



## Productivity Commission report

# Abbott's war on workers

Anna Pha & Bob Briton

The Draft Report on a "Workplace Relations Framework" is full of reassurances that the current industrial relations regime needs only a few tweaks to deal with today's "24/7", "21st Century" economy. The framework built around the FWC (Fair Work Commission) is "not dysfunctional". It needs "repair not replacement," the report says, trying to dumb down the true nature of its contents and disguise any similarity to the Howard government's WorkChoices. But make no mistake, the report is brimming with benefits for employers and attacks on workers' rights. The federal government's Productivity Commission has delivered just what Tony Abbott ordered.

The final report is due in November but already it is clear Abbott wants to continue to undermine workers and their unions but doesn't want to go to an election with the electorate fearing WorkChoices Mark II and attacks on workers' rights and living standards.

The language of the draft report is low key and acknowledges the relative strengths of the two sides in the industrial relations system – workers and employers – seeking to defend their interests. It is surprising to see such openness about the existence of class struggle (which it seeks to quash) in these neo-liberal times.

"There are ethical and social factors that separate the labour market from more conventional markets," it says. In other words workers are commodities with a little difference – they can fight back if they are not handled properly. "The ethical and social dimensions of the labour market form the basis for many aspects of the WR system that differentiate it from the regulation of other markets."

Fair Work has delivered in spades for big business. "Strike activity is low, wages are responsive to economic downturns and there are multiple forms of employment arrangements that offer employees and employers flexible options for working," it says. A potential "wages contagion" from high paying resource



Photo: Anna Pha

sector jobs to the rest of the workforce didn't happen and wages in that previously advantaged sector are coming down. Wage increases are a disease that needs to be quarantined in the eyes of the Productivity Commission. Wage reductions are described as "responsive" to economic downturns.

Australia has performed well, from the point of view of private profit-takers, by comparison with other OECD economies. But there is always room for improvement, and the report starts with the Commission itself.

### Industrial relations virgins

The draft is peppered with references to the "baggage" of the past. This "baggage" is all to do with the gains made by workers through

decades of struggle. Long service leave, penalty rates and even awards are seen as quaint legacies forced on the community by an increasingly irrelevant history. The Fair Work Commission supposedly needs a re-organisation with instrumentalities populated by people without backgrounds in "antiquated" industrial relations.


The PC recommends that the FWC should have two distinct divisions.

The first is a *Minimum Standards Division* with responsibility for wage determination. "It would undertake the annual wage review and make award determinations. Its members should primarily have expertise in economics, social science and commerce, not the law."

Continued on page 5



2  Party members in SA say no to nuclear

3  And now for the news

10  Culture & Life  
Origins of IS

12  A story of corruption, greed and ineptitude



# Guardian

Issue 1697

August 12, 2015

## Hands off penalty rates!

As expected the Productivity Commission's draft recommendations for a Workplace Relations Framework included an attack on penalty rates, recommending that Sunday penalty rates that are not part of overtime or shift work should be set at Saturday rates for the hospitality, entertainment, retail, restaurants and café industries. It calls on the Fair Work Commission to introduce new regulated penalty rates as part of its award review process.

The Fair Work Commission did not wait for the Productivity Commission's call to begin rolling back penalty rates. In response to the Australian Industry Group's submissions it has agreed to extend provisions for time off in lieu of payment for overtime throughout the award system. It means that thousands of workers will no longer be automatically entitled to penalty rates for overtime. Instead they will be entitled to one hour off for every hour of overtime and haggle with their boss as to when they will take the time off.

As the Australian Industry Group chief executive Innes Willox put it: "The decision is an important step in the right direction of freeing up the award system to remove barriers to employers and employees agreeing on workplace flexibilities of benefit to both parties."

The benefit to the employer is clear – lower wages means more profit. Willox doesn't expand on the benefit to the worker. Presumably it is that he or she gets to keep their job, for the time being at least. Even that is not certain. When it comes to agreeing on the time to be taken off, Willox has a take-it or leave-it approach. "If you don't like the offer that's given, then you don't decide to work for that particular employer." He should add "you don't get the dole if you walk out".

The right-wing Shop Distributive and Allied Employees' Association (SDA) in South Australia laid the groundwork earlier this year for cutting retail workers' pay. Initiated and signed off by the union, workers' penalty rates have been exchanged for a rise in their base wage rate. It will hit the pay of more than 40,000 workers in that state.

The agreement reduces penalty rates for Sundays from 100 percent loading to 50 percent, cuts public holiday rates from 150 percent to 100 percent. It abolishes penalty rates on Saturdays and weekday evenings. The increase in the base rate might compensate some workers for now but for the many part-timers and casuals who work mostly weekends or do night shifts, the loss is immediate. More importantly, the principle has been established and the agreement will be used as a precedent.

Over at Tourism Accommodation Australia (TAA), the Tourism Minister in the Rudd and Gillard governments and a former ACTU president, Martin Ferguson, is campaigning to cut penalty rates, calling for a new "industrial vision".

"It's about trying to develop a modern package for the nature of society in the 21st century," said Ferguson, echoing Treasurer Joe Hockey on the 24/7 nature of commerce. The Victorian office of the ACCI's submission to the Productivity Commission said that penalty rates should be scrapped because they "no longer reflect community standards". We are supposed to believe that Saturdays and Sundays are no different to week days.

The workers in the hospitality, retail and tourist sectors rely on their penalty rates to get by. Take the example of a cleaner Olisa, whose annual income is \$44,000. She has two children. Her husband is on a disability pension. She works at a shopping mall in Melbourne and often has to ask utility companies for extensions to pay the bills. With penalties, she earns \$27 an hour for a 4pm to midnight shift on Saturdays and \$34 an hour for the same hours on Sundays. Her family could not survive without those penalty rates.

Employers want to abolish penalty rates for one reason – to increase profits.

Penalty rates are just that, a penalty imposed on the employer for keeping a worker for longer hours, for being away from their family on weekends, for the inconvenience and detrimental effect on health of shift work, on families and so on. They were fought for and won by workers and their unions. The future of penalty rates depends on the strength of the struggle to keep them.

### PRESS FUND

The cost of privatising public transport is graphically illustrated at Sydney's privately-operated railway stations. Passengers holding a \$2.50 concession ticket can travel for one day anywhere within the Sydney rail network, even to Newcastle or Bathurst, travelling 200 km daily if they want. But at Sydney Airport Station they'll need another \$11.60 just to walk through the barriers! In terms of distance covered, it's 100,000 times more expensive for a concession card holder to walk those 2 metres than to travel 200 km on a train. But talking about statistics, we really need Press Fund contributions, which help us cover our operating costs, so please, if you possibly can, send us something for the next issue. Many thanks to this week's supporters, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$5, Don Mudie \$10, K M \$20, Ron Reed \$20, D Richardson \$15, "Round Figure" \$10

This week's total: \$80 Progressive total: \$4,580

# Party members in SA say no to nuclear

Craig Greer

Hundreds of commuters heading into the city from the Port Adelaide/Semaphore area last Thursday beeped horns and gave the thumbs up as they passed under a number of anti-nuclear banners hung from an overpass by local comrades.

The peak-hour protest was in recognition of the 70th anniversary of the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki but held extra significance for South Australians in light of the State government's Royal Commission, which is currently "investigating" the pros and cons of a potential nuclear waste dump, likely to be situated in the state's north.

CPA General Secretary Bob Briton (pictured) was one of a number of activists, which included members of NOWPA (Nuclear Operations Watch Port Adelaide), to take action on the Jervois Bridge over the busy Causeway Road. Mr Briton told the *Guardian* that a large number of South Australians have serious concerns about the outcome of the Royal Commission.

"I think people are worried that a Royal Commission will give the go-ahead to a range of nuclear options and leave us with the prospect of a nuclear waste dump in South Australia. This is of great concern to us. It will impact on the environment and on the Aboriginal people because these things inevitably take place on Aboriginal traditional lands – it's just not on," he said.

Briton said the Party campaign in South Australia aims to stop the proposed waste dump which he thinks is likely to be the first step toward an expanded nuclear industry.

"If a waste dump goes ahead and we're accepting high level radioactive waste from Taiwan, for example, I think the view will be, why not run the full risk with nuclear power?"

"Hiroshima Day is an appropriate time to make the connection between the rest of the nuclear cycle and nuclear weapons. If there



Photo: Craig Greer

wasn't a nuclear power industry there wouldn't be the great proliferation of weapons, and South Australians don't want to buy into that," he said.

### Local reaction

CPA State President and former Federal Election candidate for Port Adelaide Michael Perth told the *Guardian* Port Adelaide was once a nuclear-free port, but that doesn't appear to be the case any more.

"There's a number of things we've been doing to address this. We've been trying to convince Port Adelaide Mayor Gary Johanson to become a Mayor for Peace like mayors from many other local councils in the Adelaide area. We want to see the Port return to its nuclear-free status but so far he's rejected this idea," Perth said.

"We'll be continuing that campaign which complements our efforts to have this proposed waste dump rejected. We don't see a future for the nuclear industry and we're sure most local people feel the same way.

"We recently had dozens of people in Semaphore signing our petition against military bases in Darwin, so we think they'll be equally supportive of a campaign which has implications much closer to home," he added.

The Port and West Adelaide branches of the CPA have plans to run advertisements in the local Messenger press and distribute leaflets to highlight the dangers of the nuclear waste dump and nuclear industry in South Australia.

### Show your support

Want to take a stand against nuclear waste and weapons? You can go to the Party's SA website at [www.adelaidecommunists.org/campaigns](http://www.adelaidecommunists.org/campaigns) and send a preformatted protest letter to the Premier urging him to abandon the nuclear waste dump. If you'd like to help with a donation towards the campaign fund or by volunteering your time, get in touch with Bob Briton: [sa@cpa.org.au](mailto:sa@cpa.org.au). ☘

## Website and Computers Appeal

The CPA has launched a Special Appeal to buy a few computers and develop its website and social media – the latter now being an important way of reaching younger people. As everything, this costs money and our resources are stretched. We still need to raise more to meet our needs. We urge you to dig deep and support our fund-raiser. If you have just received a tax refund, perhaps you could share it with us. Our warmest thanks to the following for their generous contributions this week:

Laurie Reed \$200, KM \$20, Anon \$350.

This week's Total: \$570 Cumulative Total: \$3,010.

### Website and Computers Appeal

Name/Organisation \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque/Money Order: make out to "Communist Party of Australia".

Credit card: sign, give name on card, card number & expiry date:  Visa  Mastercard

Name on the card \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

I agree /  I disagree to having my name published in *The Guardian*.

Send to: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010 or phone it through on: 02 9699 8844

Thank you for your support.





# And now for the news

## An update on the ABC

Peter Mac

**Now that the supercilious Speaker of the House has finally fallen on her sword, the government will again turn its attention to attacking the ABC, so it's important to review the tumultuous events of the past two months.**

On June 22 during a live broadcast of the *Q&A* discussion program, audience member Zaky Mallah challenged government minister Steve Ciobo over the government's plan to cancel the Australian citizenship of dual national citizens if the responsible minister deemed them to be terrorist supporters.

Mallah described his two-year imprisonment for threatening the lives of security officials, and asked Ciobo how his treatment would have differed if his case had been decided by the minister rather than a court.

Ciobo replied that if it were up to him he would certainly expel Mallah, which led Mallah to exclaim that the minister's statement would cause young Muslim Australian men to engage in terrorism.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott subsequently declared "heads should roll" at the ABC. The *Q&A* program director was reprimanded, and the program will be subject to an independent audit, although the program and the ABC itself were forcefully defended by managing director Mark Scott.

Mallah is certainly unstable. He has threatened government officials and posted extremely misogynistic material on line, and police found a gun and ammunition in his home. *Q&A* host Tony Jones said that if program directors had been aware of his misogynistic tirades he would not have received an invitation.

But was the criticism of the ABC fully justified? Commercial TV channels have attacked the ABC for giving him air time, but he had already been interviewed by *The Australian* and *The Courier-Mail*, and on talk-back radio.

The uproar also obscured the significance of Ciobo's statement. It demonstrated that in the case of persons accused of terrorist sympathies the government intends to replace trial for a legal offence with a sentence imposed arbitrarily by a government minister, simply on

the basis of his feelings towards the accused. That justifies widely-held concerns that citizenship-stripping would violate the fundamental right to trial established under Magna Carta.

Abbott and his closest supporters would still like to strip citizenship from any Australian citizens they accused of terrorist sympathies, even if that means leaving them stateless.

And Mallah's statement was probably correct. Ciobo's declaration, together with the government's targeting of Muslims as potential terrorists, would doubtless cause some young Muslims to consider joining ISIL.

And despite the government's description of Mallah as an extremely dangerous terrorist sympathiser, he has been acquitted of a charge of terrorism. Although he went to Syria to fight, he actually joined the US-backed so-called Free Syrian Army. There is no evidence that Mallah has committed terrorist acts in Australia.

### Background to the uproar

The Abbott government loathes the ABC, not only because the wide range of political views in programs like *Q&A* often include criticism of the government, but also because the ABC's presence restricts the operations of commercial media corporations.

Last year's federal budget hacked five percent off ABC and SBS funding, leading to many redundancies among ABC broadcast and retail staff.

The cuts were followed by attacks on the ABC by the government, which in turn mirrored a hate-filled anti-ABC campaign by sections of the mass media, particularly *The Australian*.

The reason for the attacks lies not just in political differences between commercial broadcasters and the ABC, but also in market competition between traditional mass media and the new digital TV media forms such as iView, Facebook and Google.

Facing falling demand for newspapers and free-to-air TV, commercial media owners see financial salvation in transferring to new digital media forms. Many commercial



*Q&A* host Tony Jones.

broadcast viewers would undoubtedly subscribe to new commercial media outlets to access popular existing programs.

However, one of the prime broadcasting markets is for news and current affairs, and the ABC doesn't charge for its digital media broadcasts. Why would anyone used to viewing free-to-air TV news pay to receive commercial news broadcasts if they could still get news free from ABC iView?

Newspaper readers are used to paying for news, and it's unlikely that commercial newspaper production will cease, but rising costs will probably result in newspaper circulation shrinking to a "niche" market.

The cost of digital broadcasting is minimal, compared to newspaper printing and publication. But some newspaper readers who transfer to digital media will undoubtedly log in to free ABC iView for news coverage and other ABC programs.

The threat to the profitability of commercial media posed by ABC digital media lies behind attacks on the ABC by commercial media and the government.

The solution posed by the commercial media is for the ABC to cease digital broadcasting, leaving the field open to commercial interests – or even to cease operations altogether,

as *The Australian* has hinted in recent editorials and articles.

### Looming challenges

Although government and media attacks have damaged the ABC's reputation, it's still the nation's most trusted broadcaster.

That doesn't impress Abbott. He accused the ABC of betrayal and described *Q&A* staff as a "leftie lynch mob". ABC staff members were subsequently subjected to abuse, with one journalist verbally attacked at a Sydney railway station.

Abbott's petulant ban on *Q&A* has deprived ministers of opportunities to argue their cases in public. *Q&A* is now watched by more viewers than ever, and is noticeably more entertaining and enlightening without the presence of the all-too-often truculent and surly government representatives.

The term of office of the ABC managing director will end next year. The news director is resigning

and two positions on the ABC Board will fall vacant soon. The government will do all it can to stack the ABC Board and management with its allies.

Morale is understandably low, but ABC staff-elected director Matt Peacock has urged employees to stand strong. That's good advice, because it would be disastrous for the national broadcaster to dumb down its programs, switch the emphasis from topics the government hates (like climate change, asylum seekers or gay marriage), or censor criticism of this or any future government.

So hang in there, Aunty, the nation needs you.

**NB: Last Friday the ABC announced it would shift the *Q&A* program to the news department, as Tony Abbott had demanded in return for his frontbenchers again appearing on the program. ☘**

### Pete's Corner



BE MORE THAN A TOURIST

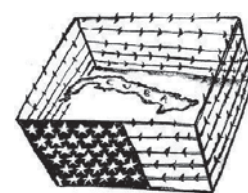
JOIN THE

**CUBA**

★ BRIGADE ★

Dec 27 2015 to Jan 16 2016

<http://cubabrigade.org.au>



Sydney

**Vigil demanding that the USA stop the blockade on Cuba**

**54 YEARS IS ENOUGH**

**August 17 at 5:30 pm**

**Outside USA Consulate in Martin Place**

Also to stop the subversion funds against Cuba and to return Guantánamo to its rightful owners – the Cuban people.



# Port workers take on a stacked system

## Workers ordered back to work after half their workmates are sacked

Len Waster

**“The company ... will expect that the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) will facilitate the orderly return to work and the continuation of work at terminals in Sydney and Brisbane.”**

This arrogance, from the world's largest multinational port operator, Hong Kong based, but registered in the Virgin Islands tax haven, gives an insight into the forces the port workers and their union, the Maritime Union of Australia, are taking on in their courageous fight to protect jobs and conditions in the maritime industry.

Hutchison Ports Australia (HPA), a subsidiary of multinational Hutchison Ports Holdings, which in turn is a subsidiary of Hutchison Whampoa Ltd, expressed the above expectation of the MUA after the Fair Work Commission issued an interim order last Friday evening directing HPA employees to cease all forms of industrial action.

The industrial action the Fair Work Commission is ordering to be stopped, is that being taken by the remaining 127 Hutchison workers in Sydney and Brisbane, who still have jobs, to refuse to return to work until their 97 workmates are reinstated and the company agrees to meaningful negotiations with the MUA on a process for the automation of port work.

The company's idea of handling automation was to send an email in the middle of the night to the 97 workers the company selected for sackings, telling them not to bother to show up for work next day – not even to clear out their lockers of their belongings. These belongings – and a cheque for a final week's pay would be “in the mail” according to Hutchison.

Hutchison enforced these sackings by installing hired security guards at its port facility gates, to block workers from entering, or trucks from delivering their containers.

In the world that Hutchison – and the Fair Work Commission live in – workers are mere resources to employ and discard as needed. The idea that workers who see half their workmates disappear in the middle of

the night should merely continue to work as directed, rather than respond to their boss's outrageous and criminal behaviour, seems totally foreign to the likes of the Commission and the company.

This outrageous action by Hutchison is one it has taken by stealth and through deception and in violation of the letter and spirit of current enterprise agreement it has with the union.

It has been undertaken in collaboration with the other port operators who all see automation as a way to finally rid Australian ports of a proud, unionised workforce and to replace it with casualised, non-union labour.

Hutchison's indecent move follows quickly on the heels of the MUA taking action over the previous few days to draw attention to the existence within HPA of a secret “Phoenix Rising” strategy, now being rolled out, to automate the ports, without consultation with the workforce and targeting union delegates and activists in the course of reducing total numbers of workers on the ports.

This is despite a current enterprise agreement with the MUA that requires the employer to discuss such plans with the union to avert and mitigate job losses.

Who is taking ‘secondary’ action and breaking enterprise agreements?

The Fair Work Commission has used the secondary boycott provisions in the Fair Work Act to order back to work the port workers who are picketing outside their work places and refusing to return to work until their almost 100 sacked workmates are reinstated.

However, the Fair Work Commission leaves alone the actions of the employer who is not standing by the terms of the enterprise bargaining agreement it has with the MUA. That agreement requires discussion and negotiation on matters that affect the employment and conditions of the workforce during the term of the agreement, which automation does in a most fundamental way.

Nor does it address the collusion among the port operators to ensure Hutchison's plan can be made to work with maximum impact to break and eliminate the unionised port workforce, something from which they will all benefit.

While Hutchison has been crying poor and claims it has been unable to secure market share with “leading shipping lines already committed to the existing operators under long-term contracts”, this is basically a lie for public consumption, but which the union and workers see through.

MUA assistant national secretary Warren Smith succinctly stated this at a meeting outside the Port Botany terminal the Monday before the sackings, when he declared that, “Hutchison ought to know the MUA is not naïve to its tactics and we are gearing up to fight for the long-haul.”

“Manipulating contracts and colluding with the other port operators in order to manufacture redundancies is just not acceptable. This is a plot to remove union delegates and activists and bring in a disposable, casual, pliable workforce when the contracts mysteriously reappear,” he declared, pointing out that Hutchison was using textbook union busting tactics.

Hutchison has not even been trying to get new contracts and has been off-loading its current contracts to its “competition”, Patrick and DP World. The company wants to rid itself of much of its workforce so it is free to implement new and higher levels of automation. This project should be completed by the time its off-loaded contracts' periods expire, towards the end of 2016, by which time Hutchison should have its fully automated terminal up and running and the contracts shall “mysteriously reappear” back with Hutchison.

### Port workers' widespread support

The striking workers and the community picket outside Port Botany and Brisbane Hutchison port facilities are attracting widespread support from members of the community, many of whom have received support from the MUA in their own struggles in the past, as well as other port workers and unions within Australia and internationally.

The pickets outside Hutchison's Brisbane and Port Botany docks will continue. Supporters are encouraged to continue to build this support in solidarity with the sacked workers and to keep contact through the MUA website ([www.mua.org.au](http://www.mua.org.au)) ☘



Hutchison Ports Australia's workers gather at Port Botany, Sydney, after being sacked by email.

***This outrageous action by Hutchison is one it has taken by stealth and through deception and in violation of the letter and spirit of current enterprise agreement it has with the union.***

## Come and support sacked wharfies

**On the waterfront, workers sacked over night, security guards blocking worksite entry ... Is this 1998?**

**No, it's 2015 and 100 workers were sacked by email at midnight last Thursday in a true sign of the disdain that Hutchison Ports shows to it's workers. Get to Port Botany and lend your support to the Community Assembly as soon as you can, as often as you can and stay as long as you can. Unions and members of the community will be there day and night until we get a result. The assembly is on the corner Sirius Rd and Foreshore Rd – Port Botany.**

Here's some of the lines from the email that workers received: “...your position will not be retained. There are no redeployment opportunities. The intended last day of your employment will be Friday 14 August 2015. I realise that this is a lot of information to take in. Accordingly you are will (sic) not be required to attend work effective immediately. We will of course pay you your normal salary to your last date of employment.”

Support the sacked workers at the Hutchison Terminal (Cnr Sirius Rd and Foreshore Rd – Port Botany)

There are guards on the gates and workers are not even allowed to clear their lockers.

We've already seen some great examples of union solidarity, with members of the community and unions joining the sacked workers in a community assembly outside Hutchison Ports, 24 hours a day, every day since workers received the email. We urge you to join us there and show your support for sacked workers. Come any time to the corner of Sirius Rd and Foreshore Rd, Port Botany.

Together, just like 1998, we will show them the power of a union and we will win.

Touch one; Touch all.  
In union,

**Emma Maiden**  
Assistant Secretary  
Unions NSW

## CPA statement on the Hutchison Ports dispute

**The Communist Party of Australia stands with the workers dismissed by Hutchison Ports as they defend their jobs and their basic human dignity against the attacks of a particularly unprincipled employer.**

We respect greatly the spirit of resistance and sacrifice demonstrated by the workers at pickets in Sydney and Brisbane. The callous and disingenuous nature of the

dismissals and are a symptom of the toxic environment created by the Abbott government; its encouragement to employers to drive wages and conditions down by any means possible. As it stands, workers are outsiders in plans for change that would impact their lives and the lives of their families.

The support from the community for the sacked workers is a striking feature of the current

dispute. This unity between workers organised in their unions and the rest of the community is an example for all as we head deeper into this period of heightened confrontation by employers and the federal government. We must learn the lessons of the past and defeat the attempts of the bosses and their loyal government to divide us.

MUA here to stay! The workers united will never be defeated! ☘



# Productivity Commission report

## Abbott's war on workers

Continued from page 1

The second is a *Tribunal Division* which "would be responsible for the quasi-judicial functions of the FWC, such as decisions relating to unfair dismissals, adverse actions, approval of agreements, rights of entry and industrial disputes."

This division would be headed by officials with "... a broad experience, and be drawn from a range of professions, including (for example) from ombudsman's offices, commercial dispute resolution, law, economics and other relevant professions."

A new "independent expert appointment panel" would make recommendations to the Minister for the appointment of Members of the Fair Work Commission. It would be made up of members with "well-developed analytical capabilities and experience in economics, social science, commerce or equivalent disciplines."

The vision is of the FWC as a technocratic body controlling workplace relations in a dispassionate, unbiased fashion without the involvement of former trade unionists. The biases of "experts" whose only common background is in law or capitalist economics and commerce is seemingly invisible to the authors of the draft report or, more likely, recognised but glossed over. The bias against trade unions shines through.

### Lowering the level of the "floor"

The minimum wage, the National Employment Standards and awards (including penalty rates) were hot potatoes for the Commission. After much ducking and weaving and references to the "Goldilocks dilemma" of getting the minimum wage "just right", the draft report suggests cuts could be in order. It says many recipients of the minimum wage live in median or even high income households. These workers are obviously considered hobbyists who don't need or deserve more substantial wages.

Many workers pulling down the minimum wage live in low income households and, in this instance, the report suggests that the government should top up the pay packet.

Other OECD countries are doing this. Rather than oblige businesses to pay liveable wages (a 20th century notion, apparently), governments should chip in to prevent starvation.

There is a problem with this "solution" from the neo-liberal point of view. An "earned income tax credit" (EITC) "must also be financed through taxes, which have their own adverse economic effects. In an Australian context, any EITC would also interact with a well-developed tax-transfer system, which is also intended to improve the incomes of the low paid." (Transfer system includes payments such as family allowances, income support, concessions on income tax and GST.)

As with other, more controversial suggestions, the PC has deferred making a recommendation and is "seeking views on whether there are grounds for giving further consideration to an EITC as a complement to minimum wages."

Wages for juniors, apprentices and traineeships were also sensitive. The Commission was cautious not to recommend anything that might lead to wage increases and put youth employment in jeopardy, or so the narrative goes. The idea that higher wages cause unemployment is woven into the document. So is the myth that employers reward wage restraint by employing more people.

One of the less developed thought bubbles in the draft is to give the jobless a say in the Fair Work Commission's deliberations. Presumably, the unemployed would have a dampening effect on workers' claims because the jobless should consider higher pay and better conditions as barriers to their entry into the labour market.

The most notable recommendation with regard to the National Employment Standards, the lowest of the "floors" below other regulations and legislation, is to disallow any future public holidays declared by state or territory governments and to allow employers to shift the day the penalty will be paid to any other agreed day.

The idea of a national standard for Long Service Leave is floated, too. There will be "winners and losers" in such a move but, make

no mistake, this document is about ensuring there are more losers than winners.

### "24/7 economy"

Changes to penalty rates for shift, overtime and weekend work have been the most widely reported recommendations of the draft report. A long preamble talked about the development of a "24/7 economy", declining religious observance, the presumed demand of consumers to shop around the clock and the fact that many have already been bludgeoned into working longer hours.

Police and workers in emergency services or nursing are quarantined from cuts to penalty rates. But those in hospitality, entertainment, retail, restaurants and café industries must forgo double time on Sundays and go back to the time and a half regulated for Saturdays. (See Editorial) In future, employers might be able to negotiate which time slot is the most "asocial" (as the report describes it) and adjust penalties accordingly.

The PC claims the Australian workplace is an essentially harmonious environment. Workers won't be fooled.

Suggested changes to unfair dismissal procedures are nearly all prompted by sympathy for the bosses. Workers can't be compensated or reinstated because of procedural failures on the part of employers. In fact, reinstatement would no longer be a goal of the system. Lodgement fees are higher and the FWC will have greater latitude to decide issues "on the papers".

### EBAs – race to the bottom

Modern awards contain minimum entitlements for wages, casual and part-time loadings, penalty rates and shift allowances and are occupation based. At present the outcomes of enterprise bargaining must meet the Better Off Overall Test (BOOT). For example, this would permit a reduction in loadings below the minimum in the award in exchange for a higher wage rate as long as the outcome saw workers better off.

Discussion of enterprise bargaining is dominated by the idea of replacing the BOOT with the Howard era notion of a No Disadvantage Test (NDT). The alleged problem with the BOOT approach is that unions tend to go through employers' proposals "line by line" rather than taking a "holistic approach". Advancing the interests of workers by insisting they must be better off than the no frills award is apparently not being "holistic".

The FWC is to be given the power to have the last say in the greenfields (new projects) agreement making process – deciding between the union's and employer's last offers.

Another theme of the draft report is that unions have some power left through the use of delays, procedure, bans, limitations and short stoppages. The sympathies of the authors are clearly with the employers and it is seeking ideas to expand the repertoire of industrial action available to the bosses. Lockouts are unpopular and the report refers to them as the "nuclear option".

It is considering punitive action against unions if they do not follow through with the threat of industrial



Photo: Tom Pearson

action where employers have implemented a contingency plan. In other words it wants them to expose themselves to heavy penalties by taking the action or not following through with their threat.

A disturbing aside in the draft report is the "a person could only be a bargaining representative if they represent a registered trade union with at least one member covered by the proposed agreement, or if they were able to indicate that at least 5 percent of the employees to be covered by the agreement nominated them as a representative."

This foreshadows another feature of the US industrial relations system where unions have to campaign like mad to "earn" the right to represent workers enterprise by enterprise. Unions are clearly identified as a problem in the Productivity Commission's document and it looks forward to a future without them.

### Employer dictated contracts

The PC would like to boost dramatically the relatively low number of Australian workers on Individual Flexibility Agreements (IFA). These WorkChoices-inspired agreements cover about three percent of the workforce, about the same portion that were on Howard's Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs).

It also wants a new "enterprise contract", a type of collective IFA by which workers could opt out of the collective agreement and, according to the PC's fairy story, work out other arrangements more suited to the worker and the employer.

Unlike Howard's AWAs, the worker couldn't be forced to take the agreement and it would be subject to the No Disadvantage Test. It is a safe bet the PC realises the power imbalance in the workplace and just how "voluntary" such offers of employment would usually be.

### Protected action – in need of a "fix"

While the PC's report acknowledges the existence of class struggle, it sees it as a failure when it is engaged in by workers. Under the

current regime, workers can essentially only take collective action or even propose such action when a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement is being negotiated. This has crippled unions' capacity to defend workers. The Commission wants to drive home that disadvantage.

"The Australian government should amend the *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)* to grant the Fair Work Commission the discretion to withhold a protected action ballot order for up to 90 days, where it is satisfied that the group of employees has previously used repeated withdrawals of protected action, without the agreement of the employer, as an industrial tactic," it says. Industrial action is usually referred to as something akin to a conspiracy in the draft report.

"The Australian government should amend s. 423(2) of the *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)* such that the Fair Work Commission may suspend or terminate industrial action where it is causing, or threatening to cause, significant economic harm to the employer or the employees who will be covered by the agreement, rather than both parties (as is currently the case).

"The Australian government should increase the maximum ceiling of penalties for unlawful industrial action to a level that allows federal law courts the discretion to impose penalties that can better reflect the high costs that such actions can inflict on employers and the community."

Tougher penalties, more power to prevent industrial action by workers, more ways for employers to retaliate against workers – that just about sums up the PC's draft report on the Workplace Relations framework.

It is full of the lies and myths peddled by the capitalist class that higher wages cause unemployment and the other negative economic consequences of the functioning of capitalism. It is a softly spoken reiteration of Abbott's declaration of war on workers and their unions. No doubt the final report in November will be full of the same anti-worker ideology. It must be resisted vigorously by unions and the community. ☘

Sydney

## Say NO to the TPP!

**Sunday August 23, 12 noon, Martin Place**  
(Cnr Castlereagh St)

**We are winning this debate, and together we can stop the TPP.**  
**Negotiations collapsed again on July 31, but another meeting**  
**is planned for late August or in September.**  
**Bring signs and banners - Bring your friends**



# Century of climate emergencies and energy wars

Nafeez Ahmed

## The US Army is preparing for a new era of war for oil.

While energy has always played a role in military conflicts, US military experts believe the geopolitics of energy, land and water is increasingly central to who rules, or ruins, the world.

Two research documents published in recent months by the US Army reveal the military establishment's latest thinking in startlingly frank terms. The research not only lends credence to environmental warnings about how climate change will fuel political instability, but also vindicates concerns about how looming resource shortages could destabilise the global economy.

## Scarcity verdict

In June the US Army published its report to the Department of Defence (DoD), outlining a new energy security strategy. Future US Army operations, it says, will be shaped by "increased urbanisation, rising populations, young adult unemployment, and a growing middle class that drive resource competition".

The report also flags up "climate change, rapid technology proliferation and shifts in centres of economic activity" as major forces of change:

"Global resource constraints will also undermine the integrity of the Army's supply chain ... We can no longer assume unimpeded access to the energy, water, land, and other resources required to train, sustain, and deploy a globally responsive Army."

The report therefore sets out a blueprint for how the US Army intends to sustain operational effectiveness, based on minimising its resource footprint, maximising efficiency, as well as securing resources critical to the military's global supply chains.

## Sustainability and national security

Many of the proposed changes draw extensively on new scientific research on environmental sustainability. The blueprint calls for integrating "resource considerations and cost management" into the core of US Army decision-making processes, including "total life-cycle costs" and even "enhanced resource stewardship".

Business processes, acquisition strategies, management of technologies, and even the very conduct of military operations will be redesigned to incorporate new principles of "resilience" and "sustainability".

While the corporate and private sector is often criticised for using such concepts as public relations "buzzwords" without applying them fully, the new US Army strategy is refreshingly different.

The report to the Pentagon shows that the US Army sees "resource stewardship" not as a fluffy concern of hippy tree-huggers who want to save the planet, but as a fundamental national security imperative.

For the US military to maintain its capabilities into the future, it must be prepared to face the new age of resource shortages with hard-nosed realism: the result vindicates scientists and activists urging governments to reduce dependence on traditional energy sources and improve our ability to manage access to water and land.

## The future is green

Much of the vision would work well in a Greenpeace handbook. For instance:

"The Army can use energy more efficiently by purchasing energy efficient products, modernising buildings and utility systems, purchasing energy efficient vehicles, and using more renewable/alternative energy sources. We can use water more efficiently by purchasing water-efficient products, matching water quality to use, maximising opportunities for water reuse, and increasing water recharge.

"The Army will build on its Sustainable Range Program, integrated natural resource management plans, and real property master plans to optimise land use requirements, while protecting the natural and cultural resources entrusted to our care. Additionally, the Army can support resource sustainability by using building materials or products that are derived or manufactured within a region."

The lessons for industrial-era technologies in fossil fuel production, transport, infrastructure and so on, are stark.

Many technologies widely used today started life for narrow military purposes. The US Army's concerted decision to spearhead a rapid transition to sustainable energy, land and water systems sounds the death knell for the old, industrial-era systems.

## Protecting US interests from "disruption"

The plan is not perfect. The US Army's understanding of "resilience" – the capacity to anticipate, prepare for, withstand and adapt to "natural or man-made disruptions" and to "recover rapidly" from them – is based on the unquestionable assumption that US-dominated global capitalism must be protected.

This notion of resilience is not about transforming the system that generates disruptions, but about increasing the US military's ability to withstand disruptions to capitalism, thus keeping the system rumbling along:

"Resilience is essential for a responsive Army force posture and an effective network of installations and capabilities at home and abroad to protect US interests and those of our allies."

The Army must become more resource-efficient so that "US interests," tied to ongoing resource exploitation elsewhere, can continue.

That stance is not surprising given that the Army can only plan within the framework of the Pentagon's directives.

## Energy wars

The imperative to protect business-as-usual is reflected in a separate report published by the US Army's institute for geostrategic and national security research.

That report, *New Realities: Energy Security in the 2010s and Implications for the US Military*, forecasts a bold new century of conflict over global energy supplies, due to dramatic shifts in the way energy is produced and consumed in key regions.

Released earlier this year, the document is a collection of papers from a US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) conference on energy security, edited by John R Deni, a former political adviser and strategic planner for US military commanders in Europe. Currently a research professor in security studies at SSI, Deni was also a national security consultant for the Departments of Energy, Defence and State.

The US Army War College report argues that the global energy landscape is undergoing a major transformation due to the dawn of the shale revolution in the US, the declining power of Middle East oil and gas producers, rising demand from China, India and the "developing world," as well as Russia's mismanagement of its domestic energy arrangements.

It also specifically warns that US energy interests – including the need to regulate the global oil supply and price system – may lead to more US military interventions across the Middle East and Africa, especially in the context of proliferating climate-induced emergencies:

"Evolving energy-based US national interests in Africa or the Middle East may shape the degree to which the US military becomes involved in political or humanitarian crises in those regions. Tightening energy supplies may alter fundamentally the way in which the United States wields military force in a contingency operation."

Reports published by the US Army's SSI do



not "necessarily" represent official government policy – but they do "use independent analysis to conduct strategic studies that develop policy recommendations" relevant for "the Army, the Department of Defence, and the larger national security community," and particularly "in support of Army participation in national security policy formation".

## Fossil fuels "here to stay"

The SSI report contains significant tensions with the US Army's proposed energy security strategy. A paper by Karen Smith-Stegan, Professor of Renewable Energy and Environmental Politics at Jacobs University in Bremer, Germany, warns that there are major risks with an energy strategy centred on renewables, largely due to China's monopoly on rare earth minerals critical for solar panels, wind turbines, electric cars and batteries.

The report does, however, take note of ongoing US Army and Pentagon efforts to increase resilience and efficiency, while reducing the military's energy and resource footprint.

But this is against the backdrop of protecting US interests in a global system that, the report presumes, will remain heavily dependent on fossil fuels for the foreseeable future.

"Burgeoning demand in China, India, and across the developing world may cause oil prices to remain stubbornly high, increasing the cost of fuel-intensive military operations in remote, austere environments," the report warns.

It predicts not just continuing, but intensifying dependence on fossil fuels across the global economy.

Demand in poorer, developing countries will be met mostly with fossil fuels, "exacerbating human-induced climate change and potentially intensifying the effects of natural disasters. Additionally, as fossil fuel production in the Western hemisphere expands exponentially, there will be corresponding increases in global fossil fuel movements."

Increased vulnerability to terrorism and natural disasters will accompany "more traditional state-versus-state security competition over limited fossil fuel resources," especially among poorer countries.

## Eastward military expansion

In some areas, declining oil production could reduce US regional engagement:

"Decreasing oil production in Sub-Saharan Africa, coupled with reduced saliency of those same resources in America's energy import mix, may severely limit US interests in the region while simultaneously increasing the risk of socio-political instability in Africa due to decreasing state revenues."

More broadly, though, the continued

centrality of oil to the global economy will underpin the need for an active US military.

In his contribution, Michael Klare, Professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College, highlights America's self-appointed role as vanguard of the world's oil trans-shipment routes. The largest flows of oil "pass from perennial conflict zones in North Africa and the Middle East to Europe and East Asia, often travelling through narrow 'choke-points' that have proved powerful magnets for insurgents, terrorists and pirates."

This is why, despite the shale revolution in the US, there is a continued need for US military forces to police these crucial regions to keep the world safe for capitalism. In Klare's words, "the stability of the global economy rests, to a considerable degree, on the uninterrupted flow of oil shipments from the Gulf."

Klare's chapter provides a candid history of the evolution of US military expansionism as a function of diversifying and protecting access to global energy supplies. The search for new sources of energy has led US military operations to extend far beyond the Middle East, to areas like the Caucasus, the Caspian and West Africa.

As global energy demand shifts further eastwards, the report warns, there is a worsening risk of the US and China clashing in their determination to enhance their respective capacities to defend critical energy shipping lanes, across the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea and the Western Pacific.

As the old cheap sources of oil and gas have depleted, there is an increasing shift to more expensive unconventional energy forms permitted by new extraction technologies, in challenging environments like the Arctic:

"As reserves in older production areas have become depleted – a natural consequence of the intense production we have witnessed over the years since World War II – energy firms are being forced to rely on ever more remote and hard-to-exploit deposits."

## Nationalist democracies

Elsewhere, the report advocates a far more interventionist approach to Latin America, described as "potentially rich in unconventional oil and shale gas resources, as well as renewables. These resources can fuel domestic growth" as well as make-up for the declining significance of Middle East oil resources.

According to Professor David Mares, a Latin America energy specialist at the James Baker III Institute for Public Policy, the countries most favourable to US interests are Colombia and Peru, as they "encourage exploration and production".

He fails to acknowledge, though, that the openness of both countries to foreign



# When greed supersedes human need



investment has been enabled by extensive US military interference involving colossal human rights abuses.

In contrast, Mares singles out Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico for raising “significant obstacles” to oil investment and production. Such democracies must be “crafted” until they adopt political stances favourable to US interests:

“The essential challenge for Latin America to meet its hydrocarbon potential is crafting stable domestic political coalitions that see the benefit of providing incentives for foreign investors to bring the requisite capital, skill, and technology to the region. Historically, Latin American democracies do not have a stellar record in providing such incentives when they perceive that they have an asset that others desire.”

The observation is a telling one, given the implication that the US sees its mission as countering regional democracies if they insist on too much “resource nationalism,” by resisting the intrusion of foreign corporations.

Mares laments that such stubborn democratic nationalism in the region would forestall the desired “bonanza for Latin America and a shift in the geopolitical centre of energy toward the Western Hemisphere”.

## Resurgence of the oil empire

That shift to the West, according to former State Department official Robert Manning – whose most recent post in the Obama administration was as a senior strategist in the office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) – is being driven by the US shale revolution.

Manning, along with most other contributors to the US Army’s SSI report, agree that shale will contribute to the “resurgence” of the American economy into the 2020s, while weaning off its immediate dependence on conventional energy resources in unstable regions.

The US Army’s sustainability strategy is ultimately about maintaining US military dominance despite resource scarcity, while safeguarding the wider fossil fuel system – not changing it.

The unswerving commitment to protecting business-as-usual, the fatalistic capitulation to a future of expanding oil dependence, and the blinkered belief that global economic health is tied to endless resource exploitation, all show that US policymakers still have their heads in the sand.

If Pentagon officials really want to defend US national security, they must wake up to the fact that the global system itself must undergo a fundamental transformation, in which economic stability is no longer dependent on the unlimited consumption of fossil fuels.

Information Clearing House ✚



Deforestation in Riau province, Sumatra, to make way for an oil palm plantation.

Steven Hallmark

**The “legal” slaughter of Cecil the lion should give us pause for thought about how money has seeped into areas of society in ways that totally contradict human decency.**

The actions of the millionaire cosmetic dentist Walter Palmer – the man who killed the Zimbabwean lion – focuses attention on the insanity of trying to control hunting by creating a market in it.

The idea we can restrict the killing of endangered animals by placing an exorbitant price tag on the “sport” creates a clash of values.

Are we saying that only the rich should be allowed to hunt threatened species? Or are we saying that the animals should be protected because of their own intrinsic value, one that entirely supersedes the monetary sphere?

Michael Sandel used big game hunting to illustrate how we have allowed markets to invade areas that would have been inconceivable a generation ago in his brilliant book *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*.

He writes:

“We need to do more than inveigh against greed; we need to have a public debate about where markets belong – and where they don’t.”

Sandel focuses on the “corrosive” impact that markets have when they are misapplied. He adds:

“Economists often assume that markets are inert, that they do not affect the goods being exchanged.

“But this is untrue. Markets leave their mark. Sometimes, market values crowd out non-market values worth caring about ... When we decide that certain goods may be bought and sold, we decide, at least implicitly, that it is appropriate to treat them as commodities, as instruments of profit and use.”

Although Cecil was killed illegally – as already well documented in the pages of the

*Morning Star* – the very fact that wealthy folk can flock to countries like Zimbabwe to buy licences to hunt animals is intrinsically wrong.

Palmer splashed out £35,000 to get his use-value from Cecil. But the public outcry over the lion’s brutal slaying – Cecil took 48 hours to bleed to death – illustrates that the majority of the global community vehemently condemns Palmer’s actions. In a fitting irony, Palmer has become the hunted. Protests have temporarily closed his dental practice and his house is being picketed. Cecil’s grim fate has caught the popular imagination, but tragically his plight is far, far from being an isolated phenomenon.

Cecil raises another – more fundamental – financial issue. The Zimbabwean economy has been on the rebound since 2009, but it remains a poor country.

The cash being waved by hunters such as Palmer means a lot in a country in which the average monthly wage is approximately £370.

Zimbabwe’s political and economic problems are well documented, but it is a country blessed with stunning national parks. However, these are seriously under threat. Zimbabwe’s Conservation Task Force released a report, in 2007, estimating that an eye-watering 60 percent of the country’s wildlife has been eradicated since 2000 due to “poaching and deforestation.”

If we really care about the irrecoverable damage being done to the world’s wildlife, a more radical approach is called for.

The Western world cannot expect to preach to developing countries about how to care for habitats which have avoided despoilation because invariably the demand for their resources arises in the developed nations. Just one example – there are roughly 13 million hectares of rainforest that have been uprooted to clear the way for palm oil plantations in Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil organisation estimates that half of the products on sale in our supermarkets contain palm oil.

We create the demand responsible for the damage being wrought, but then moan that orangutans are under threat as their habitat is decimated.

Part of the answer about how to slow the damage we are inflicting on the environment was provided by the Coalition for Rainforest Nations – a group of 10 countries led by Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica. The coalition delivered a proposal to the United Nations which read:

“We are simultaneously struggling to defeat poverty while challenged with responsibility over a majority of the world’s biodiversity ... In many forested rural areas, the only real options for economic growth often require the destruction of natural forests either when clearing for agricultural commodities or through the sale of wood products.

“In effect, international markets offer perverse incentives from the perspective of environmental sustainability, biodiversity conservation, and climate stability.”

Their demand was for the rich economies to fund them to not cut down forests. Those funds could then be used to achieve development in sustainable ways.

The stakes could not be higher if we fail to deliver.

Jan Zalasiewicz, professor of palaeobiology at Leicester University, states: “We are now living through one of those brief, rare episodes in Earth history when the biological framework of life is dismantled. It is in every sense a tragedy.”

Zalasiewicz’s point is that previous mass extinctions have been caused by phenomenon such as asteroid impacts, volcanoes and rapid climate change. But this time around “the extinctions are being driven by the effects of just one single species, *Homo sapiens*.”

Palmer’s desire to bag Cecil has undoubtedly concentrated the world’s attention on how outdated big game hunting is, but it also throws up the more basic question of how we value wildlife. Crucially, for us to properly value our environment demands that we move away from the market-driven world in which we live. If we don’t, it’s not just Cecil that gets stuffed.

Morning Star ✚



# Israeli sniper kills another Palestinian child

Budour Youssef Hassan

Israel responded to the widespread revulsion over the murder of 18-month-old baby Ali Dawabsha by fatally shooting a Palestinian teenager in the occupied West Bank. Laith al-Khalidi was “killed in cold blood,” according to Fadel, his father. (Ali Dawabsha’s father has since died from his burns.)

Fifteen-year-old Laith was in the vicinity of the Atara military checkpoint near Ramallah when a sniper in an Israeli watchtower shot him in the back. Laith was accompanied by four friends at the time he was shot.

“Perhaps he went to express his outrage at the killing of Ali Dawabsha, but when soldiers shot him from the checkpoint tower, he wasn’t throwing any stones whatsoever,” said Fadel.

The details obtained by Fadel of the incident sharply contradict Israel’s spin.

Israel has exploited the fact that Palestinian youth were involved in confrontations with its soldiers in its attempts to “justify” the killing.

An unnamed military spokesperson claimed that Israeli soldiers had opened fire on Laith as a “response to immediate danger.” Those comments were reported by *The New York Times*, which called Laith “an assailant who had thrown a firebomb.”

However, evidence in many other cases has shown that such routine claims by the army should be treated with the utmost scepticism. Last month, video evidence showed that an Israeli colonel had shot dead Palestinian teenager Muhammad al-Kasbeh, in the back, as he ran away, debunking the army’s claims that occupation soldiers were in imminent danger from the youth. Video also caught Israeli soldiers shooting dead two Palestinian youths in cold blood in Beitunia in May 2014.

Just this year, Israeli human rights group BTselem says that it “has documented dozens of cases in the Ramallah area of the West Bank in which Palestinians were injured, some severely, by live ammunition fired by Israeli security forces.”

The group says that “the large number of persons injured and the types of injury, indicates that live ammunition was used against demonstrators even when security forces were not in mortal danger.”

The army’s depiction, moreover, does not tally with how Laith’s parents, who live in Jalazone refugee camp, remember him.

## Ominous

As soon as they heard of baby Ali’s murder by Israeli settlers, Laith’s parents had an ominous feeling. Could something happen to their own children in the clashes with Israeli soldiers that would more than likely ensue?

It was not Laith, but his elder brother, Yazan, that they were really worried about.

Despite being two years his junior, Laith – who hoped to become a lawyer – was considered the more mature and reliable sibling. For that reason, their father asked Laith to make sure that Yazan stayed away from any clashes that day.

Laith had repeatedly urged his brother to stay safe.

“My son Laith wasn’t one of the kids who’d go to protests week in, week out and throw stones,” said Samar, his mother.

Even before Laith’s murder, the family had suffered heavily at the hands of the Israeli occupation. Fadel, now an assistant dean at Birzeit University, was involved in popular resistance during the first intifada. He was imprisoned for six years.

For three of those six years, he was held in administrative detention, under which Israel locks up Palestinians without charge or trial. His mother, meanwhile, had been injured in her leg after Israel attacked a protest in 1994. The protest was held in response to that year’s massacre in Hebron, during which the US-born settler Baruch Goldstein murdered 29 worshippers at the Ibrahim Mosque.

Although both his parents have been politically active, they were eager that no harm should come to their children. Their children were therefore discouraged from battling Israel’s forces of occupation.

“I wish they were different from us,” said Samar. She reacted with disbelief when she received a phone call at 5:30pm on Friday, telling her that Laith was injured. “I initially asked, ‘Laith who?’” she said. “I couldn’t even contemplate the idea that they were referring to Laith, my son.”

Laith had told her that he had gone to Ramallah to play billiards.

## “Hoping against hope”

After he was shot, Laith was taken to Ramallah’s hospital, where he underwent surgery that lasted six hours. “We had hoped that he would



Relatives carry the body of Ali Dawabsha at the toddler’s funeral in the occupied West Bank village of Duma.

somehow come through this alive,” said Fadel. “I was sitting next to the room where the surgery was taking place, hoping against hope that my son would survive. Around midnight doctors took him to intensive care and five minutes later he was gone.”

Samar is a nurse. As soon as she saw Laith, she could tell that his situation was critical. “I cannot describe what I went through during those six hours,” she said.

There was a moment in their ordeal that Samar described as “ridiculous.” A doctor told Laith’s parents that if he survived the night, he would be transferred to Hadassah, an Israeli hospital in Jerusalem.

“How can those who kill our sons then go on to treat them?” Samar asked. “How can we agree to this? But I was ready to do anything to save my child’s life, even if that meant sending him to an Israeli hospital. I would have done anything.”

Yazan, Laith’s brother, had tried to persuade him that he should join Fatah. But Laith told him that his allegiance was to Palestine, not to any political party.

“Laith was everything to me,” said Yazan. “We did everything together, we shared the same room, used the same computer, played cards together, watched sports together. We

fought, we laughed, we both liked Real Madrid. But Laith was better than me. If anyone had to die, it should have been me, not him.”

Crying, Yazan raised his voice to an almost piercing level. “Laith, why did you go away?” he asked. Laith’s 7-year-old sister Lor will only stop crying when she is told that Laith would hate to see her so upset.

“They have taken our happiness”

After a moment’s calm, she broke down again when little things remind her of Laith – like the beautiful mirror and the toys he gave her on the first day of Eid. “They [the Israelis] have snatched the smile from this girl’s face; they have taken our happiness away,” said Samar. “With Laith’s passing, I feel that a piece of me is gone.”

According to his father, Laith’s biggest dream was that the family could return to the village of Annaba. They were expelled from Annaba – located near Ramle, a city in present-day Israel – during the Nakba, the 1948 ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

“Laith visited his village when he was a kid and since then he always asked me, ‘when will we return home?’” said Fadel. It is instructive that Laith’s killing was only mentioned towards the end of the

forementioned report in *The New York Times*.

Another Palestinian teenager was also killed that day. Muhammad al-Masri was shot dead by Israeli soldiers from a watchtower on Israel’s boundary with Gaza.

Their deaths received just a fraction of the attention devoted to the condemnations issued by Israeli establishment figures following the murder of baby Ali.

Not for the first time, Western media have been extremely accommodating to Israeli propagandists. The crocodile tears of Israeli politicians over one child’s death are treated as if they are genuine. Yet European and American journalists have not stopped to ask why the same politicians failed to condemn the killing of other young Palestinians on the same day.

If those journalists did some serious analysis or research, they would realise that the killing of baby Ali was not an aberration. Palestinian children and teenagers are regularly killed by Israelis.

Occasionally, the killers are settlers, inculcated with the extremist ideology on which Israel was founded. More often, they are soldiers carrying out the orders of a racist state. *The Electronic Intifada* ☪

Sydney

CPA Port Jackson Branch  
invites comrades and friends to join us for our  
**Port Jackson Discussion Hour**

Tuesday August 18  
**The fight for workers’ rights**

Tuesday September 1  
**What is wrong with local council amalgamations**

Tuesday September 15  
**The implications of Russian-Chinese co-operation**

Tuesday October 6  
**Why is there an environmental crisis?**

All classes 5:30 pm  
at 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills  
Enquiries: Hannah 0418 668 098



Melbourne  
**WORKERS’ RIGHTS CAMPAIGN**

Communist Party of Australia with  
the support of Friends of KKE, Democritus &  
Greek Resistance Fighters

**Dinner Dance 2015**

**FAIR PENSIONS BUILD A STRONGER SOCIETY**

**Saturday August 15 at 7:00pm**

7 Union Street, Brunswick

DJ with “Chris Earthquake” – Entry Fee: \$45 per person

Contact: CPA Victoria for Tickets on 03 9639 1550 or email: cpavic@cpa.org.au



# Fears mount in Guatemala as elections approach

Emile Schepers

**On September 6 there will be general elections in Guatemala, with runoffs on October 25. Voters will elect a new president to succeed Otto Perez Molina of the Patriotic Party, who is not allowed a second term. They will also elect a vice president, all 158 members of Congress and 20 for the Central American Parliament, as well as local officials.**

Perez Molina, a right-wing former general, is mired in an immense corruption scandal. The leading role in the corruption investigation has been taken by the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, CICIG in Spanish, working in tandem with the public prosecutor's office.

The CICIG is a United Nations-sponsored entity which was set up in 2006 to deal with impunity in the Guatemalan justice system. In the current case, its investigations found that persons very close to the president were involved in a smuggling and tax evasion scheme; this has led to the resignation of the country's vice president, Roxana Baldetti, plus numerous arrests.

Also, there was corruption in contracting for kidney treatment services for the health care system of the Guatemalan Institute for Social Security. Outraged citizens of all ideological persuasions have, since May, been protesting these abuses.

Scandals have touched opposition parties too. Fourteen political parties have nominated presidential candidates. Perez Molina's own Patriotic Party (PP) is running Mario David Garcia Velasquez, a right-wing radio and TV journalist. The centrist National Unity of Hope Party (UNE) party has nominated Sandra Torres, wife of former president Alvaro Colom. The Renewed Democratic Liberty Party (LIDER) ticket is headed by businessman and death penalty enthusiast Manuel Baldizón.

On the extreme right, Zury Rios Sosa, the daughter of the former dictator, Efraim Rios Montt, will represent the fascist "Vision with Values Party". Her candidacy is being permitted by the courts even though electoral law forbids the presidency to close relatives of people who came to power by violating the constitutional order, as Rios Montt did when he took power in a military coup in 1982.

He carried out a genocidal campaign against Indigenous Ixil Maya people during his short reign. Before Rios Montt was overthrown, military forces had killed at least 1,777 Ixils, the largest single burst of murder in Guatemala's long civil war which started when the US Central Intelligence Agency overthrew the democratically elected president, Jacobo Arbenz, in 1954.

That war eventually claimed at least 200,000 civilian lives, most at the hands of the military. In 2013 Rios Montt was found guilty of genocide but the verdict was overturned on a technicality. His attorneys claim

now that he is senile and unable to stand trial.

Another candidate, Jimmy Morales of the National Convergence, has been surging in polls; he is a comedian who is using social media to crystallise the general discontent with corruption to support his "nationalist" candidacy. He appears to be on the far right also, denying that there was genocide against the Ixils and, like Baldizón, promoting the death penalty.

On the right also is free-market and socially conservative economist Roberto Gonzalez of the Commitment, Renovation and Order Party (CREO).

On the left, two parties are running presidential candidates: The New Republic Party (MNR) whose presidential candidate is a former member of Congress, Anibal Garcia, who was the running mate of Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu when she ran for president in the last elections, in 2011.

For the Broad Left Front of the National Revolutionary Unity Party (UNRG-MAIZ) and the Winaq Party, the presidential candidate this year is Miguel Angel Sandoval, a former student activist and guerrilla fighter during Guatemala's civil war.

On July 15, the CICIG dropped another bombshell, revealing that 25 percent of Guatemala's campaign financing has been underwritten by criminal elements, principally narcotics cartels. The CICIG report cited the LIDER party, whose vice presidential candidate, Edgar Barquin, a former president of the Bank of Guatemala, it accuses of being part of a criminal money laundering scheme. The money laundering scandal also touches others, including former President Alvaro Colom and his wife Sandra Torres, the UNE presidential candidate.

Baldizón, LIDER's presidential candidate, angrily accused CICIG and the prosecutor of conspiring against him to undermine his lead in the polls. He ran up to Washington DC to complain to the Organisation of American States and US politicians.

Guatemala is a country of 15 and a half million, between 41 to 50 percent of whom belong to the multiple Indigenous Maya nations. The Mayas developed a high civilisation during antiquity, but after they were conquered by the Spanish in the 16th century, they were pushed into a subordinate economic, social and political position which persists today in one of the most unequal societies in the world.

The per-capita gross domestic product of Guatemala (Purchasing Power Parity method) is about \$5,300, one of the lowest in the Western Hemisphere. Half the children under five are malnourished, and the poverty rate among Indigenous people is 73 percent with 22 percent living in extreme poverty.

A recent plant disease outbreak has devastated the harvest of coffee, the major crop of many farming communities. Since peace accords



The Renewed Democratic Liberty Party (LIDER) ticket is headed by businessman and death penalty enthusiast Manuel Baldizón.

that ended the civil war in 1996, and the incorporation of Guatemala in the Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) in 2006, foreign direct investment in Guatemala has increased, but this has led to its own problems, as foreign companies enter into conflicts with rural communities over land and water use.

The rate of violence in Guatemala, including against women and children, is extremely high, and a situation of impunity reigns in which very few perpetrators are ever brought to book.

It is not surprising, then, that the so-called "child migrant crisis" of 2014 involved thousands of children from Guatemala as well as from Honduras and El Salvador. The Guatemalan child migrants included a high proportion of Indigenous people, and more frequently gave poverty and hunger as their reasons for migrating. This crisis may repeat this year.

Reacting to the "child migrant crisis", the United States has proposed funding a new "Alliance for Prosperity" to the tune of a billion dollars. This is currently being debated in the US Congress. Part of the money would go to measures to attract more foreign direct investment to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, while a considerable proportion would go to beefing up security services.

However, the massive theft of social welfare funds in both Guatemala and Honduras, and the well documented abuses by the security services, create a question as to whether the US aid will in fact do more harm than good.

Without a thorough reform, the US funds could end up exacerbating both corruption and repression. So far, it does not look as if the most likely winners of the presidential elections on September 6 hold out promise for achieving such reform. Polls show Baldizón far ahead, followed by Torres, Morales, Rios and Gonzalez.

Various organisations have suggested that given the corruption scandal, the elections be postponed. This appears unlikely.

People's World ✪



## Region Briefs

Vietnamese Prime Minister, Nguyen Tan Dung, met his Lao counterpart, Thongsing Thammavong, in Hanoi. They agreed to push wide-ranging cooperation that was reached at the two countries' politburo annual meetings and the 37th inter-governmental committee on Vietnam-Lao cooperation. The two countries will increase high-level delegation visits, co-organise major anniversaries and celebrations, share experience on Party building, reach over A\$2.3 billion bilateral in trade by the end of this year, and prevent terrorism, sabotage and drug trafficking in border regions. The two countries will also co-evaluate the Mekong River's hydro-power dams' impact on the environment and the local people.

Myanmar was hit recently by severe flood that had killed 88 people and affected another 330,000. Yunnan, China's southwest province, which has a shared border with Myanmar, donated 14 fully loaded emergency relief aid trucks to one of Myanmar's worst-hit areas. The aid included 1,000 tents, 500 boxes of milk powder, 1,000 bags of rice, and 10,000 boxes of instant noodles. Chinese Ambassador to Myanmar, Hong Liang, said that the two countries were fraternal brothers, and China would never stop helping Myanmar when there was a natural disaster. Since June, heavy rainfall hit Myanmar, and later flooding affected 13 regions, destroying infrastructure, farmland and houses.

Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, at a China-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting, said that China would prioritise assistances for infrastructure construction and international cooperation in production capacity in accordance with the needs of target countries. He explained that due to ASEAN countries' unique characteristics (at a different stage of industrialisation), China will help the countries according to the "most in need". He also noted that "China had no intention of competing with other countries in the process of cooperation".

Twelve countries' trade ministers failed to sign an agreement of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade pact that was drafted by the US. The Japanese Communist Party Secretariat Head, Yamashita Yosiki, commented that the failure of the TPP showed that it only benefited multinational corporations, undermined working people's living standards and the countries' economic sovereignty. Japan Family Farmers' Movement Chair, Shiraishi Jun'ichi, argued that the US imposed its rule in the region by pushing the TPP. He then criticised Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo for selling off the country's agricultural interest to the US. He believed that the failure of the signing was a result of the campaigning by international movements.

Support *The Guardian*  
by donating to Press Fund



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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

## Fullerton Cove calls for CSG buy-back

Fullerton Cove residents have called for the NSW government to buy back the coal seam gas exploration licence that covers Newcastle's drinking water supply, as they prepare to travel to Sydney to support a bill to introduce a state-wide moratorium on the industry.

PEL 458 covers the Lower Hunter region, extending from Lake Macquarie to the Myall Lakes. The CSG exploration licence has been overlooked in the NSW government's

recent CSG buy-back spree, and its owners Dart Energy are attempting to sell the lease to another drilling company, AJ Lucas. Fullerton Cove residents – who successfully blockaded Dart's drill rig for nine days in 2012 – are calling on the Baird government to block the sale and buy back the Petroleum Exploration Licence (PEL).

No one should ever be allowed to drill in Newcastle's drinking water supply, or anywhere else covered by this CSG licence. Our community is determined to keep CSG out of this area – it is not safe, and not needed. This CSG lease needs to be retired; the government needs to buy it back.

Fullerton Cove residents will travel to NSW Parliament on August 13 to support a Bill that will deliver stronger regulation of coal seam gas exploration in NSW and a permanent ban on coal seam gas in important drinking water catchments including the Tomago Sandbeds.

The Greens have proposed a Bill to prohibit coal seam gas, which is

expected to be amended by Labor to introduce a moratorium on the controversial industry, plus permanent bans in key locations.

We hope that this Bill will bring certainty to the people of the Newcastle region who will know that their drinking water is protected once and for all from coal seam gas

Due to huge public pressure Dart has left the area and the wells have all been plugged and abandoned, however the threat of the sale of the PEL is a cause for some concern. We are calling on the NSW government to support this Bill and buy back the Exploration Licence covering Newcastle to protect our drinking water, environment and health from coal seam gas.

If amended and passed by both houses, the Bill would:

- Impose an immediate moratorium on all unconventional gas exploration
- Create permanent no-go zones in the Northern Rivers, key drinking water catchments, recharge areas

of the Great Artesian Basin, prime farmland and critical industry clusters.

- Ensure key recommendations made by the Chief Scientist are implemented.

Lindsay Clout  
Fullerton Cove  
Residents Action Group

## Project on a road to nowhere

I have great news to share with you. The Federal Court has just said that the Reef-wrecking Carmichael megamine should not have been given the go-ahead and has overturned the approval!

Thanks to our friends at Mackay Conservation Group, their legal challenge flushed out all sorts of inaccuracies around the mine's use of water, super inflated job promises, and highlighted massive environmental impacts. Today the court ruled in their favour.

This project is on a road to nowhere. In the last few months, two major contractors and another four engineering firms had their work suspended, 11 international banks have said they won't fund the project, and Queensland Treasury officials have called the project "unbankable".

It doesn't make any sense environmentally or financially, so let's put it to bed. The proposed mine would be Australia's largest – it would devastate the Great Barrier Reef and be a catastrophe for our climate. All of this for an industry that is a sinking ship – the price of coal is plummeting and the world is moving on from fossil fuels.

This is a defining moment for the campaign to save our Reef. We can't let it slip away.

Nikola Casule  
Greenpeace Australia Pacific

PS: Together, we've helped ban dumping in the waters of the Reef and convinced UNESCO that the government's lobbying isn't enough to save the Reef.

# Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland



George W Bush, when he was US President, enunciated the doctrine of "continuous war" and the eagerness with which the US launches wars against poor countries in particular has alienated young people all over the world.

## The anti-Communist origins of IS

The Palestinian journalist Ramzy Baroud, the author of *The Second Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of a People's Struggle* and *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story* (both Pluto Press, London), wrote at the end of July on the *Common Dreams* website "As much of the Middle East sinks deeper into division between competing political camps, the so-called 'Islamic State' (IS) continues its unhindered march towards a twisted version of a Muslim caliphate. Many thousands have lost their lives, some in the most torturous ways, so that 'IS' may realise its nightmarish dream."

Curiously, Baroud regards IS as "hardly an anomaly, considering that the group was spawned in a predominantly violent environment". What he fails to identify satisfactorily is just who is responsible for creating this violent environment and – more importantly – who benefits from it.

Western intelligence agencies have been arming and financing extremely reactionary Muslim groups since before the Russian Revolution, when such groups were seen as a potential weapon with which to disrupt what was perceived in London to be Russian threat to British possessions in India. After the Revolution, these destabilising intrigues continued with the target now the disruption and hopefully the overthrow of Soviet power in central Asia.

Western agents encouraged the most reactionary beys and emirs to take up banditry, to attack convoys of Soviet cotton and murder anyone supporting the new collective farms

that were being formed as the groundwork for socialism. Lawrence of Arabia was even hauled out of retirement and sent to Afghanistan to stir up anti-Russian feeling on the border of the Soviet Union.

Prior to the Second World War, in preparation for Germany's invasion of the USSR, Nazi agents sought out these same groups as a fifth column. When Hitler invaded, anti-Soviet Muslims in Chechnya, for example, declared their allegiance to the Reich, a mistake that cost them dearly when the war did not work out as planned. After the War, the US as the most powerful capitalist country, took over the mantle of chief instigator of anti-Soviet intrigue, chief proponent of what soon became known as "the Cold War". The US also took over all of the Nazis' intelligence apparatus in Russia. They have continued to stir up anti-Communist and anti-Russian sentiments wherever they see an opening ever since.

The Saur revolution of April 1978 in Afghanistan provoked an immediate hostile response from the US intelligence community, determined as it was to "roll back Communism". They chose to back the reactionary feudal elite who opposed the revolution with the aid of the most backward section of the Muslim clergy. Now, however, these modern champions of intolerance and ignorance were very well funded and armed with US-supplied Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.

Afghanistan, where hope and confidence in the future had briefly flourished after the revolution overthrew its royal family, became instead a failed state, wracked by constant warfare, a place for imperialist governments to try

out new weapons and tactics. Meanwhile, the US and its main Middle Eastern allies – Israel and Saudi Arabia – sought to use their creation of a Muslim terrorist force as a weapon against numerous governments in the region, some progressive, some merely inclined to be independent especially with regard to trade in oil.

Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia as well as Russia and Ukraine have all found themselves under attack from armed terrorist bands claiming allegiance to the Muslim faith. For a while they claimed to be part of "Al-Qaeda" but now they have metamorphosed into IS, supposedly building "a new caliphate".

George W Bush, when he was US President, enunciated the doctrine of "continuous war" and the eagerness with which the US launches wars against poor countries in particular has alienated young people all over the world. As Ramzy Baroud notes, "IS" thrives on conflicts and calamities that are rooted in poor, fragmented Arab societies, where youth are disenchanted with their governments and where they have little or no hope for the future due to corruption and the protracted violence. Such embitterment is a perfect recruiting ground for 'IS', which enjoys multiple revenue streams and a self-sufficient economy."

Those "multiple revenue streams" are the key: they come in the first instance from the oil-rich Saudis and their patrons, the US. The latter country is determined to gain control over the world's key resources, especially oil. No matter how much wars may play havoc with a country's economy, infrastructure, and social system, as long as its resources can still be accessed, US imperialism will be content.

And so it is happily instigating wars all over the region and beyond.

As Baroud says, "With access to massive funds, IS is able to latch on to local militant groups which were formed as a result of real grievances, buying leverage and loyalty, as they have done in Libya, Syria and Sinai." However, he also notes that "the ferocity and ruthlessness of the many conflicts currently under way in the region have achieved little, aside from setting the stage for extreme polarization in political, ideological and sectarian discourses. [Which is precisely what those conflicts were meant to achieve.]

"Mauritanian journalist, Sidi Ahmed Tfeil ... lists countries where IS is moving in full force, flushing out Al-Qaeda influence and competing with local actors there. They include Yemen and Libya, but also Algeria, Mali, Somalia and others. Aside from Algeria, the same malaise of internal conflict, external meddling and intervention seems to unite the rest, which have either become – or teeter at the edge of being – failed states. [Libya of course was nothing like a failed state until NATO attacked the country and destroyed its economy and infrastructure.]

"It is the lack of political prospects, and the smothering of any attempt at freedom and fair economic opportunity, that lead to extremist violence in the first place. As long as this reality remains intact, IS will tragically find new recruits, latch on to local militant groups, and continue to expand into new borders – and even darker horizons."

And as long as imperialism's attempts to control the world's resources are not combated, that reality will remain intact. ✪



## Taking Issue by Rob Gowland

# Preparing for nuclear war

I watched a televised US news program in amazement last week, as various experts debated the pros and cons of modernising the US Navy's fleet of nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed submarines. Not even the entire fleet, just the big subs, the ones with the arsenals of cruise missiles with multiple warheads.

The chiefs of the Navy want to replace the existing long-distance nuclear subs with new generation subs at a cost of many hundreds of millions of dollars. So costly is the proposal, that it could not be accommodated even within the USA's bloated "defence" budget. The Navy wants Congress to establish a separate, special fund to pay for the new subs.

The new subs would be even bigger, would carry more missiles and the missiles would have even more warheads. A war-hawk's wet dream. Put it together with the intensifying Cold War against Russia and China, and we have a new nuclear arms race – towards Armageddon.

Some US commentators understandably focused on the colossal cost. Bear in mind that the subs are only part of the picture: as the Quaker Dr Joseph Gerson noted in *Common Dreams* on July 31, "the US is now on track to spend one trillion dollars to 'modernise' its nuclear arsenal and delivery systems".

The US economy is already in serious trouble and has been for a considerable time. Manufacturing for war is the only thing that keeps much of the population in jobs. But sustaining a huge military budget has been inexorably dragging the US economy down for decades, and as the military budget expands the drain on the economy expands also.

However, financial cost is not the only factor. As David Krieger wrote in *Truthout*: "On the 70th anniversary of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is past time for the United States to lead the world in negotiations to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons, rather than pursue current plans to modernise its nuclear arsenal."

Past time it certainly is, but don't hold your breath. Despite his pledge in Prague, President Obama has retired fewer nuclear weapons than any other US President despite the supposed ending of the Cold War. The Soviet Union in the 1960s proposed peaceful co-existence with non-military competition between capitalism and socialism, but the US and its imperialist allies saw that as proof that their policy of forcing

an arms race on "the Reds" was working.

While there is no doubt that the cost of meeting imperialism's military threat placed a tremendous burden on the Socialist countries' economies, had they not done so the West's war hawks would have unleashed the most horrifying war imaginable on humanity. What alarms all civilised people is that they still contemplate it. They are just waiting until they have achieved some form of military advantage. Hence the new subs, etc.

Quoting Joseph Gerson again, "During wars and international crises, the US has prepared and/or threatened to initiate nuclear war on at least 30 occasions – at least 15 times during the Korean and Vietnam Wars and crises with China, and at least 10 times to reinforce US Middle East hegemony. And each of the other eight nuclear powers has made such threats or preparations at least once."

Dr Gerson's most recent book is *Empire and the Bomb: How the US Uses Nuclear Weapons to Dominate the World*, so he should know.

Lest you think that no one would deliberately use nuclear weapons against a civilian population, remember that that is precisely what the US did at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Neither city was bombed "to end WW2".

"US Secretary of War Stimson had advised Truman that Japan's surrender 'could be arranged on terms acceptable to the United States' without the atom bombings. ... Senior US wartime military leaders including Admiral Leahy and General (later President) Eisenhower thought 'It wasn't necessary to hit them [the Japanese] with that awful thing.'

"But, as General Leslie Groves, the commander of the Manhattan Project, told senior scientist Joseph Rotblat, the bombs came to be designed for the Soviet Union ... to intimidate Stalin and other Soviet leaders by demonstrating the apocalyptic power of nuclear weapons and Washington's willingness to use them – even against civilians. Little Boy and Fat Man, as the bombs were named, announced the beginning of the Cold War.

"The myths that the A-bombings were necessary to end the war against Japan and that they saved the lives of half a million US troops remain widely believed. The myths serve as the ideological foundation for continuing US preparations for nuclear war, which in turn has served as the primary driver of nuclear weapons proliferation and the creation of deterrent nuclear arsenals."



Lest you think that no one would deliberately use nuclear weapons against a civilian population, remember that that is precisely what the US did at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Which brings us once again to the bizarre situation in which the USA is preparing to cripple its own economy even further in the vain hope of gaining a significant military advantage over Russia and China. But, of course, there are tremendous profits to be made from a staggeringly expensive nuclear arms race.

And the allure of those huge profits will be the only factor that matters to the all-powerful military-industrial complex in the USA. War – and preparations for war – has always been good business and as weapons systems have become exponentially more complex and sophisticated – and more destructive – they have also become exponentially more expensive and consequently correspondingly more profitable.

However, the likelihood of anyone being able to enjoy those profits in the aftermath of a nuclear "exchange" would be slim indeed. Recent scientific studies demonstrate that even a "small" exchange of 50-100 nuclear weapons targeted against cities would result in smoke from fires that would cause global cooling, and up to two billion deaths from famine.

As Nikita Krushchev said of the survivors of a nuclear war, "The living would envy the dead." Strangely, that does not seem to perturb some capitalists. But it should strengthen the resolve of the rest of us to put an end to wars of conquest once and for all. ☺

### Sydney

*The Committee in Solidarity with the Workers Movement of Iran – Australia*

## Commemorating the Twenty-Seventh Anniversary of Massacres of the Political and Ideological Prisoners in Iran

In solidarity with the remaining family, relatives and friends of those fallen victims involved in the dire massacre in 1367, committed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, the committee in solidarity with the workers movement of Iran – Australia has conducted and organized the following two programs:

### Program: (1) 7:00pm September 5

Speech, Poetry, Music, and a Book stall

Speaker: Mr Ahmad Mazarei - A political activist and a previous political prisoner in Iran.

Topic of discussion: 'The development of violence on the massacres of the prisoners in Iran.'

Entry Fee: \$15.00 per individual

### Program: (2) 7:00pm September 12

Speaker: Mr Ahmad Mazarei

Topic of discussion: 'Iran – Middle East: The development and consequences of the agreements of the nuclear energy.'

Entry: Free Entry

Place of the both programs

### Pennant Hills Community Centre

Corner Yarrara and Ramsay Rd opposite pennant Hills train station

More info: 0413 489 420 proletarianunite@gmail.com

### 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

Sydney

# POLITICS IN THE PUB

August 13

## THE BARBARISM OF AUSTRALIA'S BI-PARTISAN REFUGEE POLICY

Julian Burnside, QC, Human Rights and Refugee Advocate and author;

Phil Glendenning, Director, Edmund Rice Centre;

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](http://www.politicsinthepub.org.au)



# "It's a story of corruption, greed and ineptitude"

Jess Worth

Sitting in the Oxford sunshine, Ken Henshaw is telling me how proud he is of the solar panel on his Port Harcourt house. "In Nigeria, you are your own government and energy company!" he jokes, describing the lengths to which he has gone to connect his home to a power source. He also had to buy a pump to access clean water, and runs his own sewage system. "The government has abdicated all responsibility at the local level," he explains, allowing oil companies in his home region – the Niger Delta – to step in and buy off polluted communities by providing necessary schools and health centres.

Ken knows he is one of the lucky ones – he can afford to generate his own power. The vast majority of Nigerians are dependent on national energy supplies, which is a desperate position to be in right now.

Ken is in Britain to challenge the Department of International Development (DFID) over its support for Nigeria's recent disastrous energy privatisation. "The Nigerian government has gone for the worst form of privatisation available," he explains. "It is a story of corruption, greed and ineptitude. They sold off public assets to their friends, who had no expertise and no intention of actually providing power. They laid off over 14,000 workers and had to use more than half of the US\$3 billion they sold it for to compensate them."

Tariffs have increased sharply since the sell-off. There are fixed charges just for being connected, and Nigerians are not charged for how much electricity they actually use – they must pay whatever they are asked to.

As a result, the 67 percent of Nigerians who live below the poverty line are finding themselves unable to access electricity at all. Ken lays out for me the three big problems with the new privatised power system. First, tariffs have increased sharply in the four years since the sell-off was agreed. Second, there are new fixed charges just for being connected, even if there



is no power available – essentially a regressive tax on the poor and energy-efficient which has already sparked protests. Third, Nigerians are not charged for how much electricity they actually use. Their bills are estimated and they must pay whatever they are asked to.

"It's a major crisis that has resulted in what little energy is available being channelled to the rich suburbs," concludes Ken. The poor majority, who used to have pretty good if unreliable access, are back in the dark.

## Epic struggles

Power in Nigeria has long been a problem. Power cuts and intermittent supply have plagued the country for decades, forcing those

who can afford it to rely on noisy, polluting, diesel-guzzling generators. In such a huge country with bad infrastructure, it doesn't make sense to have one central power system. But when the Bretton Woods institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) arrived and said they could solve the problem through privatisation, the Nigerian government jumped at the chance.

"Nigerians were blackmailed into it," says Ken, who is scathing about the British government's role in encouraging this catastrophe to take place. "DFID have earmarked US\$80 million to support the privatisation process. We have no idea where that money's going. When I met them they couldn't tell me, although they are funding the [free-market] Adam Smith International as contractors. They admitted the privatisation has failed, but when I talked about energy democracy, about communities owning and generating their own renewable electricity, it seemed they'd never thought of that. All of DFID's plans to help countries generate power are tied to fossil fuels – only a tiny percentage is dedicated to renewables."

The campaign for energy democracy in Nigeria is just beginning, says Ken. "Nigerians are getting angry. We are asking for a decentralised system of community-controlled solar and wind power. Privatisation doesn't work on any count."

Ken is no stranger to epic struggles against corrupt vested interests and the abuse of power. He grew up in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, joining the struggle for environmental justice and self-determination as a teenager. At university, he was elected national president of

the influential National Association of Nigerian Students. He was part of the pro-democracy movement that brought military dictatorship to an end, and was involved in the 2012 uprising against fuel costs and the current mobilisation to force Shell to clean up the Niger Delta.

Now he works for Social Action, an NGO for which he was a founding staff member in 2007. In his words, it "intervenes directly on the side of the people in the fight for economic and environmental justice." It supports community education, mobilisation and solidarity around energy, mining, trade and investment that is affecting human rights, democracy and livelihoods.

For a man who has been at the heart of such intense struggles for most of his life, even imprisoned by the military dictatorship, his determination and continued commitment to justice seem undiminished. I met him just after he'd given a talk to a feisty bunch of Oxford schoolchildren. "I told them that life expectancy in the Niger Delta is 46 years old. They asked 'how old are you?' When I told them I was 38, they said 'Oh that means you've only got eight years left!'" As he guffawed with laughter it was obvious that this fierce passion suffused with humour is one source of energy that should give Nigerians hope for the future.

Sign the petition to ask development minister Grant Shapps to stop wasting UK aid money on this failed scheme: [globaljustice.org.uk/stop](http://globaljustice.org.uk/stop)  
Read the *Global Justice Now* briefing on the Department of International Development and energy privatisation. *New Internationalist* ✪

## Australian Marxist Review

Journal of the Communist Party of Australia

**IDEAS  
THEORY  
POLICIES  
EXPERIENCE  
DISCUSSION**

**4 issues are \$25**  
including postage within Australia

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010  
Ph 02 9699 8844 shop@cpa.org.au  
www.cpa.org.au/amr  
Credit cards incl type, name, number & exp date.  
All Cheques/Money Orders to "CPA".

**Support The Guardian  
by donating to Press Fund**

**Communist Party of Australia**  
[www.cpa.org.au](http://www.cpa.org.au) [cpa@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpa@cpa.org.au)

**General Secretary**  
Bob Briton  
email: [gensec@cpa.org.au](mailto:gensec@cpa.org.au)

**Party President**  
Vinnie Molina  
email: [president@cpa.org.au](mailto: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](mailto:sa@cpa.org.au) web: [www.adelaidecommunists.org](http://www.adelaidecommunists.org)

**Brisbane** postal: PO Box 6012, Manly, Qld 4179 phone: 0449 476 540  
email: [bris@cpa.org.au](mailto:bris@cpa.org.au)

**Canberra** Ruben Duran phone: 0421 049 602 email: [act@cpa.org.au](mailto: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: [cpavic@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpavic@cpa.org.au)

## Head Office (Sydney)

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

**Newcastle** email: [newcastle@cpa.org.au](mailto:newcastle@cpa.org.au)

**Perth** Vinnie Molina postal: PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906  
phone: 0419 812 872 email: [perth@cpa.org.au](mailto:perth@cpa.org.au)

**Riverina** Allan Hamilton  
postal: 2/57 Cooper St, Cootamundra, NSW 2590 email: [riverina@cpa.org.au](mailto: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](mailto:tas@cpa.org.au)

