wide there is a growing trend among parents *not* to immunise their children. This trend is partly caused by the very success scientists have had in eliminating epidemics of serious even deadly childhood diseases, like whooping cough, diphtheria, polio and more. People have become complacent because they have not seen these scourged for so long they have forgotten them. But as immunisation rates fall in some countries, these diseases are making a comeback.

Even in Australia, where immunisation is accepted by most people, more than 50 percent of parents still have concerns about it. *Jabbed* should go a long way to answering their concerns. It deserves a wider audience than SBS commands and it raises the question why didn't the ABC pick it up?

The program is written and directed by Sonya Pemberton, one of this country's leading factual

television producers, with numerous prizes for science programs to her credit. What probably worked against the program being picked up by the ABC or the commercial networks is its length, but that is actually one of its strengths: it has time to present the facts (including the facts of several famous instances of vaccination gone wrong) in moving testimony from parents and medical experts, as well as to give the full picture, free of hysteria.

I found it informative, well made and effective, as well as moving in its coverage of what is unquestionably an emotive issue.

This week's stand-up comedy routine in the *Funny As* slot (ABC2 Saturday June 1 at 9.30pm) features the always amusing Eddie Izzard on tour in San Francisco. His material is wide-ranging, covering everything from society's tolerance of mass murderers to the naming of Engelbert Humperdinck and the building of Stonehenge. ☺



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2003;

May 31

### WHY AUSTRALIAN INVESTORS HAVE LOST \$10 BILLION IN THE LAST DECADE - AND WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT

Gerard Minack, Global Cross Asset Strategy, Morgan Stanley;  
Joe Nagy, Economist and Financial Risk Analyst;

June 7

### NO MEETING

Long weekend, holiday;

June 14

### GENOCIDE IN SRI LANKA: WHY NO RESPONSE FROM AUSTRALIA?

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# Entrapment - The Australian conundrum

## Disrespect to sovereignty

Peter Barrack

### Part 2

The next put-down on Australia's right to determine how it handles its economic responsibilities came from Admiral Locklear, head of the US Pacific Command and Richard Armitage, who publicly launched a tirade of offensive statements: "It threatens the country's credibility as an ally", "Australia is freeloading on the American taxpayer", "Australia defence spending has fallen below what the US expects", "Australia's defence budget is inadequate", and so on.

These statements were appallingly insensitive and arrogant and showed an authoritarian disrespect to Australian sovereignty within the context of:

- the loss of Australian lives in the superfluous commitment to the three contrived wars that were Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan
- the US commitment to substantial defence cuts. The first cut will be US\$487 billion followed by a cut of US\$600 billion. These cuts are to alleviate the stress on the US economy created by a US\$16.5 trillion foreign debt. China is America's largest debtor.

Further, the European debt crisis has forced defence expenditure reductions by major NATO countries.

However, US reductions of defence expenditures have not impacted on weapons sales. In 2011-12, US arms sales tripled. Overseas arms sales were US\$66.3 billion; this was 78 percent of all global arms sales. The principle recipients from the US were the remaining conspiratorial Middle East dictators, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Bahrain. The despicable former Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, once said: "Do nothing to offend the dictators for they are the only ones you can trust".

One of the most extensive pressure strategies is a proposal commissioned by the US Defence Department and constructed by the US Centre for Strategic Studies for the enhancement of the US force posture in the Pacific-Asia region.

The final report recommended in part that (1) the US increase Special Forces in the region, and (2) move a US carrier strike force to HMAS Stirling base in Perth. Such a strike force would consist of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, an air wing of nine squadrons (66 aircraft and 13 helicopters), 1 or 2 guided missile cruisers, 2

or 3 guided missile destroyers, 1 or 2 nuclear submarines and a supply ship.

The report was submitted to the US Congress for consideration, not the Australian government. What the US wants the US will get.

In dealing with the most disputatious pressure being imposed on the Australian government are drones, and within that context I must acknowledge the impeccable articles by Hannah Middleton and Brian Tyrell on their drone coverage and John Pilger on Diego Garcia, that may well reflect the future of the Cocos Islands.

Brian and Hannah's revelations as to the extent that Australia is so seduced by drones must become a matter of broad public debate.

There are three tiers of contradictory information on the scope of killing, both terrorists (suspects) and civilians. They are the country responsible for the killings, the country that has been attacked, and the independent organisations such as Amnesty and others. I will use statistics provided by the independents.

The process by which a decision will be made as to where and who the next assassination will occur is the sole responsibility of President Obama, based on information given to him by John Brennan, his Intelligence Officer.

Brennan prepares a list of suspects; they are likely to reside in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, or Somalia (but not exclusively). The list is known as the "kill list Tuesdays". It will be given to the President to determine who will and who won't be assassinated. The President is the judge, jury and executioner.

In Pakistan, according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, over the first term of President Obama there have been 362 strikes, 3,461 deaths, of which 891 were civilians.

The most recent was in Yemen: a truck carrying 14 civilians: men, women and children, as hit by a drone, tipping the truck over. It was then hit by a second missile. All 14 were killed, including a seven-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy. They were all innocents.

According to the *New York Times*, "The US has more drone pilots in training (those who sit in front of a computer are considered pilots) than for fighter and bomber aircraft combined".

Secretary of Defence, Leon Panetta, recently announced that "US troops who launch and direct cyber attacks may be recognised with a new medal. The new blue, red and white ribboned 'Distinguished Warfare Medal' will be rewarded to individuals for 'extraordinary achievement' related to military operations. Unlike the combat medal, it does not require risk to his or her life". (I assume "extraordinary achievement" means high body count, but it won't be given for bravery).

**The ANZUS Treaty is a document of weasel words and the Alliance is an imaginary US tool of convenience. Neither guarantees any reciprocal responses to Australia should the need arise.**

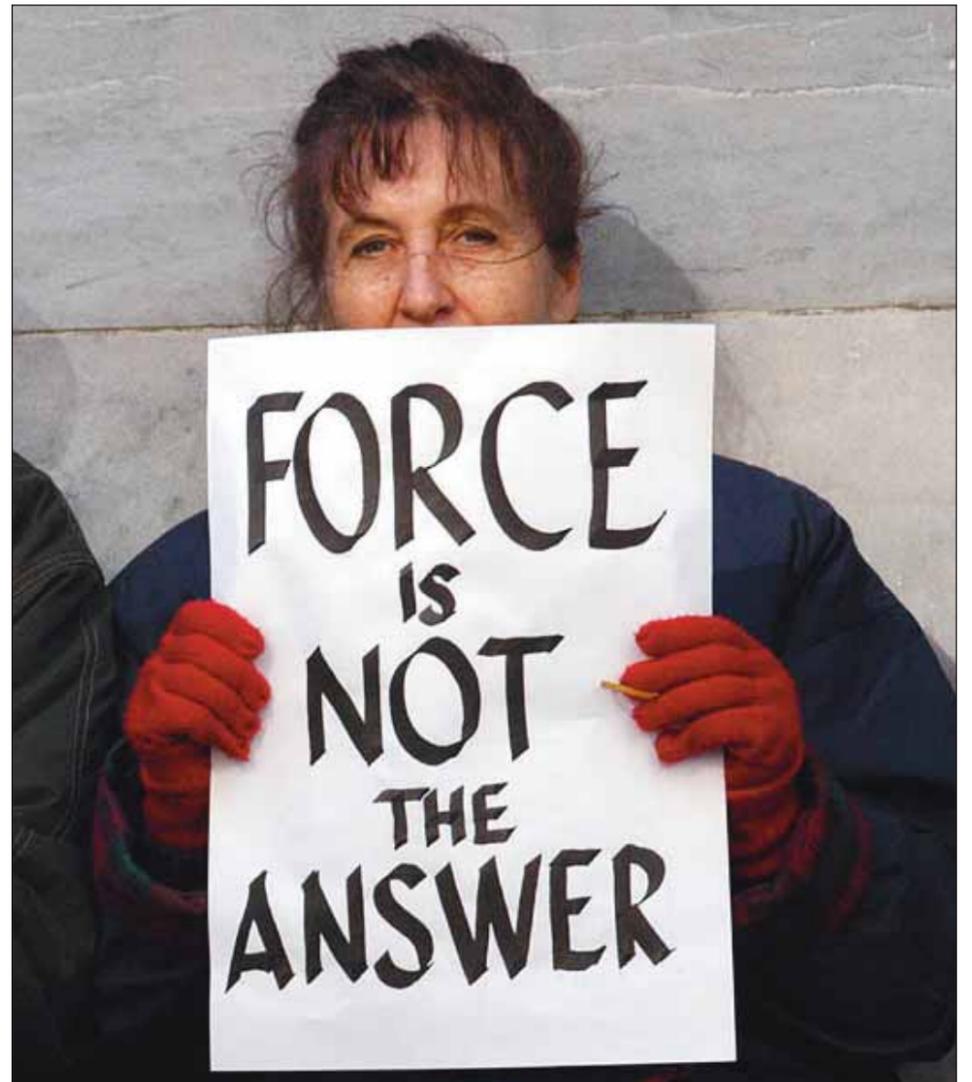


Photo: Avante Media Australia

America wants occupation of the Cocos Islands to expand the airbase to accommodate drones, Global Hawkes and Poseidon aircraft; apart from being offensive to our northern neighbours, it would not be inconceivable to draw a correlation between the future of the Cocos and that of Diego Garcia.

Under pressure from other countries, including Russia and China, and relevant independent organisations, the United Nations has established a dedicated investigations unit based in Geneva. Its investigative brief is to examine the legitimacy or illegitimacy of drone attacks as to whether they breach international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity.

On entrapment, the Australian government entrapment comes as a consequence of its own servility. Its commitment to the unrequited, ageing ANZUS Treaty and the illusory Alliance, consequentially derives a perception that Australia not only gives credence to the "global spectrum dominance" ideology it is itself entrapped by it.

The ANZUS Treaty is a document of weasel words and the Alliance is an imaginary US tool of convenience. Neither guarantees any reciprocal responses to Australia should the need arise.

The Australian government has, on the issue of troop rotation, treated the Australian people with deceit. To suggest that Australia was doing anything but aiding and abetting the US in a pre-arranged agreement to assist in the challenge of China beggars belief.

The claims that it was the US that made the approach was rebuked by Admiral Willard when he said, "It has been very much a part of public record that Australia made overtures to the US".

Part 1 appeared in last week's Guardian. The Beacon ✪



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