



Snowden leaks reveal

Massive Pine Gap expansion

Dr Hannah Middleton & Denis Doherty

The United States Pine Gap satellite tracking station, 19 kilometres south-west of Alice Springs, was built in 1966 and came on line soon after. A new report * by leading espionage experts has revealed that there has been a massive expansion of satellite communications surveillance capabilities by the US National Security Agency and its Five Eyes partners – the Australian Signals Directorate, the UK's Government Communications Headquarters, Canada's Communications Security Establishment and New Zealand's Government Communications Security Bureau.

Whistleblower Edward Snowden described Five Eyes as a "supranational intelligence organisation that doesn't answer to the known laws of its own countries".

Professor Desmond Ball, of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at ANU, said there has been "a fundamental transformation" in the role of the Pine Gap facility from "a highly specialised mission" to a "multi-agency, multi-purpose mega-intelligence centre."

"Pine Gap is engaged in 'collect-it-all' surveillance, military as well as civilian, linked directly to military operations, including drone strikes," he said.

The original Five Eyes satellite monitoring project – ECHELON – became widely known after European Parliament enquiries into satellite monitoring from 1999 to 2001.

Mass surveillance of satellite communications has grown. There are now 232 antennas available at the sites identified, almost double the capacity before 2001.

What is Torus?

"We conclude that development work at the observed sites since 2000 has more than doubled coverage, and that adding Torus has more than trebled potential coverage of global commercial satellites," the report says.

Torus is a new kind of satellite espionage, capable of soaking up calls and messages and data from 35 satellites at once. A Torus dish can monitor 70 degrees of the sky, without moving. It collects all the different facets of modern communications, from Facebook to fax.

Between 2007 and 2013, western spy agencies built six new Torus antennas in the UK, Cyprus, Oman, Australia and New Zealand.

The Torus interception network complements well-established satellite interception facilities including those operated by the Australian Signals Directorate at Kojarena, near Geraldton in Western Australia, and Shoal Bay, near Darwin.

Pine Gap

Pine Gap is now engaged in foreign satellite intelligence collection as part of the Five Eyes "collect-it-all" surveillance of global internet and telecommunications traffic.

Pine Gap's secret role in satellite communications interception probably began in the early 2000s and has been supported by the deployment of US Air Force intelligence detachments to the base. A Torus multi-beam antenna was installed at Pine Gap in 2008.

Pine Gap is managed by the US National Reconnaissance Office and is the CIA's most important technical intelligence collection station in the world.

Pine Gap's original and still most important function is to serve as the ground control station for US National Reconnaissance Office signals intelligence satellites that intercept ballistic missile test telemetry and microwave telecommunications. In addition Pine Gap relays data from US missile launch detection/early warning satellites – the Space-Based Infrared System.

The base also intercepts a very wide range of radio and mobile telephone communications to provide tactical intelligence support for US military operations across the Eastern hemisphere, including drone strikes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere.

Government secrecy

There have been no official statements about Pine Gap's new role.

In 2013, then Defence Minister Stephen Smith said the Australian government approves the presence of a capability or function in Australia but this "does not mean that Australia approves every activity or tasking undertaken".

The Australian government has repeatedly refused to comment on specific disclosures from documents leaked by Edward Snowden. Last year Prime Minister Tony Abbott insisted that Australia would not use intelligence "to the detriment of other countries".

A detachment of the US Army's 743rd Military Intelligence Battalion, a detachment of the US Air Force's Air Intelligence Agency's



Pine Gap is the CIA's most important technical intelligence collection station in the world.

Intelligence Operations Group, and a sub-unit of the US Marines' Cryptologic Support Battalion were posted to Pine Gap in the late 1990s.

Detachment 2 of the US Air Force's Air Intelligence Agency's 544th Intelligence Operations Group, previously located in Puerto Rico, was transferred to Pine Gap in the early 2000s, signifying that Pine Gap had become a new Foreign Satellite site.

The detachment comprised 28 personnel and included a Geospatial Metadata Analysis unit which "optimises information flow to the warfighter" and especially Special Operations Forces teams.

Public enquiry

Pine Gap's new functions – from its role with drones to the assault on privacy contained within the "collect-it-all" strategy – must be exposed.

The peace movement has been calling for Pine Gap to be closed down for many years.

Hidden by government secrecy and its isolated location, most Australians know little of its spying and war fighting functions. Many do not even know it exists.

In response there has been a long campaign for a public enquiry into Pine Gap's functions.

Now the need for an informed, transparent public re-assessment of Pine Gap's roles is more important and more urgent than ever.

***Expanded Communications Satellite Surveillance and Intelligence Activities utilising Multi-beam Antenna Systems**, by Australian National University emeritus professor Desmond Ball, British investigative journalist Duncan Campbell, Canadian intelligence researcher Bill Robinson and Melbourne University professor Richard Tanteris published by the Nautilus Institute of Berkeley, NAPSNet Special Report, 28 May 2015. ✪

3 

Triggs and the attack on human rights

4 

Housing crisis and "good jobs"

10 

Culture & Life
Media culture

12 

Anti-fracking movement

Guardian

Issue 1689

June 17, 2015

Secrecy meets inhumanity

The Abbott government's asylum seeker policy is descending into tragic farce. The "we'll stop the boats" pledge made before the 2013 federal election is being upheld despite the mounting human cost and the major damage done to Australia's reputation in the region and beyond. For progressive Australians, it is another manifestation of an arrogant authoritarianism creeping over the politics of the country. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton's advice to people concerned about the plight of refugees and Australia's international commitments is that they should "move on". It is reminiscent of Joh Bjelke Petersen's refrain of "don't you worry about that" or even the "let me be your conscience" slogan from pre-war Germany.

The war of nerves against Australian Human Rights Commission president Gillian Triggs, who reported on the deplorable state of children in detention, goes on. Claims by Greens Senator Hanson-Young, that she was spied on during a visit to a detention centre on Nauru, were ridiculed and dismissed by government spokesmen when they hit the headlines recently. Hanson-Young was an "embarrassment to the country," according to Dutton. It turns out the Senator was right. A parliamentary inquiry got it from the secretary of the minister's own department that an employee of Wilson's Security had tailed Hanson-Young's car during the December 2013 visit.

The government is particularly sensitive to leaks regarding its notorious mandatory detention regime. Doctors and teachers working with asylum seekers now face two years in jail for providing information to journalists. The relevant bill passed quietly into law on May 14. Australian Medical Association (AMA) president Brian Owler is concerned about the moral aspect and the public interest. "This puts most doctors in a very difficult situation if they have to face two years' imprisonment for speaking out, or be quiet and let people suffer. That's not appropriate."

The AMA wants an urgent review of the *Border Force Act* to exempt medical practitioners drawing attention to failures in health care delivery. The government is not likely to listen. The *Act* formalises and toughens the stance of former minister, Scott Morrison, who used section 70 of the *Crimes Act* to silence 10 staff from the Save the Children organisation working on Nauru.

Elsewhere there are reports of the bleak prospects facing asylum seekers released into the community in Papua New Guinea and Cambodia. In the latter case, a small, initial group of detainees was rushed to Phnom Penh recently in a military-style operation. They were told their applications for refugee status would be fast-tracked if they make the move. They were also told Cambodia was a booming land of opportunity, not a poor country still striving to repair the wounds of US bombing and Khmer Rouge-inflicted genocide. The refugees were given cash, accommodation, language instruction, health insurance and other assistance.

The experiment with these desperate people's lives is raising eyebrows internationally. The huge expense and the involvement of an unrelated third country make plain the determination of the government to exclude certain populations from Australia. And the latest revelations concerning payments to Indonesian people smugglers to turn back to Indonesia with their human cargo aboard the same, overcrowded boat put lie to Abbott & Co's supposed concern for asylum seekers' safety at sea. The Indonesian government is to investigate the bribery claims.

The whole tragic situation has been another "bi-partisan" effort with the parliamentary Labor Party. Opposition leader Bill Shorten and others are working the media about the thousands of dollars allegedly handed over by Navy and Customs officials to persons we were told were the worst type of criminal on the planet. Labor spokespersons are careful not to appear critical of the mandatory detention policy or even "stopping the boats". They remain convinced the argument that Australia must meet its commitments to international conventions regarding refugees has been lost. They have stopped listening to the large numbers of ALP members and trade unionists horrified by the betrayal. It is up to all Australians still holding to principles of humanitarianism and solidarity to unite to stop the current, unacceptable policies towards refugees before it causes more misery.

PRESS FUND

In NSW the Baird government is now warning Sydney commuters that public transport will undergo severe disruptions because of the introduction of new rail infrastructure. He's right. The new privately-operated Northwest Line will use a different type of train, forcing city-bound passengers to change trains at Chatswood, where the new and existing lines meet. And that disadvantage will last until construction of a planned new extension of the private line to the city allows the government to begin phasing out the existing publicly-operated service. It's called privatisation by stealth. But enough! The good news is that you can help us cover these developments by contributing to the Press Fund for the next edition. Many thanks to those who contributed this week, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$15,
Wrappers Club *Guardian* tin \$180

This week's total: \$200 Progressive total: \$3,820

Glebe development wrapped in lies and greed

The Minister for Social Housing's announcement that half the public land at Cowper Street, Glebe will be sold to private developers is a disgrace. It will do nothing to help solve Sydney's housing crisis but will steal land belonging to the people and give it to the wealthy.

"The Baird government should use some of the billions it is raking in from stamp duty and land tax to start a major public housing building program to meet the needs of the 60,000 on the waiting list and the many homeless in our city," Denis Doherty from Hands off Glebe Inc said in Glebe this morning.

Over the past decade Labor and Liberal governments in NSW have privatised 7,000 public housing properties. The O'Farrell government cut \$37 million from the housing budget in 2013.

"The truth is that the Baird Government wants to get rid of its responsibility for housing its citizens altogether. It is selling public assets on a massive scale, offloading \$1 billion worth of property in the past two years alone.

"This is short-term interest being

pursued against long-term interest of the people," Mr Doherty said.

"The Minister should be ashamed of this development. Close to Cowper Street is the Wentworth Park Aqueduct where under each arch four to six people sleep rough each night. The government had a chance to build another 'Common Ground' establishment on land it owned in a key area yet they passed it up for a quick and shameful profit.

"The Inner City needs affordable homes for essential workers such as nurses, teachers, police and ferry workers yet only a small portion of the development will provide this. Cowper Street is close to three universities and student accommodation is also desperately needed yet there is no provision for this need.

Lies and more lies

"The Minister is repeating the lies of Housing NSW when they destroyed a thriving community of almost 300 people four years ago. The homes may not have been architectural marvels, but the claim that they had to be demolished because they were 'old' is a lie. Some of the 16 low rise buildings had just been

renovated including \$4 million for lifts.

"The suggestion that the development will provide 'mix' is another lie. Private and public housing will be physically separated by a busy road and his barrier will not be crossed.

"The claim of community consultation is another lie. There is no evidence that the community supports the Cowper Street development.

"Hands off Glebe is a local community group formed to defend public housing which has been campaigning for years to save Cowper Street public housing.

"We have organised postcard and letter writing campaigns, protest rallies at the site and outside Parliament House and much more.

"Recently the Minister cancelled an appointment to see a delegation from Hands off Glebe, saying he would be too busy for a long time to see us.

"It is criminal to privatise the dwindling stock of public housing and public land when there is a housing affordability crisis. A home is a human right, not just another way for the rich to make even more money," Mr Doherty concluded. ☘

"People, take the situation in your own hands!"

Mass protests in Greece against EU austerity measures

Tens of thousands of people, representing more than 700 trade union and people's organisations have participated in demonstrations all over Greece.

The demonstrations, initiated by the All Workers Militant Front (PAME – *Panergatiko Agonistiko Metopo* – founded by Communist Party of Greece trade unionists in 1999), protested the latest anti-worker austerity measures the Greek SYRIZA government has prepared at the behest of the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank.

The demonstrations have sent a message of militant resistance from the people of Greece to the

governments, financial institutions and multinationals that are pushing the costs of capitalism's self-induced economic crisis onto the backs of working people.

Workers from dozens of unions occupied the Ministry of Finance of Greece, where they raised a giant banner proclaiming: "Enough blood we have shed! Enough we have paid! People, take the situation in your own hands! Block the new measures and the long lasting memorandums!"

The demonstrations are in preparation for a general strike, which PAME is calling in response to the Greek government's latest austerity measures.

The Maritime Branch of the Communist party of Australia, which is based on militant, class conscious members of the Maritime Union of Australia in Sydney, sent a message of solidarity to PAME on the eve of the demonstrations in Greece, stating:

"We support your class struggle against the attacks by Capital and the Greek government, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union, who are attacking the rights of workers and the broader masses. We congratulate you on your mass demonstrations today, June 11, 2015. We will stand with you until your final victory". ☘

Low wage outcome "deeply disappointing"

UnionsWA has commented on the decision by the WA Industrial relations Commission in the WA State Wage Case.

Meredith Hammat, Secretary UnionsWA said: "This is a deeply disappointing and inadequate wage outcome for the lowest paid in WA.

"Many on the minimum wage will be increasingly anxious and frustrated.

"An extra \$14 per week or 2.1 percent will not meet high and rising costs of living.

"These costs have been made worse by WA government increase of double or more to fees and charges for essential costs of living such as transportation, electricity and water.

"Inequality will worsen in WA.

"The mean spirited calls for a wage freeze by the Chamber

of Commerce and Industry WA were completely rejected by the Commission.

"This should be a reality check for employer representatives."

For a full-time adult worker the WA Minimum Wage will be \$679 per week. This decision affects around 100,000 working West Australians on the Minimum Wage and reliant on state awards. ☘

Professor Triggs and the attack on human rights

Peter Mac

In March the Abbott government attacked Professor Gillian Triggs, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), for having published a critical report on the presence and treatment of children in Australian immigration detention centres.

Abbott called the report “blatantly partisan,” even though it also criticised the former Labor government and acknowledged that the number of children held in detention fell after the Coalition took office.

Attorney-General George Brandis then got a Canberra bureaucrat to offer her a nice job overseas if she decided to retire from AHRC. Labor and the Greens asked the Australian Federal Police to investigate whether this constituted bribery, but Professor Triggs refused to make a formal complaint.

Last week Immigration Minister Peter Dutton claimed she had linked the government’s asylum seeker policies with Indonesia’s execution of two convicted Australian drug smugglers, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran, i.e. that the policies had somehow influenced the Indonesian government’s decision to execute the two young men.

But Professor Triggs made no reference to Chan or Sukumaran at all, only suggesting that because of the asylum seeker policies Asian countries “will not engage with us on other issues that we care about, like the death penalty” and that the government should “work diplomatically ... to reach agreement with Indonesia on ending the death penalty in the region.”

Minister for Social Security Scott Morrison then attacked a recommendation made by the AHRC last year that Indonesian asylum seeker John Basikbasik, who had served seven years in jail for killing his wife, should be released to community detention and compensated for having been held in immigration detention for a further eight years.

Morrison was clearly attempting to distract public attention from the real issue highlighted by the AHRC, i.e. that the human rights of asylum seekers are violated when they are held in detention for long periods,

and that they are entitled to compensation for what is, in effect, unjustified imprisonment.

The policy of imposing an extra sentence may also violate the constitutional separation of powers of the executive and the judiciary. The decision to detain asylum seekers indefinitely is already being made by the Minister, as in the case of the Nauru detainees who refuse to go to Cambodia, and who are subject to immigration policies which Professor Triggs has described as “essentially punitive”.

Loss of citizenship

The government’s proposal to strip Australian citizenship from people who have dual nationalities, but are accused by the government of being involved in terrorist activities, is loaded with potential for the violation of human rights.

People with both British and Australian nationalities, for example, could find themselves stripped of both nationalities and rendered stateless, because Britain already has legislation in place similar to that proposed by the Abbott government.

For someone born here the loss of Australian citizenship would constitute a denial of their birthright. The government has already decreed that children of asylum seekers who are born here will no longer be entitled to Australian citizenship.

Last Monday marked the 800th anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta, the historic legal document that enshrined the principal of equality under the law and the right of persons to be free from arbitrary arrest.

As Professor Triggs has commented, that principal is now under threat in Australia, because the decision to strip Australian citizenship from people accused of terrorist crimes would be made by the government, not by the courts.

Again, the constitutional separation of powers would surely be violated if this proposal is implemented.

Attacks, resistance and counter-attacks

Professor Triggs’ comments regarding the impact of federal policies on foreign relations are very important, because Indonesia and other Asian neighbours see many of



President of the Australian Human Rights Commission Professor Gillian Triggs.

Australia’s policies as hypocritical and self-serving.

The government took Indonesia to task over the execution of Chan and Suikumaran, but the Howard government demanded the death penalty for the Bali bombers. The depth of Dutton’s concern for human rights was indicated when he walked out of parliament during Labor leader Kevin Rudd’s 2008 apology over the Stolen Generations.

Successive Australian governments have railed against the people smugglers, but last year the Abbott government put intercepted asylum seekers into lifeboats and forced them to return to Indonesia, and is now paying the crews of asylum seeker boats to return their passengers to Indonesia.

By taking these actions the government is in effect engaging in people smuggling itself. Paying the crews to return their passengers to Indonesia also makes people-smuggling far more financially attractive.

Moreover, if the Indonesian

government also refuses to permit asylum seeker boats to return, the passengers could find themselves repeatedly forced back to the open sea, abandoned and in danger of drowning, starvation, or dying from thirst, as demonstrated recently by the case of asylum seekers fleeing from Myanmar.

The government has launched attacks on many public organisations, including the Climate Commission, the ABC and the AHRC, all of which have questioned government policies as part of their mandated role. It has even canvassed the idea of eliminating the AHRC.

Earlier this year the United Nations special rapporteur on human rights defenders questioned the government concerning its treatment of Professor Triggs.

With breathtaking hypocrisy and in complete contrast to its brutal verbal assaults on Professor Triggs, the government replied that it is deeply concerned about human rights, and fully accepts that the

AHRC may make statements critical of the government.

Nevertheless, it continued to attack Professor Triggs, describing her conclusions as “a stitch up”, “lacking credibility”, “biased” and “hopelessly untenable”.

What a picture! A dignified, highly intelligent woman capably and courageously defends human rights, while a pack of barking, male chauvinist political “attack dogs” surround her, trying to browbeat her into submission!

But they won’t succeed. The AHRC enjoys wide support from organisations and individuals concerned about human rights, and opposition to the citizenship proposal is even coming from former Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone, arch-conservative Liberal Senator Cori Bernadi and neo-liberal Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson.

So stand fast, Professor Triggs, you have many supporters, and you’re doing a great job for human rights and the nation. ✪

Pete's Corner



Sydney

**CELEBRATE
A LIFE OF STRUGGLE**

**Come to Rob Gowland's
75th Birthday**

Mark his many decades of struggle
the Communist Party and the
wider social justice movement.

**3 PM
Sunday June 28**

74 Buckingham St Surry Hills

**Delicious food & great company
More info Linda/Tom 02 9699 8844**



Housing crisis and "good jobs"

Anna Pha

Treasurer Joe Hockey's advice for new homebuyers was quickly condemned as "insulting", "insensitive" and "out of touch". Even some of his own colleagues were shaken by their brutal and uncaring nature. The biggest shock of all was to young people, seeking to buy their first home but continuously being outbid at auctions or the house sold after one "open day".

"The starting point for a first home buyer is to get a good job that pays good money," said Hockey.

"If you've got a good job and it pays good money and you have security in relation to that job, then you can go to the bank and you can borrow money and that's really affordable," Hockey said adding insult to injury.

Where are all these "good jobs" that pay enough "good money" to buy a first home? Most young people are struggling to pay rent, let alone save a deposit of one or two hundred thousand.

Not everyone can be a billionaire or multi-millionaire banker, entrepreneur, mining magnate, media mogul, surgeon, developer, or government minister.

Every society needs nurses, teachers, process workers, scientists, technicians, emergency workers, cleaners, shop assistants, office workers, farm labour, bus or train drivers, construction and maritime workers, child and aged care workers, etc. These are the people who make the world go round. Everything would collapse without them.

"Good jobs"

Is Hockey saying that being a teacher is not a "good job"? That a

nurse does not have a "good job", that risking your life to rescue people or put out fires or care for children is not being employed in a "good job"?

And that the highly paid CEOs of corporations that exploit workers to the hilt, pollute the environment with toxic fumes, poison rivers, rip up land and destroy water sources for coal seam gas have "good jobs" and make "good money"?

Teaching has become less secure, with the growing use of contract labour and undermining of permanency. Teachers are constantly having to fight for higher salaries which are at best on par with the average wage. Schools are understaffed and new graduates find it hard to gain employment.

Thousands of nurse graduates on finishing their degrees face unemployment, underemployment and job insecurity through the use of body hire companies. Like teachers, their pay fails to recognise their training, skills and responsibilities.

Nurses, engineers and many other professionals are up against competition from workers on temporary 457 and other visas who are subjected to abuse and exploited to the hilt.

Housing prices are being deliberately blown out. There are several forces at work.

Firstly, the banks with record low interest rates are forcing people – many of them retirees – to look for alternative places to put their savings. Some have turned to the stock market and other speculative instruments. Hence there is the contradiction between the rise on the stock market and an economy sliding into recession.

Others have been drawn to real estate, seeing bricks and mortar as



Graphic by Craig Greer.

more secure. Either way the risk has been shifted from the banks to the investor on markets which are subject to boom and bust cycles.

In particular, investors are flocking to housing and making use of negative gearing – a massive tax rort which the Abbott/Hockey government refuses to act on. The banks are coming to the party on this. Under negative gearing they make sure that the rental income is less than their interest payments. The difference (negative income) is then allowed as a tax deduction against their other income.

According to Australian Property Monitors in the early 1990s only about a sixth of new home lending went to investors. This year it is more than half. Housing is no longer just seen as somewhere to live but as a place to invest, just like shares or derivatives.

There is also a discount in the capital gains tax paid if the property is sold at a profit (taking CPI increases into account).

There is a chronic shortage of housing which also serves to drive up prices. State governments are reluctant to release more land to ease the boom as they are raking in billions of dollars in extra stamp duty – very handy for balancing the books.

All of these factors have combined to drive up prices. In reality foreign investors do not appear to have played the major role as some in the media have suggested.

What Hockey has also done, apart from damaging his chances of still being treasurer at the time of the next elections, is put the present housing crisis on the front pages.

Housing crisis

Not only is the purchase of a first home beyond the reach of most young people, there is a chronic shortage of affordable and available rental housing.

More than 100,000 homeless people do not have a safe and secure place to call home. Rental prices reflect the rising cost of housing as landlords seek to meet interest bills and mortgage repayments.

A family looking to rent a home in Sydney is facing weekly payments

of \$400-\$600 or more a week or \$20,800 to \$31,200 per annum. It depends how run-down the home is, its location and local infrastructure or lack of – schools, public transport, etc.

As from July 1, the minimum wage will be \$656.90 per week. Around 1.86 million lowest paid workers rely on this wage rate for a living, close to one third of them in hospitality and retail sectors.

They would be lucky to find rental that does not consume 50 or 60 percent of their income unless sharing. What is left would not be enough to pay for other necessities such as transport, food, utilities, clothing. The recognised standard for maximum percentage of income consumed by housing costs is 30 percent. Even this for people on very low incomes is too high.

They may be homeless because of lack of affordable or suitable accommodation or as a result of domestic violence. For the unemployed, aged pensioners or other social security recipients it is even more difficult to find a home. A single person on such low income can barely afford to rent a room, let alone a flat or apartment.

The unemployed who have managed to qualify for the Newstart allowance are paid less than half the minimum wage, and that is after including their maximum housing allowance.

Two classes

What Hockey has done with his comments, is to reveal his true colours, his arrogance and contempt for those who do not belong to his class, the class he serves, the ruling capitalist class.

This is consistent with the government's budget, all the austerity measures attacking the most vulnerable and those on the lowest incomes while dispensing more corporate welfare.

Shelter is a basic human right. There is a great deal that can be done to alleviate the situation, the following are just a few:

- State and territory governments must resume their former role in the construction of public

housing. Governments should subsidise housing, just as they do for public transport, health and other services, from general revenue. This will not only provide affordable public housing, but thousands of jobs in cities and regional areas as well.

- The federal government should increase the basic level of payments to social security recipients and Commonwealth Rent Assistance.
- Negative gearing needs to be tackled. As a first step it should be abolished for all new property investments. Then a phase-out could commence starting with those who have more than five negatively geared properties.
- The capital gains tax incentive should be banned on all new purchases and wound back over time.

These measures and competition from public housing would serve to make housing far more affordable and bring rents down.

At the same time, public housing should not be ghettoised into large blocks, dividing the community into two. In Scotland a very successful model has been developed with the public sector building similar houses in clusters with some public and some for private sale.

Neither this government nor Labor with their many negatively geared MPs are hardly likely to take such measures. Labor is making a few noises about minor changes to negative gearing, but let's wait and see, it is early days.

We need a government that is prepared to stand up to the big end of town, to take on the transnational corporations and govern for the interests of the people and the planet. This can only be achieved by building a strong and militant movement combining trade unions, left and progressive political parties, other activists and the wider community.

The form developed during the Your Rights @ Work campaign that saw the defeat of the Howard government had the seeds of such a model but unfortunately was dismantled following Labor's victory. ✪

70 YEARS
70th anniversary of the
bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki



THURSDAY 6 AUGUST 2015

Candlelight procession 6pm
Assemble Cnr Elizabeth & William Streets 6pm
Walk to public meeting at 33 Mary Street, Surry Hills 7pm

Organised by the Hiroshima Committee
www.hiroshimacommittee.org

Endangered Quolls re-introduced to the Flinders Ranges

Steven Katsineris

The Western Quoll's chances of survival have been given a lift with their re-introduction into their former habitat of the Flinders Ranges in South Australia, where they disappeared from over 130 years ago.

The Western Quoll (or Chuditch) is one of Australia's rarest species. It is a medium-sized predator and has a white-spotted brown coat and a long tail like its eastern and northern quoll relatives. The marsupial carnivore once covered about 70 per cent of Australia, but loss of habitat and killings by feral cats and foxes have seen the Western Quoll's range reduced to the south-west of Western Australia, where they remain a threatened species.

The re-introduction program was trialled in April last year, when 41 Western Quolls were flown in from Western Australia. They were released into unfenced woodland at Wilpena Pound, in the Flinders Ranges NP, after a great deal of fox and cat eradication measures to decrease these feral animals' numbers.

Despite the loss of 11 Western Quolls from the first release, mostly by feral cats, the trial was considered a success, as most of the

surviving females bred and gave birth to around 60 young, with 10 of the females having about six babies each. Based on the great results of the trial, release approval was given for the official translocation project to begin.

"The unusual thing here is it's actually working without a fence, which is pretty incredible ... To get an increase in one year is pretty amazing," ecologist Kathryn Moseby said.

A further stage of the program took place in early May this year with the release of another 37 adult Western Quolls in the Flinders Ranges. They will swell the numbers of the newly introduced colony to well over 100 quolls.

The project is supported by funding from the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME). FAME partnered with the South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, who for the past 23 years has conducted the Bounceback program, dedicated to land management and tackling feral animals.

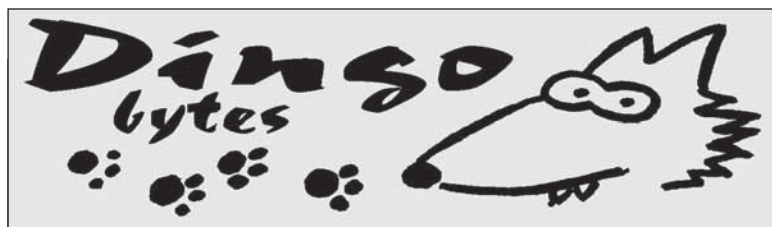
Australia's first threatened species commissioner Gregory Andrews said it would not have been possible without many groups working together. "Here we have an opportunity ... because of 20 years

of consistent effort by state government, national parks, the rangers, the Indigenous people and even the sporting shooters association," he said.

It was hoped the relocation of the Western Quolls would also significantly reduce the risk of extinction in WA. "So we've got a genetic bank if ever there was a disease that hit that population here in Western Australia," WA Environment Minister Albert Jacob said.

As long as we continue bad land clearing practices we will face a huge struggle in protecting threatened species in Australia, as preserving their habitats is crucial in saving native wildlife. This project is however a fantastic victory in the campaign to help the recovery of the Western Quoll and reverse some of the damage we have done to the ecosystems and wildlife of Australia.

The Flinders Ranges, a wild region where the Western Quoll became extinct is now once again the home of the endangered animal. This project is the first ever return of the threatened Quoll to part of its original range. If the effort to bring back the Western Quoll to South Australia continues to go well there could be further translocations in the future. That's certainly a cause for celebration. ☘



Younger onset dementia affects about 24,000 Australians. By definition, any dementia under 65 is classified as an early onset one. In reality there are many much younger dementia patients; the condition may develop in people in their 50s, 40s or even 30s. One can only imagine the huge impact it has on their families – partners and children. It's not only one person affected – it's the whole new way of life which changes how a family works. It is extremely important that professional help is provided in these circumstances. One of the programs that is doing this at the moment is called The Key Worker program. It gives specialised one-to-one support to people under 65 with dementia; the key worker acts as an advocate and primary contact for people with early onset dementia and their families. The program has been described by patients as having a transformative influence on their lives. But this program will lose its funding when the National Disability Insurance Scheme starts in July next year. It may mean that younger people with dementia will have to go into residential care – not a good outcome for either the patients or their families.

The Abbott government has cut \$11 billion from its overall overseas aid budget since coming to power. The cuts will have devastating effects in many countries. Myanmar will be one of those losing nearly \$55 million from its healthcare programs. The programs included child and maternity health, HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. It's a mean measure which will impact not only on the health and well-being of the aid recipients. Global exchanges and travel nowadays make health issues global. Even from a purely selfish point of view it pays to invest money in better health round the world. Australia is a wealthy country compared to many others and can easily afford to contribute to people's well-being. Cuts to aid will affect many Australian volunteers who are working with the Red Cross, Australian Volunteers International and Scope Global as their government-funded programs are on hold as well. They are funded through the Australian Volunteers for International Development program and their funding was cut by \$24 million to \$39 million. The Abbott government's aid cuts are extremely embarrassing for a rich country like Australia.

Potentiality is a computer program which is being used by some of Sydney's elite private schools to track information about potential donors. The software builds profiles on each donor, stores every email from a parent to a school fundraising body, their donation history, volunteering history – in other words, all the information they can gather to get some extra cash and boost profits. Somehow it does not feel right, does it? Creepy is the word I was looking for.

Legal battle over mine

Andy Parks

Representatives from the Wangan and Jagalingou (W&J) people have issued a Federal Court challenge aimed at stopping Adani's \$16.5 billion Carmichael coal mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin.

The National Native Title Tribunal ruled in April that the mining leases could be granted and that there was no evidence the mine would impact on the W&J's way of life.

But Adrian Burragubba, speaking on behalf of the W&J Family Council, announced a two-pronged approach to stopping the mine. "First, we announce that we have filed an appeal and judicial review in the Federal Court of Australia," he said.

"This court action challenges

the decision of the National Native Title Tribunal that the Queensland government may issue mining leases for Carmichael.

"This challenge is unprecedented in the history of Native Title Tribunal decisions. If necessary, we will take our case all the way to the High Court."

Mr Burragubba told the *Koori Mail* the legal action was about who had the right to make decisions over the land. Adani has been negotiating with other people connected with the Wangan and Jagalingou native title claim.

"This is not about land use agreements, it's about our animals, trees, plants, water and totems," Mr Burragubba said. "We are fighting to protect our lore ... There has been no free and informed consent from our people.

"On the Wangan and Jagalingou native title, there are two names but one claim. Nobody can say I can't speak on that country."

Mr Burragubba said the W&J Family Council represents nine of the 12 family groups that have a native title claim over the area of the proposed mine.

"That's where I take my instruction from. They have never consented to having this mine," he said.

The second part of the campaign to stop the mine – which would be one of the biggest coal mines in the world if it goes ahead – is a world tour to meet with investment banks in the US, Europe and Asia and First Nations groups in North America.

"This disastrous mine needs billions of dollars of finance if it is to ever go ahead," Mr Burragubba said. "We will communicate to the banks that we do not consent to Carmichael, and the reasons we cannot allow this mine to go ahead.

"We will remind them that any bank that funds Carmichael will be breaching important human rights principles to which they are signatory; principles requiring that projects that affect Indigenous owners have their consent. We'll urge them to honour their obligations and commit to ruling out funding."

Economic analysts have said the mine would only be viable if coal was at \$100 a tonne. Currently it is bringing about \$60 a tonne and showing no sign of rising.

Koori Mail ☘

Melbourne

New International Bookshop

Big Red Bookfair

Saturday 27 June, from 10am

The New International Bookshop

54 Victoria Street Carlton

Thousands of titles, lots of fiction,
secondhand and recently published.

For more info NIBS 04 9662 3744

Germany: many strikes and a big scandal

Victor Grossman

BERLIN: Was the German working class suddenly turning super-militant? Some may have been fearful, some hopeful that on the rail lines and elsewhere the old IWW-Wobbly song from 1915-USA, "Solidarity Forever" was literally coming true: "... without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn."

The strike of locomotive engineers stopped freight cars on May 19 and passenger traffic the next day. Unlike eight previous strikes by the same union, the strike was not for 30 hours, 42 hours or six days – but with no end date. Although the state-owned but largely independently-run railroad company tried to maintain a skeleton schedule, two-thirds of the wheels stopped turning; also city rail service was cut by 40 to 85 percent. In Berlin the crucial "S-Bahn" elevated system tried hard to achieve at least 20-minute intervals on main routes. Subway, bus and tram lines were unaffected – but overfilled.

The long-lasting dispute involved not just wages and hours – a 38-hour work week, no more than 50 hours overtime and proper weekends, all considered necessary for rail safety – but also a jurisdictional conflict. This small union, Germany's second oldest, going back to 1867 (though interrupted by the Nazi years), insists on its right to organise not only engineers but also other staff working on the trains like conductors and restaurant workers, and not be swallowed up by the general transportation union, seven times larger but usually tamer.

Many Germans are more or less pro-union, but of course this strike did hit people going to work or school each day and frightened those planning travels over the long May 23-25 weekend (not just Pentecost Sunday, Whit Monday is also a holiday). The issues were not easy to grasp for non-railway people and the media, aided by the national transportation minister, did what they could to work up feelings, especially against the union head, who is alternately ridiculed – easier due to his Saxon dialect – or attacked, in hard language.

Then an agreement was reached: to end the strike and turn the matter over to two mediators. They are a curious pair; for the company Matthias Platzeck, 61, a Social Democrat, until 2013 minister-president of a coalition with the LINKE (Left) in Brandenburg state, and for the engineers Bodo Ramelow, 59, once a union official but since December the first LINKE minister-president in Germany, heading a coalition of LINKE, SPD and Greens in Thuringia. Ramelow pointed out right away that the new written agreement permitted the union a separate contract, a key issue. But neither man is a fire-eater, both have made past compromises, so it seemed fairly likely that they would work out an agreement. (Almost ironically, that other, larger rail union now threatens to strike for its own demands. But not before the holiday.)

New labour law

Then, a day later, the entire picture changed. The engineers had accused railroad managers of purposeful foot-dragging, partly so people would blame and hate the union for the inconvenience, but also because a new law, due for passage by the Bundestag, would hinder just such small independent unions from organising and making contracts at companies with larger

unions – not only the engineers and train staff but pilots, air safety controllers (now also considering a strike), even medical doctors working in clinics.

Good as industrial unions are in general (and historically important in the USA in the 1930s), this law was clearly intervention in free union activity and, it was admitted, it would prevent many strikes. Some saw it as a quid-pro-quo move by Social Democrats in the government coalition after Merkel's Christian Democrats agreed to the new minimum wage law. Others saw it as just one more move against militancy. And now it has been passed; the LINKE, the Greens and some mavericks were unable to stop a big government majority. It will immediately be challenged in the Supreme Court – with a very uncertain outcome.

This law and the train strike have divided an already edgy labour movement. The union federation (DGB), founded in 1949 with 16 industrial unions, is now down to eight after many mergers. More worrisome, the number of organised employees dropped from about 25 percent in 2005 to a little over 16 percent now, with only a slight recent upturn. The demise of East Germany and its entire union movement did not nearly bring a big expected growth since East German industry was also largely disposed of after reunification. And the alarming increase in part-time, temp, make-work-at-low-pay and other precarious jobs, usually with no union membership and a cause for lower wages, has taken its toll. And yet, more than six million people are still organised – if not always united.

The new law is officially welcomed by four big unions: metal workers, mine and chemical workers, construction workers and transportation workers. These four, even when they demand wage increases, generally get along with employers. Their initial post-war opposition to the so-called "social market economy" grew more docile over the years, with broad acceptance and support for the status quo, just like their main Social Democratic ally. (Key actors in this process during their formative years were two from the US AFL-CIO, Jay Lovestone and Irving Brown, who generously received and handed out State Department and CIA dollars.) For these four unions, the days of big, militant strikes are generally forgotten.

But three other unions, mostly with more women, are not so glued to the SPD and sometimes lean more leftward, though rarely daring, even on a local scale, to show too much sympathy for the LINKE (Left) party, labour's most consistent ally in state and federal parliaments but still largely taboo in West Germany thanks to old feelings against the GDR.

Ver.di

They are the teachers union, the union of food and restaurant workers (both headed by a woman), and a union with the unusual name *ver.di*, an abbreviation of Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft – United Services Trade Union United Service Workers. It unites all kinds of people: retail clerks, public employees from hospital workers to garbage men, bank, insurance and other white collar workers, postal employees, workers in the paper and printing field, with special branches for photographers, writers, musicians and artists, and even one for so called sex workers. Its charismatic president,



The strike of locomotive engineers stopped freight cars on May 19 and passenger traffic the next day.

Frank Bsirske, 63, belongs to the Greens, but *ver.di* has taken part in annual left-wing Rosa Luxemburg conferences, worked with the anti-globalism Attac movement [the "Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financière et l'Aide aux Citoyens" or Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens], and joined in the Blockupy demonstration against the European Central Bank in Frankfurt in March. It is big, over two million strong, topped only by the metal workers union with 2,300,000, with which it has occasional jurisdictional disputes; there is often "bad blood" between their heads. *Ver.di*, certainly the fightingest of them all, leads more strikes than all the others combined, in part because its more numerous female membership faces more discrimination than most blue-collar men.

Right now *ver.di*'s postal employees are conducting a series of short warning strikes on wage and hour issues, first in one state, then in another. In the state of Brandenburg bus and streetcar drivers are demanding more pay, and also switching stoppages from one county to another until authorities make an acceptable offer. Nurses and other personnel at Charité, Berlin's famous university hospital (the name is purely historical), after years of negotiations and a brief warning strike, are now voting on a possible unlimited strike (with full attention to patients in need of care). Their demands are for an urgently-needed improvement in the nurse-patient ratio. They demand no more than 1:2 in intensive care wards and 1:5 at normal wards, instead of the present ruthless ratio average of 1:12.

For two years employees of the Amazon mail order firm have been fighting hard for decent wages against bosses who have done everything to use strikebreakers and set shops against each other.

In the most dramatic of *ver.di* strikes, since early May the staffs of most nurseries and

kindergartens and some senior care facilities have gone on strike to demand a 10 percent increase in wages, now far too low in view of their long training. This includes a wish for more respect for their demanding and important job! Thanks to the example of the GDR (though it is rarely mentioned), the offer of child care, private or public, is now at least officially required, with a wide variety of usually low prices, which means that the strikes cause problems for a large percentage of working parents. But the women (and a few men) saw no alternative and hope the growing pressure will help them win out.

NSA and BND scandal

Does this strike wave reflect a change in an otherwise more placid economic and political scene? Crystal balls are rare and untrustworthy. Golf balls, or giant structures resembling them, now take more headlines but are far, far less transparent than the crystal kind. Round and white, these radomes or radar domes, located in Bad Aibling in Bavaria, are tools in the all-encompassing spying activity which has joined the American NSA with the German BND [Bundesnachrichtendienst, Germany's intelligence agency, the German CIA equivalent] in a long-lasting series of scandals. The German side, the media cry, lets cloak and dagger men from Washington not only in on government doings all over Europe and beyond, but on a host of business matters, too, with a list of maybe 5,000 "selectors"; words, names, and places to be sorted out from the billions of messages. And this is in clear violation of basic German law.

The differing reactions of those caught up in the limelight are more than interesting. Washington kept largely mum. Merkel, now busy pressuring southern Europeans, especially in Greece, to keep up "austere" measures no matter how many go hungry, medically untreated or commit suicide, or pressuring eastern Europeans from Tallinn to Kiev to step up pressure against Russia, reacted only by asking "What scandal?" or by justifying it: "After all, they are our closest allies!"

Sigmar Gabriel, head of the Social Democrats and vice-chancellor in the coalition, sounded off loudly against the responsible officials. His party somehow can't break out of a 25 percent slough in the polls (against the 40 percent average of Merkel's side of the coalition), and he sniffed a chance to win points. But when a few journalists recalled that his party had been in charge when the NSA-BND agreements were made, Gabriel's voice lost its angry

In the state of Brandenburg bus and streetcar drivers are demanding more pay, and also switching stoppages from one county to another until authorities make an acceptable offer.

Philippines

US bases and women's rights

Liza L Maza

Speech delivered as a part of Women Cross the DMZ events at the Women's Peace Symposium on May 26, 2015, in Seoul, Korea.

Greetings of peace to all especially to the courageous and joyous women who are gathered here today calling for Peace and Reunification of Korea! Let me also convey to you the warm wishes of solidarity from GABRIELA Philippines and the International Women's Alliance (IWA), a global alliance of grassroots women's organisations.

I am honoured to speak before you today to share the experiences of Filipino women in organising for peace in my country. I have been with the parliament of the state as representative of the Gabriela Women's Party to the Philippine Congress for nine years and in the parliament of the streets as a feminist activist of the GABRIELA Women's Coalition for half my lifetime. I will talk about the work of peace building of my organisation, GABRIELA.

Having been colonised by Spain for 300 years, by the US for more than 40 years and occupied by Japan during WWII, the Filipino people have a long history of struggle for peace that is inextricably linked to the struggle for national sovereignty, social justice and genuine freedom. The Filipino women were at the forefront of these struggles and played important and leading roles.

Despite formal independence in 1946, our country remains a neo-colony of the US. The US still dominates our economic, political, and socio-cultural life. One of the most telling manifestations of such control was the US occupation for almost a century of our prime lands to maintain its military facilities including two of its largest military bases outside its territory – the Subic Bay Naval base and the Clark Air base. These bases served as springboard for US interventionist war in Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East.

The sites of these US bases became haven for the "rest and recreation" industry where women and children's bodies were sold in prostitution for the price of a hamburger; where women were viewed as mere sex objects and the culture of violence against women pervaded; and where thousands of Amer-Asian

children were left impoverished and abandoned by their American fathers.

In addition to these social costs, the US has not owned up responsibility for cleaning up the toxic wastes left after the bases were removed in 1991 and for the health hazards these wastes continue to pose to the people in the community. And like in the camp towns in South Korea, innumerable cases of crimes including murder, rape and sexual abuse were committed with impunity by US troops with many of these cases not even reaching the courts.

These compelling realities are the very reasons why we oppose the presence of US military bases and troops in the Philippines and beyond. We believe that there can never be long and lasting peace as long as we are under the control of the US or any other foreign power. And we cannot have a free and sovereign state with the presence of foreign troops on our land.

The women brought into the anti-bases argument the discourse on the social costs of the bases and why the removal of the US bases and troops is important for women. GABRIELA, the biggest progressive alliance of women's organisations in the Philippines which was organised in 1984 at the height of the anti-Marcos dictatorship movement, brought the issue of prostitution of women around the base areas and the puppetry of the dictator to US interests. Marcos was deposed in a people power that became a model to the world. The Philippines subsequently passed the 1987 Constitution with clear provisions against the presence of foreign troops, bases and nuclear weapons on our soil.

The historic Senate rejection of a new treaty that would extend the Military Bases Agreement with the United States beyond 1991 was another victory for women. Leading up to the Senate vote, women conducted massive information campaigns, held pickets, demonstrations, caravans, die-ins, lobby work and networking both locally and internationally to pressure the government to reject the treaty. The efforts of the women and the broad anti-bases movement finally led to the termination of the bases agreement.

But our struggle continues. In flagrant violation of our Constitution, the US in collusion with the Philippine government was able to reassert its military presence through the Visiting Forces Agreement of 1998 and the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement of 2014, agreements that are more dangerous than

the previous agreement they replaced. These agreements allow the US military free and unhampered use of virtually the entire Philippines for its basing needs and for rapid forward deployment of its forces as part of the US pivot to Asia policy. This heightening US military presence is also happening here in South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Australia among others.

Filipino women at the grassroots – the rural and Indigenous women, workers, youth and students, housewives, professionals, religious and other sectors continue to organise. The women are aware that massive poverty and hunger and the marginalisation, discrimination and violence against women are intensified by the policies of imperialist globalisation which is carried out, propped up and sustained by militarisation and war.

Furthermore, the policy of militarisation and war diverts much needed funds and resources that could have been used to create jobs for the 10 million unemployed and underemployed; to build homes for the 22 million homeless; to build school buildings, day care centres for children and crisis centres for women, and hospitals and health clinics in remote villages; to provide free education, health and reproductive care and other social services for the poor; and to develop our agriculture and industry.

We build long and lasting peace that is based on social justice and where women participate in the process and not the peace based on silencing the poor and powerless that militarist and war mongers do.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to convey the Filipino women's solidarity with the women of Korea. Our fathers and brothers were also sent to fight the Korean War and our grandmothers and mothers were also victims and survivors as comfort women during the Japanese occupation. We share this memory of war and women's exploitation, oppression and abuse. But today we also affirm our collective memory of struggle against all these as we persist and continue to work for peace in both our countries, in our Asian region and the world.

Liza Maza is a former Congresswoman representing Gabriela Women's Party to the Philippine House of Representatives, and Chairperson of the International Women's Alliance (IWA).

globalresearch.ca ✪



tones and almost got lost entirely – only briefly, of course.

And the head of the BND, the Federal Intelligence Service? Hailed in front of a Bundestag committee, he asserted that he had known nothing about the whole spy deal until just last month. It was all done by his underlings. Anyone believing that would be a good customer for the handsome bridge spanning the Rhine at Cologne – if someone will sell it.

And no one seemed to recall that the whole BND organization was founded in 1956 by Nazi ex-general Reinhard Gehlen, after building it up as an annex of the CIA right after the war. Some of its ties, not only to Washington but to Gehlen's earlier buddies, never completely lost their influence, as a growing pile of evidence would seem to indicate.

Angela Davis

I'll close on some very different notes. Human rights activist Angela Davis, visiting Berlin (and other places), went to the former school building where 40 asylum-seekers are living, part of a larger group of African and West Asian refugees still fighting for the right to gain asylum since 2012, when they walked to Berlin in a long caravan. Davis was barred by police from entering the building, but met asylum seekers and their supporters at an outdoor meeting where she compared their fight with that of immigrants in the US and the incarceration of great numbers of Americans. Older East Germans know her name well; during her imprisonment and trial in California in 1970-72 she received literally tons of supportive letters and cards from GDR young people, often adorned with a hand-drawn "Rose for Angela". The trucks with big sacks of mail even impressed the presiding judge.

In the same Kreuzberg district she visited, the weekend will see the annual Carnival of Cultures, one of Berlin's nicest events, with a parade on Sunday – some 60 costumed dancing groups from the many nationalities living in Berlin. Over a million spectators are expected along the parade route.

Of interest to art-lovers: Berlin's Old National Gallery is featuring a new exhibition contrasting Impressionist and Expressionist paintings. Long lines of art-lovers were already lining up.

And for nature lovers: a fine lilac aroma often filled the air, countless blossoming chestnut trees overwhelmed the eye, while happily tweeting, amazingly agile chimney swifts arrived back in town.

People's World ✪



Protesters march towards the gates of the US Embassy during a protest in Manila, July 2013.

Chilly G7 Summit

Victor Grossman

BERLIN: In Elmau, top leaders of seven top nations at the G7 Summit discuss “the global economy as well as ... foreign, security and development policy.”

That doesn't sound exciting. And since the big shots are sorting it all out in a five-star “luxury spa, retreat and cultural hideaway” a thousand metres high in the Alps, as far from the real world as possible, it could remain quite cool. To guarantee this, one possibly caustic troublemaker, Russia's President Vladimir Putin, was shown a cold shoulder. Down-graded areas in controversial latitudes and longitudes like China, India, all Africa and Latin America were not even considered. If they wish to, let them have G20 meetings – or whatever – the seven seemed to think. “We know who really counts in this world!”

But counting, like chickens before they hatch, is a dubious exercise. A big crowd wants to intrude on their Alpine solitude – as loudly as possible. Recalling the excited G8 Heiligendamm summit of 2007 at the Baltic Sea, much closer to urban civilisation and constantly bothered by angry citizens, Angela Merkel has seen to it that 17,000 police guard a wide security zone around the Elmau “retreat” and all routes leading to it. They have a close-knit video net, a fleet of helicopters and drones, “confinement” containers and quick-sentencing, rapid-fire judges at the ready.

All hotel and pension rooms in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, the nearest town, were blocked well in advance and everything else done to frighten local farmers from renting free camping space for tents, trailers, meetings and facilities like the well-ordered tent colony in Heiligendamm. When one courageous property owner offered the protest campers a large

meadow the agreement was first barred by the town because of possible “flood waters.” Another court decision reversed this, however, and the colony has been set up, though over 15 miles from the summit palace.

Protesting G7

The first rally on June 4, almost 100 miles away in Munich, the nearest city of any size, surprised everyone with up to 40,000 determined, non-violent demonstrators. They came from a wide range of groups like the teachers' union (GEW), the LINKE (Left) party, Oxfam, the Green Youth, the Green Party of Bavaria, the anti-speculation organisation attac (Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions and Citizen's Action) and the left-leaning Nature Friends.

They sent many demands up to the lofty mountainside: drop the “austerity” policy so enduringly espoused by Angela Merkel, move convincingly against climate warming and ecological disaster, keep antibiotic meat and gene-altered attacks on agriculture by firms like Monsanto out of Europe, and above all, cancel plans for US-European (TTIP) and Canadian-European trade agreements (CETA), companion pieces to Obama's US-Pacific treaty (TPP), which would endanger ecological efforts, labour standards, cultural independence in films and books and hand key decisions to special courts and big business who could over-rule any progressive gains in the separate countries.

Since the demise of the USSR and its bloc 25 years ago the mighty companies and the governments they so strongly influence have used technological progress and global possibilities to push down standards of living in the poorest countries of the south and, aided by the resulting



Demonstrators march in Germany in advance of the G7 Summit.

pressure, of working people in their richer countries as well, whose union movements and political Left almost everywhere have been weakened or de-clawed. Wage levels, job security, retirement age, women's rights, public schools and higher education have all been under pressure.

The current demonstrations are another sign that people are fighting back. Rallies and marches are planned for each day, moving as close to Elmau as permitted, maybe even somewhat closer. The “black bloc” groups who like to burn cars or garbage cans and break windows have not been invited this time but, unlike Putin, they could show up uninvited, and many non-violent protesters are also in a defiant mood. As ever, the media predators will hunt big bold scare headlines.

What worries the G7?

The G7 men and two women (hostess Angela Merkel and World Monetary Fund head Christine Lagarde) will rely on the armed, uniformed, visored men in surrounding woods and meadows to keep the crowds unseen and unheard. But two burning themes can hardly be avoided. Present or menacing war, from Donetsk or Odessa to Ramadi and Palmyra is of bloody importance. Nor can they ignore their real worry; not only do protest rallies seem to be growing, but undesirable election results look like troublesome, rebellious omens, most recently in Spain, far more urgently in Greece. Such uppity presumption will surely be discussed as much up in Elmau as down below in the crowds.

Indeed, some may already be thinking up new slogans; on June 20 the World Social Forum will mark a week of solidarity for Greece. In its bitter tug of war against the Syriza government elected on January 25

the rulers of the European Union, headed by Germany and its tight-lipped, tight-fisted, tightwad Finance Minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, see it and movements like Podemos rather like Liberia saw Ebola or South Korea sees the new MERS epidemic. It must not spread! Syriza must be stopped, yes, wrecked!

The rallies planned for Berlin, Rome, London, Brussels and elsewhere hope to prevent this; the victories in Greece and Spain, signs of a new spring of resistance, demand strong support. The slogan will be “Remake Europe – democratic, borderless, in solidarity”.

This development is more than embarrassing to the Social Democrats and their leader Sigmar Gabriel. To retain any claim to a leftward inclination and maintain vital ties with the labour movement, his party should be joining such protests and rallies. But Vice-Chancellor Gabriel is part of the government, and Merkel is hostess in Elmau. He has joined Schäuble in badgering poverty-stricken Greece to pay up all its debts to its wealthy debtors and has been a main supporter of TTIP.

Due to growing opposition, even from fellow Democrats, to his friend Obama's Asian treaty, but mostly due to general German rejection of signing away the country's birthright for a Biblical mess of potage, consumed by big biz, Gabriel is making all kinds of claims as to the treaty's basic innocence if not its outright blessings. Sadly for him, the US negotiators are not backing him up in his assurances and his party is increasingly divided.

Forces

The Greens are also showing signs of what, among amoebae, is called mitosis; when cells, or their nuclei, begin to divide. While

left-leaning Greens – there are still some – are taking part in some of the protests, others, like co-chair Cem Özdemir, is so far to the right on some issues that he once joined the likes of Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz in an open letter violently attacking Russia. He speaks with deep respect for Angela Merkel and President Gauck and might perhaps be open to a coalition with their Christian Democratic Party. Or, to be fair, to any coalition, even with the Social Democrats and LEFT if it would get him a government cabinet seat. He currently hopes to end the double-chair rule in his party, with one man, one woman, and thus rule the roost alone.

This would be opposed but hardly lead to full mitosis, in contrast with the young Alternative for Germany (AfD), which now does seem to be splitting apart, with its present head, who is far to the right, opposed by the two vice-chairs, who are even further to the right. But then this is surely related less to amoebae than to the sphere of the e-coli.

The Left may also face a hot time on this hot weekend, hopefully no mitosis. At its party congress in West German Bielefeld the delegates will be debating desirable or undesirable coalitions with Greens and Social Democrats, their foreign non-intervention policy in the face of pressures from those other two parties, but hopefully also its new program of fighting hard on key issues affecting so many, here too: jobs, rent increases, pensions, environment. Perhaps this would help sooth inner wounds as well as possible and break the 8-10 percent status quo in the polls whose corset has confined its ribs for so long.

People's World ☸

Perth **SATURDAY JULY 25**

Santiago de Cuba

Carnival 2015

8pm to late - doors open at 7pm

The Navy Club
64 High Street Fremantle 08 9336 3752

\$20 presale / \$25 at the door

Featuring: Latin Fusion
7 piece Latin band that will revolutionize the dance floor

Latin food, drinks and Cuban merchandise on sale!
Join us early for a free dance lesson and stay late for some great raffle prizes

All proceeds to go to the Jose Marti library project in the province of Las Tunas, Cuba

More info: acfsperth@gmail.com or 0419812872
Organised by the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society (ACFS) Perth

The Vietnam of Friendship Organizations (VUFO)

&

The Cuban Institute of Friendship With The People (ICAP)

VII Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of Solidarity with Cuba

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam will be the venue of the VII Asia-Pacific Regional Conference of Solidarity with Cuba from September 8th to 9th, 2015, in the capital city of Hanoi. Its celebration constitutes another action aimed at strengthening the friendship and solidarity among our respective nations.

The event will take place in the year of the 55th anniversary of the creation of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples and the 70th anniversary of the Proclamation of Vietnam Independence. Undoubtedly, the Conference will be a further example of the excellent and fraternal relations between Cuba and Vietnam.

ISIS vying for control of water

Catherine Shakdom

Beyond the clamour of war hides a more vicious and insidious conflict – ISIS is vying to control water. Away from the sensational headlines, the terror group is working to throw the global economy out of balance in a game of dominoes we all stand to lose.

Although ISIS' interest over both Syria and Iraq water resources is hardly breaking news, the infamous radical Wahhabist terror group's relentless military advances and the precisions of its men's strikes at key infrastructure and certain geographic vantage points in the greater Levant region paint a picture which should have the world worried.

We live in an increasingly globalist world, where the fluttering of one butterfly's wing can indeed wreak havoc some several thousand miles away. And while many experts will continue to downplay ISIS' intrinsic threat by reducing its malignant effects to a twisted religious ideology coupled with end-world megalomaniac ambitions, constrained to the Middle East, ISIS' water war, or rather its natural resources war is not the figment of a chaos theorist's imagination. It is a reality we all, sooner, rather than later, need to wake up to.

Beyond the simple corporate bottom line, ISIS, if allowed, could soon hold the world to ransom over more than just fuel – food supplies, global economic stability and population migration, all stand in the balance. What are world powers doing?

Not much, given the speed with which this one terror army has been able to encroach further onto Iraqi and Syrian territories over the past few weeks. With half of Syria under the sway of terror militants, many military experts among whom retired Brigadier General Abdullah Al Hakeem, have warned that Iraq is positioned to be the next shoe to drop. "With Syria weakened and its military thinned out in between various fronts: government opposition and terror militants, ISIS is likely to concentrate its forces against Iraq to consolidate its hold over key strategic areas," the general explained.

"ISIS is not looking to score more territory. Its selected holding: water dams, oil wells and other vital infrastructure to suffocate not only Baghdad but the region. There is a domino effect we need to consider here when looking at this picture. ISIS is planning an empire, it is not your regular hit and run terror organisation," Al Hakeem added.

Mohammed Abu Zaid, a security consultant with the Yemen Institute for Arab Affairs, noted that in the light of the Middle East pre-existing water crisis, ISIS' play on the region's fresh-water resources represents a threat of biblical magnitude.

"Water resources are scarce in the region. Global warming, pollution and mismanagement have evidently exacerbated the problem and studies have shown that by 2025 famine would hit a drought-stricken Middle East unless global efforts are made."

And indeed, US water management expert Roger Patrick assessed in March, in a report for the Journal of the AWWA, that local water shortages are now having "more globalised impacts." He drew a parallel in between "political instability in the Middle East and the potential for the same in other countries" and the "global interconnectedness" of water scarcity at local and regional levels.

These findings echo a 2012 US intelligence report on a classified National Intelligence Estimate on water security, commissioned by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton which concluded that by 2022, "droughts, floods and freshwater depletion," would likely lead terror organisation to weaponise water – the new tool of terrorism.

Playing access to water will have far worse repercussions over the global economy than a play on oil and gas commodities ever could – water is after all the very source of life.

Looking at how ISIS militants attempted to "cleanse" entire communities in Iraq on the basis of their religious preferences, it is not too difficult to imagine how this one terror group could use thirst as a weapon of mass destruction.

But beyond the weaponisation of



ISIS' water war, or rather its natural resources war is not the figment of a chaos theorist's imagination. It is a reality we all, sooner, rather than later, need to wake up to.

natural resources lies another reality which we have too often dismissed when attempting to confront and defeat terror. Water scarcity is and has been a driving factor of sectarianism, a catalyst and a fuel for radical groups such as ISIS. Not convinced?

In 2011, before ISIS elected Syria as its regional springboard, the country suffered a devastating drought which forced over a million Sunni farmers to migrate to areas falling under the control of the Alawites. These new living arrangements led to aggravated sectarian tension, fanned by economic hardship and the disappearing of the middle class.

In June 2014, Eric Holthaus, a US meteorologist remarked in a report for the Slate that the cataclysmic rise of ISIS in Iraq, March-May 2014, overlapped a period of extreme heat and drought. He wrote, "This year's major drought has coincided with the rise of ISIS, which has already used dams as a weapon of war, threatening downstream agriculture and electricity production during its march to gain control of vast swaths of territory in Syria and northern Iraq."

If we missed the writing on the wall then – what about now? Can we really afford to ignore what perils lie ahead just because politicians fail to link the dots?

Should terror militants be allowed to control the region's water resources: the Euphrates and the Tigris being the first two rivers on its list, oil prices and the illegal sale of barrels of petrol on the black market will be the least of our worries.

RT ☛



Region Briefs

The Philippines and Japan recently conducted a joint navy exercise, after the Philippines' President visited Japan. During the visit, the President compared China with Nazi Germany, flattering Japan by supporting its militarism in order to form an alliance with Japan to contain China's peaceful development. In 2014, the Philippines passed a bill that allowed the US to station troops and weapons in the country, while Japan passed the Collective Defence Right that allowed the military to send troops overseas (a new Fascist Axis is forming in Asia-Pacific). According to data released by Japanese Defence Ministry, 25 Japanese Self-Defence Force members in Afghanistan and 29 in Iraq have committed suicide after they returned from their overseas posts. The suicide number is 10 times higher than for the ordinary Japanese population. The actual suicide number is even higher as the data only started to be recorded from 2004.

Vietnam's Vice Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai visited China's Yunnan province for the opening of the third China-South Asia Expo. During the visit, the Vice Prime Minister met Chinese Vice President Li Yuanchao, and he proposed a number of suggestions that would foster the partnership between the two countries, such as maintaining high-level meetings and implementing agreements for win-win cooperation in all fields, and promoting people-to-people exchange. Li said that the Party and the government of China always sought neighbourly friendship and cooperation with Vietnam. He spoke highly of the bilateral relationship in the past and hoped to actively enhance comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries.

Vietnam and China will jointly build the first eco-plastic plant in Vietnam's province of Mekong Delta, hoping to reduce plastic bag pollution. The plant is worth over A\$11 million and it will be constructed jointly by Vietnam Plastic House Co Ltd and its Chinese partner, a biodegradable plastics company in Guangzhou. The compostable bio-plastic bag is made from wheat flour and uses Vietnamese local materials. The plant will produce 3,000 tonnes of bags every year, hoping to replace the traditional plastic bags by 65 percent by 2020 in Vietnam's supermarkets and 50 percent in other domestic markets.

At a recent national climate change and emissions reduction meeting in Beijing, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said that "China is committed to full, effective and sustainable implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change". He stressed that the country was ready to work with all parties to ensure a comprehensive, balanced and strong agreement at the upcoming Paris Conference. China will engage with other countries bilaterally and multilaterally on the issue, especially to provide capital and technological support to developing countries, small island nations and least developed countries for climate protection purpose. Energy saving and emissions control were prioritised in China's 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015), the country's energy consumption dropped by 29.9 percent and carbon dioxide emission dropped by 33.8 percent in 2015 compared to 2014 levels.



AUSTRALIAN
SPEAKING TOUR
BY BESTSELLING
AUTHOR
**Anne
Cadwallader**

Lethal Allies
British Collusion in Ireland

PERTH
Saturday June 20, 2:00pm,
Trades Hall, Unity House,
77-79 Stirling St

ADELAIDE
Monday June 22, 6:30pm,
Irish Club

SYDNEY
Tuesday June 23, 7:30pm,
Gaelic Club,
1/64 Devonshire St,
Surry Hills

MELBOURNE
Friday June 26, 4:00pm,
Celtic Club,
Cnr La Trobe & Queen St

BRISBANE
Sunday June 28, 4:00pm,
University of Queensland
(room tbc).

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

email: tpearson@cpa.org.au



China's national defence white paper

China has issued a white paper on national defence elaborating its new security concept and peacetime employment of armed forces. The document, the eighth of its kind issued by the Chinese government since 1998, says China advocates a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, and pursues comprehensive security, common security and cooperative security.

"China will never seek hegemony or behave in a hegemonic manner,

nor will it engage in military expansion", the white paper says.

According to the document, China will 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 paper warns that China still faces multiple and complicated security threats and challenges.

The issues of subsistence and development security and traditional and non-traditional threats to security are interwoven, the document says.

"Therefore China has an arduous task to safeguard its national unification, territorial integrity and development interests," it says.

The paper elaborates on the country's diversified employment of the armed forces in peaceful times, saying that it responds to China's core security needs and aims to maintain peace, contain crises and win wars.

Chinese armed forces are employed to safeguard borders, coastal and territorial air security and they will strengthen combat-readiness and

combat-oriented exercises and drills, it says.

And they will readily respond to and resolutely deter any provocative action which undermines China's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.

In this paper, the People's Liberation Army for the first time reveals the actual number of army, navy and air force servicemen, designations of its army combined corps and the main missile line up.

It also has under its command missile bases, training bases, specialised support units, academies and research institutions.

T Southern
Brisbane

Save township from mining greed

NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes only has a few weeks to intervene to save Bulga from Rio Tinto's Warkworth coal mine expansion, or it will be too late.

The project is now before the Planning Assessment Commission for the final time, and the

Commission is expected to make a determination within weeks. The Lock the Gate Alliance used its supplementary submission to the PAC to urge Commissioners to respect the 2013 judgement of the Land and Environment Court, which rejected the project because of its unavoidably massive impacts on the town of Bulga, and on the critically endangered Warkworth Sands Woodland.

The Land and Environment Court has very clearly ruled that this mine expansion is against the interests of NSW. The only thing that will allow it to be approved in spite of all we know about its devastating impacts is very bad planning and mining policy.

The rules have been rigged to make sure Rio Tinto get the approval they want. The public, the community, the bushland are trumped by the demands of a multinational mining company and right of the public to appeal the merits of that approval in court have been removed. This process is a sham, designed to get a coal mine approved at any cost.

The Commission has conceded that "significant legislative and policy changes" since the 2013 court

ruling have made the project "capable of being approved."

Lock the Gate argues in its submission to the PAC that these changes were introduced by the former Planning Minister in response to lobbying by Rio Tinto in the wake of the court judgement against them, and are regarded in the community as a gross and unfair betrayal of procedural fairness. The new Minister, Rob Stokes, has publicly stated that these unfair changes, in particular the Resource Significance amendment to the Mining SEPP, are now being reviewed with intent to restoring some semblance of fairness and balance, and that "environmental and social considerations must be a foundation concern in any decision about resource use."

We congratulate Minister Stokes for recognising that the current mine-approval regime is completely unfair and unbalanced. It desperately needs to be fixed, and the Minister has indicated that he plans to fix it.

But he needs to intervene now, or it will be too late to save the people and wildlife of Bulga.

Steve Phillips
Lock the Gate Alliance

Culture & Life

by Brett Gowland

Media culture's class act



The *Courier Mail's* campaign began with the announcement that UNESCO had given the reef a "clean bill of health". What the report actually said was that the health of the reef was "poor, and declining due to coastal development and climate change".

"Divide and conquer" is one of those imperialist phrases that applies very well to the present day. But it won't cover all contingencies. When a politician wants out of a fight, rather than in, then it's time to invoke that other ploy so popular with imperial statesmen: "distract and evade"

Take the present farce over "coding", the job-skill of the future, which the neo-capitalist government and the equally neo-capitalist opposition have made their top priority in education policy (this month). And why have they done that? Well, according to them, it's because 3D printing and artificial intelligence are about to change everything forever. That's what they're saying. Just like voice recognition software, which they said would make all keyboards (and trained typing skills) obsolete by the end of the 1990s. Remember that? Well, it's 2015 now and keyboard skills are as important as they ever were. So why had they made such a fuss about Voice Recognition?

Because talking about the "enormous opportunities for prosperity" which are "about to change everything forever" distracts everybody from the real issues in education – the ones we've already heard about – which the politicians would rather continue to avoid: failing schools, lack of specialist support for students, the increasing shift away from comprehensive publicly funded schools to private education, poor international rankings in literacy and numeracy, and countless other real, and very difficult issues, that confront Australia's education system.

While the politicians are seeking to avoid the social issues, the same cannot be said for the corporate media. They have never been so politically active. Constantly in a state of outrage, they have taken to liberally spraying us all with a daily dose of their opinion on politics,

politicians, political institutions, policy proposals, activists, dissidents, sceptics, terrorists, vegetarians, and of course, the state of economic development in Australia. Happily for the big developers, the opinion of the corporate media manages the marvellous trick of coinciding exactly with whatever the developers happen to want most that very week.

Take the example of the *Courier Mail*. They spent the past week running a massive campaign to wreck the credibility of the activist organisation Get-Up. This organisation has been very successful in mobilising public opposition to the Adani and Abbot Point projects on the Great Barrier Reef. The *Courier Mail's* campaign began with the announcement that UNESCO had given the reef a "clean bill of health". They went on to accuse Get-Up of using "fraud" and "lies" to stir up the public.

They devoted space and editorial rhetoric to the story, which painted a picture of proud Australian industry at risk, just when it's most needed by the community, due to the outrageous interference of wrong-headed people. Take that, Greenies! What the UNESCO report actually said was that the health of the reef was "poor, and declining due to coastal development and climate change".

They were unable to classify it as "in danger" because that category is reserved for environments that are actually in the process of being destroyed by active development. This won't apply to the Barrier Reef until the Adani project commences. However, with the *Courier Mail* doing all it can to get the public on side, we won't have to wait very long for that.

It is remarkable that the corporate media should be so active, and so widely seen by us all, given they profess to be in a severe state of economic downturn and market instability caused by the difficult transition from

"old-school" publishing to the online era. Well, you wouldn't know it. Even as the various media companies are shedding staff in unprecedented numbers, and abandoning print-media, the amount of propaganda they are able to produce and distribute goes up. Perhaps I'm cynical, but I suspect this demonstrates a basic correlation: fewer people reviewing each other's work means more irresponsible bullshit getting to press. A win/win for the media companies.

Besides being a highly favourable situation for corporations that want to play politics, and politicians who want to avoid the business in front of them, our media culture has produced a situation which is damned essential for those people who are busy conducting the "War On Terror". Their campaign is nowhere without ready access to a public bulletin board that will publish daily announcements (mostly designed to frighten us and turn us against each other) without hesitating ten seconds to wonder whether any of it is true. For this, they need look no further than Murdoch, the American fox in Australia's media chicken-coop.

Not content with persecuting SBS for broadcasting *Struggle Street* (a program which showed people on welfare were doing it tougher than anybody previously imagined), the *Daily Telegraph* went further with its claims that Centrelink is a major sponsor of terrorism in Australia. The Prime Minister didn't hesitate to back up the story, possibly pleased to be able to add the dole office to his personal list of "criminal institutions", along with bikie gangs and unions.

But when the PM gives credibility to an allegation concerning terrorism, the Senate has to check it out. You know, in case it's true. Well, we can all relax, because it isn't. "Almost all Jihadis are on welfare" has been rounded down

to "In fact, none". Mind you, I'll never look at a Meals-On-Wheels van the same way again.

Speaking of persecutory behaviour, when the Prime Minister recently brought his cabinet colleagues in for some heavy whipping, and had them all swear a fresh oath of loyalty to him, he described it as a "Come to Jesus moment". He went on to say that he had told his cabinet there would be "political and personal consequences" for leaking Cabinet affairs to the press. Personal consequences?

It's easy to see how their political opportunities could suffer from his displeasure, but how will he make them suffer "personal" consequences? Run over the family cat with his car? Can you threaten the personal affairs of your colleagues? "Come to Jesus ... before he hurts you ..."

On the subject of being threatened by one's own senior officials, I should like to pay a small tribute to a cultural document from the far side of the planet. A bill of law which was filed not very many years ago in the British parliament. The "Human Rights Act". It's a refreshingly simple document, easy to use. Best kind of guarantee you can have really, the one with simple wording. It lists the rights you have.

The right to seek work, the right to protection from torture, the right to marry. The right to freedom of "expression and thought". That's an important one. No complicated exemptions, or strange sub-clauses explaining the state's option to withhold some or all of your rights from you if and when they see fit. It just lists your rights, and charges the state with the responsibility for seeing that you get them.

Just so everybody knows who the state is meant to be working for. And what do the Tories want? They want it scrapped. It's in their way. ☹



Rob Gowland
previews
ABC & SBS
Public Television

Sunday 21 June –
Saturday 27 June

Martin Clunes has done numerous things since *Men Behaving Badly* finished, but he will forever be remembered as the oafish if well-meaning hero of that sitcom. One of the ways he has successfully sought to forge a new career has been as the amiable host of a series of programs about the relationship between people and animals. The two-part series *Martin Clunes: Man And Beast* which started last week, deals with people working with or exploiting animals in various countries around the world.

This week's episode (ABC Sunday June 21 at 7.40pm) covers everything from pet ownership in Japan – there are now more than 24 million cats and dogs sharing the pavements of Japan's already crowded cities – via bulbul singing competitions in Thailand to the 500 year old activity of swan upping on the River Thames (that is, fixing rings to the 1,000 or so swans on the river to make sure everyone knows that these birds belong to the Queen. No swans for you commoners!)

Ancient Greece gave us democracy, philosophy, and sport as well as tremendous contributions to architecture, language and literature. This was a consequence of the Greeks having a developed economy (for the time) based on slave labour.

In the two-part series *Michael Scott: Who Were The Greeks?* (Sunday SBS June 21 at 7.35pm), classicist Dr Michael Scott travels across Greece today, visiting ancient cities and battlefields, great ruins and wild countryside, to uncover how the ancient Greeks thought and lived. He finds that ancient Greece was a seething mix of strange, unsettling and downright outrageous customs and beliefs. But the vital economic analysis is a little slim.

People who swim in the open ocean where sharks are the top predator, or fish in estuaries frequented by ocean-going estuarine crocodiles or go bushwalking in

forests inhabited by grizzly bears are putting their lives (or at least their limbs) at risk. Not perhaps as risky as driving a car to and from work, but risky nevertheless. So why do some people – especially politicians – rush to make a big show of destroying the animal that ate the person who wandered so foolishly into their dining area?

Sharks are an essential predator, keeping the oceans healthy and fish-stocks likewise. Yet in WA the government is desperately trying to earn votes from the uninformed by waging war on sharks. As the planet warms, and as people spread out into former wilderness areas, more and more people are going to encounter "dangerous" wild animals. Are we to shoot them all, so that we can then concrete their habitat and make it "safe" for humans?

In this week's episode of the three-part series *Operation Maneater* (SBS Monday June 22 at 8.30pm), veterinarian Mark Evans travels to the shores of Canada's Hudson Bay, where polar bears are causing havoc in isolated communities. He arrives in the town of Churchill hours after an attack has left two people seriously injured and a bear dead. He joins the Polar Bear Alert team as they transport a captured bear by helicopter to a release site outside town. In the Inuit town of Arviat, Evans works with wildlife officers to test an aerial drone early warning system, a military grade ultra-loud speaker to deter bears, and a controversial experiment to place meat out on the tundra to keep bears away from town.

I haven't seen this week's episode of *Britain's Oldest Family Business* (SBS Tuesday June 23 at 7.30pm), but I saw last week's (about a family of butchers). It was so dull I eventually had to turn it off. Talk about mind-numbing tedium!

This week's episode is about Kent-based R Durnell and Sons, who've been builders since the time of Elizabeth I. They are Britain's oldest family building business, and properties built by their ancestors as far back as the 1590s are still standing to this day. You have been warned.

Interesting sidelight in the program: 7,000 construction companies have gone bankrupt in the UK since the financial crash in 2008. And Tony Abbott says small businesses will be the backbone of our future economy!

The "action-packed thriller from the creators of *Homeland*", *Dig* (SBS ONE Thursdays at 9.30pm), is a product of the new American Cold War. It is about an FBI agent stationed in, of all places, Jerusalem. A propaganda piece



Empire Of Dirt (NITV Saturday June 27 at 9.30pm).

promoting the close relationship between America and its key Middle Eastern ally? Do you think?

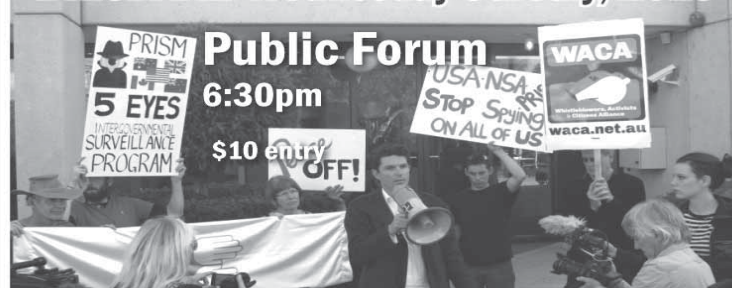
The Canadian feature film *Empire Of Dirt* (NITV Saturday June 27 at 9.30pm) is a domestic drama about Aboriginal Canadians. It got mixed reviews, but this 2013 one from Regan Rebecca, a regular contributor of reviews from Toronto to the International Movie Database (IMDb), is probably kinder than most.

"*Empire of Dirt* is a rather clichéd tale, the story of drop-out single mom Lena who, despite managing to get herself clean and working as a community leader for other struggling Aboriginal youth, finds herself struggling to support her troubled teenage daughter. When her resources run out she returns to the town of her birth and reconnects with the family and friends she was once so quick to let go of as a pregnant teenage mother so many years ago.

"Despite the trite storyline which neatly skips over the usual beats of the story, the movie is somewhat rescued by the lovely performance of its three leads. Newcomer Cara Gee appears in nearly every frame of the movie and acts natural and graceful and Shay Eyre as her teenage daughter Peeka matches her beat for beat with the two having a believable mother/daughter chemistry. The movie is also lovingly shot and the camera luxuriates on the outdoor beauty of the town of Lena's birth." ☺

DANGEROUS ALLIES ?

AUSTRALIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE ORGANISATION
BRISBANE Wednesday 8th July, 2015



The Edge, State Library of Qld, South Brisbane

Prof Kozue Akibayashi WILPF international
Senator Scott Ludlam Australian Greens
Prof. Richard Tanter Nautilus Institute,
Chaired by Ros MacLennan Qld Council of Unions



Website: ipan.org.au email: ipan.australia@gmail.com
Phones: Annette (Qd) 0431 597 256; Shirley (Vic) 0417 456 001
Jo (WA) 08 9272 4252; Nick (NSW) 0420 526 929; Justin (NT) 0424 028 741

POLITICS IN THE PUB

June 18

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT WEST CONNEX AND ITS IMPACT ON INNER CITY COMMUNITIES?

Michelle Zeibots, Institute for Sustainable Futures, UTS;
Jenny Leong, MP, Greens Member for Newtown;

June 25

THE REALITY AND RHETORIC OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA, WHO BENEFITS AND WHO LOSES?

Bill Mitchell, Professor, Director, Centre for Full Employment and Equity, Newcastle University;
John Buchanan, Professor, School of Business, Uni of Sydney;

July 2

A HUMAN RIGHTS ACT FOR AUSTRALIA – WHY WE NEED ONE

Chris Holley, Campaign Manager, Amnesty International;
Chris Graham, editor, *New Matilda*;

July 9

INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM: THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Wendy Bacon, Dr, Professor Emeritus, UTS;
Chris Graham, editor, *New Matilda*;

Every Thursday 6:30 pm 'til 8:15 pm

Harold Park Hotel

Cnr Wigram Rd & Ross St Glebe

Charles Bradley 02 9692 0005
odl_bradley@pacific.net.au

www.politicsinthepub.org.au

Support *The Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

Subscription to **The Guardian**

12 months: \$100 (\$80 conc/\$150 solidarity) 6 months: \$55 (\$40 conc/\$80 solidarity)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

Pay by Cheque Money order (Payable to "Guardian Publications")

Phone in details on 02 9699 8844

Or send to: Guardian Subscriptions

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

or by credit card: Mastercard Visa *\$20 minimum on cards

Card# _____

Amount: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____/____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

The Guardian

Editorial Office
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Tom Pearson

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

Printed by Spotpress
24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment
is taken by T Pearson,
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Action to unite anti-fracking movement

Claire Fauset

In contrast to the tourist-ready images of Spain as a parched, sun-bleached plateau, the Basque Cantabrian basin in the northern part of the country was cool, rainy and green as I drove through the vineyards of Rioja Alavesa to give a talk in a village threatened by fracking. If the Spanish government is to be believed, these Rioja vineyards and the verdant hills and valleys sit on a shale formation that could yield 185,000 million cubic metres of natural gas.

Above that sits the 170-km square Subijana aquifer, which is a vital water resource for the entire region. Local politicians Dani Maeztu and Igor Lopez de Munain estimate that the aquifer would need to be punctured over 1,000 times to extract the volumes of gas the industry predicts. As the aquifer is 300 metres deep, they claim that there is no credible way that this level of interference could leave it uncontaminated.

In the United States, at least two million oil and gas wells had been hydraulically fractured by 2013, making up 43 percent of the country's oil production and 67 percent of its natural gas production.

Fracking is a relatively new, "non-conventional" method of extraction of natural gas trapped in shale and other impermeable rocks. The gas is released by drilling vertically to depths of around two kilometres and then horizontally, using new drilling techniques. The well is then "hydraulically fractured" or "fracked", where water (laced with a mixture of chemicals) at very high pressure is injected to shatter the rock, enabling gas to be captured.

The shale gas boom there has had horrific side effects: irreparable groundwater contamination, air pollution, neuro-toxin poisoning, noise pollution, sinkholes and even earthquakes. Added to that is the release of quantities of "fugitive emissions" of methane that studies have shown make the process more polluting than coal in terms of greenhouse-gas emissions.

Today, the oil and gas industry seeks to export fracking across the world. Their efforts, however, have been met by strong grassroots opposition in almost every country, particularly in Europe, Africa and Latin America. And the Basque Country is no exception.

A surprising turn of fate

Mikel Otero, a firefighter and core member of the Basque anti-fracking group Fracking Ez, told me how a chance meeting with a high-ranking government minister sealed his resolve to fight this destructive new technology.

Mikel found out about the plans to frack in the Basque Country in 2011, when the former Basque Prime Minister, Patxi Lopez, who had just been on a visit to Texas, appeared in the media saying that an agreement had been reached with two US companies to start drilling in 2012.

"In the winter of 2011 we started seeing these notices in the newspaper and said, Hmm, that looks odd. Then we started spray-painting 'Stop Fracking' around the city and having assemblies."

The more they found out about the impact fracking was having in the US, the more concerned they became. At the time of these initial meetings, Mikel made an unplanned and speculative visit to the Ministry of Industry in Madrid to see if he could find out more.

In a surprising turn of fate, he ended up at the office of the Director of the Department of Hydrocarbons. Intrigued by a Basque citizen turning up at her office asking questions about the fracking permissions, and perhaps keen to make her department look transparent and accountable, the minister agreed to meet Mikel for 10 to 15 minutes.

He was there for two hours.

"I was surprised because here was a person of high rank in the administration communicating with me directly and listening to my concerns. At one point she told me we should be very careful about what we were doing because there had been many occasions where the economic development of the country had been



13,000 people supported Fracking Ez's (meaning "No Fracking" in Euskara, the language of the Basque Country) demonstration in Gasteiz, the capital city of the Basque Autonomous Community of Álava in northern Spain, October 2013.

The shale gas boom there has had horrific side effects: irreparable groundwater contamination, air pollution, neuro-toxin poisoning, noise pollution, sinkholes and even earthquakes.

held back because of people's opposition to high-technology development. And that was the moment when I thought, OK, I think I am going to be in the front of this struggle."

Radical discussion, radical action

Fracking Ez (meaning "No Fracking" in Euskara, the language of the Basque Country), along with the assemblies against fracking in Cantabria and Burgos, quickly mounted a strong resistance against the plans to frack.

In the Basque Country, where the tradition of left-wing politics and social campaigns is strong, 13,000 people rallied in 2013 in the small city of Gasteiz, in the centre of the region where fracking is proposed.

The Frackanpada international protest camp will take place from July 13-19.

The same year, the Cantabrian assembly succeeded in mobilising grassroots support and passed a ban against fracking in this strongly conservative region. The ban, along with bans passed by other Spanish regions, was later overturned by the constitutional court in Madrid, but it nonetheless shows the strong feelings local people hold on this issue, as well as their ability to mobilise support for their cause.

The anti-fracking movement in the Basque Country is inspired by a long history of struggle against the government's inappropriate land development. The anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s prevented five nuclear power stations being built along the Basque coast and has kept nuclear power out of the country.

The movement to oppose the high-speed train line that would cut through the Basque countryside, offering no benefit to local people, started in the early 1990s and is still a major focus of resistance.

Mikel explains that he feels excited that the anti-fracking struggle is one of the first times he has been involved in a struggle that brings together a wide range of people and that it is

prompting a radical discussion about the energy system.

"There are people of many ages, people from the villages working alongside people from the city; also politically it is wide and not limited to just one political viewpoint. It is exciting when you go to the villages and talk with all kinds of people about fracking, and what it means, about the mess we are in with our energy system and our consumption levels. Everybody agrees that we are in a crazy time and a crazy place and many things must be changed. Even if we could get everybody on board, it is still not clear how we are going to change these systems, so fracking is a good point to start to have these discussions."

Fracking Ez's latest project is organising a "Frackanpada", an international anti-fracking camp, from July 13-19, to bring together the anti-fracking movement from across Europe for a week of debates, plotting, skill-sharing, concerts and anti-fracking actions.

With the permission of the local village, the camp will take place on the site of an old conventional well next to where the companies are proposing to re-drill and frack, immediately above the aquifer.

The locals want to show the strength of opposition and resistance that companies can expect if they go ahead with their plans to frack here.

Working together with anti-fracking groups from across Europe, including Reclaim the Power in Britain, the camp aims to connect the issue of fracking to other struggles which target land appropriations, against the economic system that does not value life, and to create visions of a better world.

Mikel sees so many possibilities. "It's going to be a crazy mess of ideas and experiences and skills ... I still don't know exactly what is going to happen there, but I know great things are going to come out of it."

New Internationalist ✪

SECOND 2015 MELBOURNE
Latin American
Documentary
Film Festival

JUNE 26TH & 27TH,
RMIT UNIVERSITY
115 QUEENSBERRY ST. CARLTON
www.latinamericansolidaritynetwork.org

Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au cpa@cpa.org.au

General Secretary
 Bob Briton
 email: gensec@cpa.org.au

Party President
 Vinnie Molina
 email: president@cpa.org.au

Adelaide Bob Briton postal: PO Box 612, Port Adelaide BC, SA 5015
 phone: 0418 894 366 email: sa@cpa.org.au web: www.adelaidecommunists.org

Brisbane postal: PO Box 6012, Manly, Qld 4179 phone: 0449 476 540
 email: bris@cpa.org.au

Canberra Ruben Duran phone: 0421 049 602 email: act@cpa.org.au

Melbourne Andrew Irving
 postal: Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth Vic 3053
 phone: 03 9639 1550 email: viccpa@netspace.net.au

Head Office (Sydney)

postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
 phone: 02 9699 8844 fax: 02 9699 9833 email: info@cpa.org.au

Newcastle email: newcastle@cpa.org.au

Perth Vinnie Molina postal: PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906
 phone: 0419 812 872 email: perth@cpa.org.au

Riverina Allan Hamilton
 postal: 2/57 Cooper St, Cootamundra, NSW 2590 email: riverina@cpa.org.au

Sydney Wayne Sonter
 postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 phone: 02 9699 8844

Tasmania Bob Briton phone: 0418 894 366 email: tas@cpa.org.au

