



# Modern day slavery

Anna Pha

**A joint ABC *Four Corners*/Fairfax investigation has exposed the theft of tens of millions of dollars from workers at 7-Eleven stores around Australia. They revealed dodgy bookkeeping, blackmail and the mass underpayment of 7-Eleven's workforce.**

So the issue is not exactly new. Fair Work Australia, the Australian Taxation Office and the government know what is happening, but they stand by and do nothing as workers continue to be treated like slaves.

"I don't earn good money. I, ah, I get \$12 an hour," Sam Pendem, one of thousands of 7-Eleven's slaves told ABC's *Four Corners* program (August 31).

"I used to work 70 hours; sometimes 80 hours. Low wages, no respite, no breaks at all and underpaid everything. ...

"So that is the reason only has to do more hours so to compensate, to get that money. So run for a week, surviving here. They treat like dogs. He just, like, treats like an an - slum dogs."

The minimum legal wage is \$17.29 per hour with penalty rates for night and weekend work.

Being forced to work 40 hours or more, as in the case of many students, imposes incredible difficulties for students attempting to study a full-time course.

One of the most common scams – the "half pay" scam – is a wage at half the rate on the books for double the hours on the books. So \$10 per hour for 40 hours would appear as 20 hours at \$20 per hour.

One franchisee admitted paying international workers without a visa \$5 per hour.

## Blackmail

"And so many students go and work for, ah, people like 7-Eleven who offer them 40 or 50 hours a week at a reduced rate of pay which is so, which is in total contravention of all of our labour laws and other laws. And in doing so they're breaching the conditions of their visa which gives, which puts the franchisee in a position where he can blackmail these people into silence. And once

they've exposed themselves to that vulnerability, they have to keep their mouth shut," class action lawyer Stewart Levitt told the ABC.

Students fear deportation for visa breaches if they speak up.

There are more than 600 7-Eleven stores around Australia mostly employing international students. They rake in more than \$3 billion sales per annum off the backs of their workers. They are owned by siblings Russ Withers and Bev Barlow who are said to be worth \$1.5 billion. The stores are run as franchises and seem to be based on the super-exploitation of visa holders, cash-strapped students and others hoping to settle permanently in Australia. They have more than 56,000 stores located in 17 different countries around the world.

Their empire also includes the Australian arm of the Starbucks coffee chain, 300 Mobil petrol stations and an extensive property portfolio. It begs the question what is happening to workers at the Mobil and Starbucks franchises.

Consumer Advocate Michael Fraser did his own research. "I've been to 60 stores in three states and spoken to hundreds of people. Every single person has been underpaid," Fraser told the ABC. He met workers outside the stores to avoid video cameras and possible loss of job for the workers being interviewed.

Head office of 7-Eleven was not interested when Fraser phoned them offering the evidence. Franchisees invest life-savings and then find that the only way to make a living is to underpay workers and commit fraud. They must return 57 percent of gross profits to 7-Eleven. They can hide nothing. Everything they sell, do or say is monitored by head office.

The ABC has also revealed the underpayment of workers at On the Run, a large Melbourne-based contractor with more than 120 stores and at Australia Post.

## Union campaign

And where was Fair Work Australia in all of this? Fraud and theft on such a scale!

It takes the courage of several brave international students to bring



about another exposure, more raids and then what? Will a couple of stores be checked where a few students spoke up?

UNITE, a trade union representing workers in fast food and retail outlets in Victoria, has been campaigning for workers at 7-Eleven since 2008.

The union is not registered under the Fair Work Act. It was set up in the retail and fast food sector where shortcomings were seen in term of workers' rights in those sectors.

UNITE notes that since 2008 its campaigning has led to the Fair Work Ombudsman auditing dozens of 7-Eleven stores across the country.

While they found hundreds of thousands of dollars in underpayments UNITE explained that this was just the tip of the iceberg.

"In a face to face meeting UNITE organisers told Fair Work Ombudsman officials that a simple audit of the books would not show up the full extent of the underpayments taking place," UNITE secretary, Anthony Main said.

"It was recommended that a comparison be done between the time and wages records and the cash register reconciliation forms. In most stores the employees log in and out of the cash register and a comparison with

time sheets would show that people were not being paid for all the hours they worked.

"Similar requests for an audit were made in a face-to-face meeting with the then 7-Eleven Chief Financial Officer, David Ginsberg." Ginsberg refused to act", Main said.

With the additional publicity from the ABC and Fairfax and a law firm deciding to launch a class action against head office, 7-Eleven appears to have gone into damage control. The Fair Work Ombudsman is launching a new investigation into the company and 7-Eleven have agreed to an internal audit led by former head of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Allan Fels.

The company has also announced it would buy out any stores that wish to cancel their franchise agreements. Head office, which previously denied any responsibility or knowledge, has announced it will fast track back-pay owed to workers.

## Importance of trade unions

The situation at 7-Eleven drives home the importance of trade unions. Deunionisation and casualisation have made it easier for employers to

act with impunity. Restrictions on the right of entry of trade union officials and the outlawing of almost all industrial action have fostered an environment facilitating super-exploitation and fraud on a massive scale.

Unions used to have the power to inspect time and wage books. It should be restored along with other trade union rights.

It is a reminder of the importance of our public broadcaster the ABC. The Fairfax media have also played a positive role in exposing the ongoing situation.

An amnesty is needed so that workers "breaking the law" are not punished. As it stands it is the students who face punishment not their bosses. So far Immigration Minister Peter Dutton and Employment Minister Eric Abetz are still turning a blind eye to entire roort.

However, pressure is mounting on Immigration Minister Peter Dutton to grant an amnesty for students working more than the maximum number of hours. There are currently more than one million visa workers in Australia. Instead of hounding trade unions, the government should set up a Royal Commission into the underpayment and blackmail of visa workers in Australia. ✪

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# Guardian

Issue 1701

September 9, 2015

## Abbott isolated on climate change

If you relied on the Murdoch press and the rest of the corporate media for your information, you could be excused for thinking climate change is no longer a major concern in the community. The Abbott government has cobbled together a supremely unambitious and non-specific emissions reduction “plan” to take to the UN Conference on Climate Change in Paris in December but very few are applauding. There is even a growing sense of alarm in business circles that the federal government’s recklessness is helping to make the world unsafe for profit-making.

Team Abbott is banking that Murdoch and the Coalition’s backers in the coal lobby will prevail. They have been presenting the proposed 26-28 percent reduction on 2005 level emissions by 2030 as credible and “responsible”. It is noteworthy that forces wanting to coddle the planet’s big polluters regularly alter the base year for measuring change. It used to be 1990. Then it was the year 2000 and now Abbott has made 2005 the government’s benchmark.

The PM claims the target is in line with those of comparable countries but Bernie Fraser of the Climate Change Authority strongly disagrees. He insists the figure puts Australia “at or near the bottom” of the table of developed nations. Fraser also dismisses Murdoch media reports that the economy would take a \$600 billion hit if we pursued a more responsible goal of a 40-60 percent emissions cut based on 2000 levels. Treasury makes no such claim.

There are also plenty of critics for the draft “safeguard mechanism” announced by environment minister Greg Hunt recently. It turns out that 80 percent of the country’s biggest polluters won’t be affected. They will be able to increase their emissions. Experts predict only 20 to 30 companies will have emissions checked against their highest figures recorded between 2009-10 and 2013-14. Breaches in one year can be made up in the next. They will also be able to buy pollution “credits” from overseas. Hunt is bending over backwards to please the corporate sector. “It has always been our commitment and we continue to budget zero revenue. It is our clear expectation that no businesses will pay penalties,” he said.

Tony Wood of the Grattan Institute said the new rules will do nothing to reduce emissions. “It’s called a safeguard mechanism but it’s not an environmental safeguard. Greg Hunt is not actually constraining emissions. If it’s going to work it’s got to have teeth but all we’ve got are gums,” he said.

It is clear that the Abbott government wants to protect fossil fuel-dependent industries from any threat to their bottom line. It has gone to ridiculous lengths to champion the cause of coal - one which increasingly appears lost. The price for coal on international markets has slumped. The governments of India and China have announced plans to dramatically cut or cease the import of thermal coal. Glencore has announced the shut down of mines in Australia. Wollongong Coal is closing its Russell Vale colliery. Coal-fired and nuclear power generation are on the nose internationally.

The Abbott government has sought to plug the sources of bad news for its favoured industries. Cuts at the CSIRO have caused the science agency to cancel its annual survey of Australians’ attitudes to climate change. Results for 2014 won’t be released. In its first budget, the Abbott government took \$111 million out of the CSIRO’s funding.

People want a renewable energy future. Despite the media’s incessant campaign against the science of climate change and the adoption of renewable energy, roughly 70 percent of Australians accept the scientific consensus. That is up 6 points on the figure for 2012. Their enthusiastic embrace of solar and wind power has been met with hostility by the Abbott government in the form of a cut to the renewable energy target. This is only one more example of the disconnect between the will of the people and the actions of pro-corporate government but one with terrible consequences for the survivability of the planet. The people will need to make a careful assessment of alternative emissions strategies but their judgement on the Abbott government’s climate change vandalism is in.

### PRESS FUND

Peter Dutton, the unsmiling and totally uncharming Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, has accused the Fairfax Media and the ABC of launching a “jihad” series of attacks on the Abbott government, with the intention of bringing it down. In fact, the government itself is doing that job very capably, with its militarisation of Dutton’s ministry, its negativity, its blatant contempt for ordinary working families, and its obsessive determination to engage in yet another war in the Middle East in support of US imperial ambitions. We intend to cover the inevitable downfall of this odious regime, but we need your help by way of Press Fund contributions, so please, if you possibly can, send us something for the next edition. Many thanks to this week’s supporters, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$5, Eddie Seymour \$25, “Round Figure” \$10  
This week’s total: \$40 Progressive total: \$4,850

# Navy trying to kill Gangjeong Village

I was invited to come to Jeju City last month to appear on live radio show for 20 minutes. As we were preparing to leave Gangjeong village we looked into the sky as a formation of Navy Blue Angel war planes came screaming over the village. For the next 15 or so minutes they went back and forth directly over Gangjeong (South Korean island) doing various stunts. One of the stunts brought the planes very low in an ear splitting manoeuvre.

The Navy was sending a message to Gangjeong village. The message was loud and clear. “We own you now. Your village will become a war base. There is nothing you can do. We will project power against China from Jeju Island. You’d better get used to the idea.” This is the way the US military empire thinks and the way they treat people who stand in their way.

Just before we went on the air for the radio interview we learned that the Navy was demanding that Gangjeong villagers pay US\$20 million in fines for disruption of construction operations on the base now nearing completion.

Some activists believe that the Ministry of Defence in Seoul is actually controlled by the Samsung corporation which is the lead contractor for the Navy base construction operation. Just as in the US, where Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon and General Dynamics control our government, the Park administration inside the Blue House in Seoul is actually the pawn of corporate interests.

By demanding this outrageous amount of funds from a small fishing and farming community the South Korean puppet government is saying that democracy does not actually exist anymore. In a true democratic nation people who protest oppressive government policies are not fined and driven into poverty - especially an entire village.

What was the crime of Gangjeong?

They wanted to protect the environment, sacred Gureombi rock, the offshore endangered soft coral



Outside the Jeju Courts - refusing to pay fines for protesting against the US naval base construction.

forests, the water, the sea life and more. The villagers wanted to protect their way of life - their 500-year old culture.

I’ve learned that only South Korea and Japan have this kind of punishing policy that obviously smacks of fascism. The government of South Korea is controlled by corporations and Washington. How can they claim in Seoul to be a democracy and then turn around and treat citizens this way? How can the government claim they need a Navy base to defend the people and then attack the people who use non-violent protest to challenge the destruction of their village?

This will have to go to court but the courts are ultimately under the control of the same corrupt corporate state. When the Navy demands that the village must pay \$20 million in fines that means every man, woman and child owes that debt. It means they would be naked without any land after the court would take all they owned.

This is nothing more than an illegal and immoral attempt to finish off Gangjeong village. Every living and breathing human being on this planet should be outraged at this crime against the human rights of the people in Gangjeong village.

After the US-directed April 3 massacre on Jeju Island soon after WW2 was over a new program was put into place called the

“Involvement System”. This meant that anyone who was labelled a communist by the US-run puppet government could get no job and would have no future.

It also meant that any family member would suffer the same fate. This demand for \$20 million by the Navy is an attempt to reinstate this “Involvement System” once again. The only way out for a person is to commit suicide.

I am told that the South Korean regime is using this same punitive program to go after striking auto workers on the mainland and other activists around the nation. The decision has been made to kill democracy in South Korea. We are seeing the same method of operation in Japan today as the right-wing government kills their peaceful constitution against popular will. We see the same system in Okinawa as the people demand US bases there be closed. We see the same system underway inside Ukraine where Washington has installed a puppet government.

For those out there sitting on the fence this is the time to wake up and see the writing on the wall. Democracy is being drowned globally by corporate capitalism.

Who will be next?

**Bruce K Gagnon**  
Coordinator  
Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space ☪

## 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.

### 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.**



# Justice done ... like a dinner

Anna Pha

**It took just a few minutes for Justice Dyson Heydon to announce that he was staying put as Commissioner of the so-called Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. That was it. His defence was published in a 67-page decision. Hearings would recommence the next day, September 1.**

"I have concluded that it is not the case that a fair-minded lay observer might apprehend that I might not bring an impartial mind to the resolution of the questions which the work of the Commission requires to be decided," Heydon said.

Essentially the question was whether a fair-minded person would perceive Heydon as being politically biased for agreeing to speak at a Liberal Party fundraiser – the Sir Garfield Barwick annual address.

This is a Commission that by its very title presumes corruption in the trade union movement and excludes an "even-handed" investigation of corruption amongst employers.

Heydon argued that the speech he was giving was on legal matters, not political. That accepting the invitation did not mean a person believed in, supported or had any relevant association with the Liberal Party. He also argued that there was no connection with how the Commission had been run, that a fair minded person might conclude that a former judge or highly experienced lawyer would be objective.

In reality he was judging his own evidence – his claims that he had not noticed the Liberal Party logo, had not read the parts of the email laid open for him on his desk that mentioned fundraising for the Liberal Party. Did he believe his own statements?

## Barwick the politician

Putting those issues aside, there is still the question of the event

itself. It is an event organised by Liberal Party lawyers to honour Sir Garfield Barwick, a man they hold in great esteem. And a man reviled by many on the labour side of politics. The significance of being the star attraction at an event to honour Barwick seems to have been overlooked.

Prior to his 17 years as Chief Justice of the High Court, Barwick was a Liberal Party MP (1958-1966) and served in the Menzies Liberal government as Attorney General (1958-64) and Minister for External Affairs (1961-64).

When Governor-General Sir John Kerr sacked the Whitlam Labor government on November 11, 1975, it was following advice on the constitutional legality of such action from Barwick.

As Attorney-General, he was responsible for some of the most draconian and anti-democratic legislation. The main targets of the legislation were the Communist Party of Australia which Menzies had unsuccessfully attempted to ban in 1951\* and the trade union movement.

Garfield claimed his amendments to the Crimes Act were necessary for defence and security.

The Waterside Workers' Federation summed their purpose up in a pamphlet *How the Crimes Bill Makes Hidden Attacks on Democratic Rights*: "They are designed to cripple the Labour Movement, to silence the critics of the government's foreign and domestic policy." (The WWF is now part of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA).)

"The new provision of the offence of 'sabotage' is aimed directly at the Trade Union Movement," the WWF warned. The definition of sabotage was so wide that a strike by any group of workers could be declared "sabotage". Those taking action faced 15-year jail sentences.

"Sabotage" is defined as the "destruction, damage, or impairment for a purpose prejudicial or



intended to be prejudicial to the safety or defence of the Commonwealth, of any article."

The reference to "any article" is expanded upon: "It is in or forms any part of any railway, road, way, or channel, or other means of communication by land or water (including any works or structures being part thereof or connected therewith,) or any place used for gas, water, electricity works, or other works for purposes of a public character. ..."

Garfield's provisions for "treason" were just as broad, aimed at opposition to the government's foreign policy. Both offences carried the penalty of life imprisonment.

In fact there were strong similarities with much of the "anti-terrorism" legislation introduced by current Attorney-General George Brandis.

"What we are left with now is a multi-million dollar Royal Commission that is tainted – everything that has happened until now and everything that will happen in the future is stained by these events," Australian Council of Trade Unions secretary Dave Oliver said.

Abbott and his side-kick Eric Abetz will use the findings of the Royal Commission to try to justify the next round of anti-union, anti-worker measures, some of which are contained in the recently released Productivity Commission's report.

## Public perception

The *Sydney Morning Herald's* website poll (August 13-15) asked readers: "Should Dyson Heydon stand aside from the royal commission into union corruption?"

Yes, the appearance of his impartiality has been damaged and he should make way for another royal commissioner: **33%**

No, his scheduled appearance at the fundraiser is no reason for the former High Court judge to quit his role: **8%**

Yes, and the royal commission should immediately be scrapped: **58%**

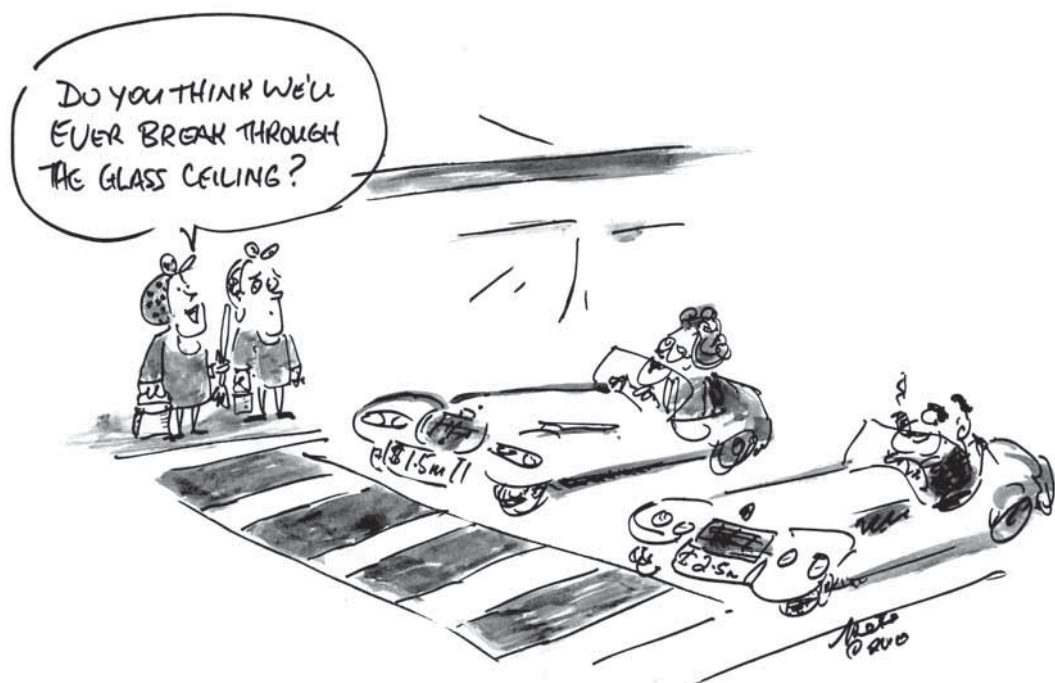
Not sure: **3%**

Its fair-minded readers have spoken! The *Guardian* adds its vote to scrapping the Commission.

\*The legislation to ban the CPA was overturned in a Constitutional Challenge and then defeated in a referendum. ✪

## As Attorney-General, Barwick was responsible for some of the most draconian and anti-democratic legislation.

### Pete's Corner



Sydney

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

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

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

Tuesday October 20  
**Defending workers rights**

Tuesday November 3  
**What is happening in Syria**

Tuesday November 17  
**A new model for public and affordable housing**

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

# Traditional owners in mine challenge

Wangan and Jagalingou traditional owners of Queensland's Galilee Basin are challenging Indian company Adani's Carmichael mine proposal in the Federal Court. Traditional owner Adrian Burragubba said that the Wangan and Jagalingou people have added more named applicants to their native title claim.

"The Federal Court registered our new applicant, ending the fabricated myth that the majority of Wangan and Jagalingou do not oppose Adani's mine," he said. "This dispels the malicious disinformation spread by Adani, which has always tried to paint our community as terminally divided."

"In any group, there is a variety of views. But a clear majority of our people said no to the Carmichael mine. Twice. This decision is final. What part of our democracy do they not understand?"

"Adani is seeking to divide and conquer – a tactic that mining companies have used against Indigenous peoples standing up for their rights the world over."

"Once and for all: My people do not consent to this mine and never will. We have consistently fought the Carmichael mine and will do so until this Indian mining giant packs its bags and goes home."

"Nor will we stand by while the media mouthpieces of Adani and the government insult us, representing us in story after story as simple, gullible patsies bought off by greensies. We are calling this out for what it is: a colonial attitude, and a repugnant mischaracterisation of us as a people. It is just the latest version of our dispossession. These misrepresentations do us serious harm."

"Let's set the record straight, again, and for the last time. We are an independent group of traditional owners. We cannot be bought and sold by anyone, including outsiders like Adani. They offered us millions

to consent to the ruination of our future.

"We rejected a land use agreement with them – twice. We told them to take their shut-up money and go home. We told them we autonomously determine our own interests. This means self-determination without dependency on mining."

The Carmichael project is facing major hurdles on several fronts.

Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt failed to follow the guidelines, meaning his approval was voided by the Federal Court earlier this month.

And potential financial backers have been pulling out, with London financier Standard Chartered the latest to withdraw support.

"The bank's decision brings this disastrous project one step closer to its demise," Mr Burragubba said. Standard Chartered is one of Britain's largest investment banks and was understood to be a key advisor and financier to Adani in funding the \$16.5 billion project. A senior executive of Adani Mining told a Queensland court earlier this year that Standard Chartered had loaned \$680 million to the project.

Earlier this year Mr Burragubba and others met with investment banks in the US, Asia and Europe to tell them traditional owners did not consent to the mine.

Standard Chartered's decision follows news that the Commonwealth Bank has also withdrawn from the project. The Wangan and Jagalingou are calling on the remaining three of Australia's big four banks – NAB, Westpac and ANZ – which have not ruled out funding, to confirm they will not support the Carmichael coal mine with finance.

Wangan and Jagalingou traditional owner Murrawah Johnson said the Queensland and federal governments should heed the message of the banks and recognise that Adani's mine is at a "dead-end in history".



Abbot Point – The Carmichael project is facing major hurdles on several fronts.

"The future does not lie in the destruction of Aboriginal culture, the devastation of the environment, and the fuelling of dangerous climate change," she said.

"It is time for Australian governments to chart a sensible course on energy and development, and to leave our lands and waters alone."

## Govt moves to change law

Meanwhile, the federal government has announced it will try to repeal a section of environmental law that allows activists to challenge major projects. The decision follows the Federal Court's move to overturn approval of Adani's \$16.5 billion Carmichael coal mine in central Queensland after Environment Minister Greg Hunt failed to follow the law.

"This government will repeal section 487.2 of the EPBC (*Environment*

*Protection and Biodiversity Conservation*) Act which gives activists the standing to sabotage decisions," Prime Minister Tony Abbott told Parliament.

Attorney-General George Brandis said the laws as they stood allowed "radical green activists to engage in vigilante litigation" to stop important job-creating projects. Senator Brandis called on Labor to support the bill.

In response to questions from the *Koori Mail* on whether the changes to the Act had the potential to affect Aboriginal people's access to the courts, a spokesperson for Senator Brandis said it wasn't a "matter for the department to respond", but was for the Environment Department.

A spokesperson for Mr Hunt said there was no change to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act* and that "the proposed amendments will not impact on the rights and interests of

Indigenous communities affected by a project".

However, the solicitor who won the case regarding the Carmichael approval, NSW Environmental Defenders Office chief solicitor Sue Higginson, said there was certainly potential to affect Indigenous people.

"If the repeal goes ahead, it will certainly put us back in a more historic place, where Aboriginal people will have to – like any person – prove that they have a special interest in a project," she said.

"The law doesn't recognise automatically that Aboriginal people have a special interest. So many Aboriginal people who identify with their own traditional lands do not have the more Western contemporary property interest in those lands, would arguably be in a more disadvantageous position than they are now with regards to access to the courts."

*Koori Mail* ☼

## States should delay signing NDIS: union

The Health Services Union (HSU) has urged state governments not to sign the NDIS Bilateral Agreements until appropriate quality and safeguarding mechanisms are in place for people with disabilities and serious workforce issues are addressed.

Presenting to the ongoing Commonwealth Senate Inquiry into Violence, Abuse and Neglect in Disability Services, HSU national president Lloyd Williams said funding, training and accreditation were major unresolved issues that relate

directly to the prevalence and frequency of abuse.

"We're very concerned about the current headlong rush into the full implementation of the NDIS given the accounts of abuse against clients across a number of states. Whilst the various inquiries will make their findings and recommendations, it's impossible to separate the issues of violence, abuse and neglect against people with disabilities from the systemic workforce issues bedevilling the sector."

Currently under the NDIS

working arrangements there are no minimum qualifications required for workers, unless they are a registered health practitioner under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

This means that tens of thousands of disability support workers, tasked with providing complex care and assistance to people with disabilities, are not required to have any minimum training once the NDIS rolls out in full.

There are a lot of words around NDIS "best practice" and "quality

assurance", but the two key aspects of minimum qualifications and national accreditation standards are not currently a requirement and they need to be.

"The whole system also needs to be adequately funded, not driven by the ideological belief that a market-driven system will magically deliver cheaper services without compromising quality care," said Mr Williams.

He said that the current so-called "efficient price" doesn't come close to covering the true cost of quality care and it means even less money will be available for training and quality assurance processes.

"We must have these issues addressed within the Bilateral Agreements before they are signed. This is the moment of leverage by state governments to ensure that the NDIS delivers on its promise that people with disabilities and their families will get the care and support they have been denied for too long."

"Everyone supports the NDIS but it must be done properly. Just as the kerosene baths brought about minimum quality requirements in

the aged care sector, this must also be the case for the disability services sector."

These issues are set against a backdrop of impending supply-and-demand challenges. Last month the NDIA released its *Market, Sector and Workforce Strategy*, which restated the looming capacity issues facing the sector. The disability sector workforce will need to more than double in size, from around 74,000 FTE (full-time equivalent) currently to more than 160,000 by 2019-20.

"In these circumstances, where there will be a huge new influx of untrained workers, it's not hard to see very high and increasing levels of risk. Workforce training and accreditation is the elephant in the NDIS Garden of Eden that nobody wants to talk about. There needs to be talk and action on this now."

"States should be using the signing of the Bilateral Agreements to push for minimum qualifications, a national accreditation system and be satisfied that there is funding available to train the expanding workforce." ☼



Sydney

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

54 YEARS IS ENOUGH

Thursday September 17 at 5:30 pm Outside USA Consulate in Martin Place

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

# Australia goes deeper into criminal war against Syria

Len Waster

**Australia looks set to join the United States in bombing Syria. Now we have yet another Australian government dragging us into yet another US war.**

The Abbott government wraps its decision in the mantle of supporting the war against the Islamic State (ISIS), which seemingly sprang from nowhere in 2014 to brutally seize large swathes of Iraq and Syria.

However, given that Abbott has apparently demanded a security measure from his bureaucrats each week between now and the next election and it was the government that asked the US administration to send Australia an invitation to invade Syria, along with a reassurance that such an action would be legal, it turns out this war is also for that most base of all reasons – to keep a desperate Prime Minister in power.

ISIS and other Al-Qaeda offshoots did not even exist in the Middle East until United States and its ‘coalition of the willing’ – including Australia – invaded Iraq in 2003.

And the current coalition to quell ISIS, pulled together by USA in early 2014, includes countries that have backed ISIS and other Al-Qaeda offshoots from the beginning of the strife in Syria – as US Vice President Joe Biden confessed to a gathering of students in October 2014.

The US government is itself in no way innocent of sponsoring terrorists to bring down the Syrian state. As early as August 2012 the US Defence Intelligence Agency welcomed the possibility of ISIS and other terrorist groups creating “salafist principalities” in eastern Syria as the situation “unravelling” and saw this as exactly what the “supporting powers to the opposition want.”

The US Congress’s House Intelligence Committee June 2015 budget discussions revealed the CIA had operated a billion dollar a year budget to train and arm rebels in Syria, as “part of a broader, multibillion-dollar

effort involving Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey” over “several years.” In this time the CIA “trained and equipped nearly 10,000 fighters sent into Syria ... spending roughly \$100,000 per year for every anti-Assad rebel who has gone through the program”.

The CIA defended its expenditure by arguing that much of the CIA money went “toward running secret training camps in Jordan, gathering intelligence to help guide the operations of agency-backed militias and managing a sprawling logistics network used to move fighters, ammunition and weapons into the country.”

These fighters were obviously not being trained to fight ISIS over this time – the US effort, in collaboration with those Joe Biden admitted were backing Islamist terrorist gangs, coincides with ISIS coming to predominance in the region, as the United States had expected and welcomed.

At these hearings the CIA argued its efforts were achieving results: “US-backed insurgents have just begun to emerge as effective fighters”, “the war is approaching a critical stage in which Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is losing territory and strength” (though the government is “not on the verge of defeat”) and “many people are starting to openly talk about an endgame for Assad and Syria.”

Already Turkey and Jordan have announced plans to establish no-fly, or “buffer” zones on Syria’s northern and southern borders.

This indicates that at this stage the Australian government is effectively signing up to bomb Syria, not so much as to destroy ISIS, but to help impose “no fly” zones over Syria as the next step in the country’s subjugation.

The Australian Foreign Minister has hinted at this. In a bizarre call to European countries to join in on the airstrikes against Syria, on the grounds that bombing would relieve



their refugee crisis, Julie Bishop claimed such action would resolve the situation “at its source,” by bringing about “a military and political solution for both Syria and Iraq.”

This is code for Syria’s destruction to bring about regime change against the determined resistance of the Syrian people, so both Iraq and Syria can then be redivided in a way that satisfies the ambitions of those who take part in this criminal venture.

It is difficult to characterise the conflict in Syria as primarily a civil war, given the level of covert, outside intervention in the country over the war’s four and a half year duration.

The war against ISIS could be easily won – merely by cutting its supply lines in and out of Jordan and Turkey. Why does this not happen? Because, despite the rhetoric, ISIS is covertly supported by USA, funded by the Gulf countries and

“assembled” in Turkey and Jordan under US auspices.

## Refugees and the endgame

The cruelty and violence inflicted on Syria and Iraq by ISIS and other Al-Qaeda offshoots has created an unparalleled refugee crisis.

On the eve of the declared “endgame” of the war against Syria, there has been an outpouring of sympathy for the upsurge of refugees fleeing from the war zones of Syria, Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan into Europe.

This though is being used to justify, not just the escalation of the efforts to shut down ISIS, but to finish of the “Assad regime”, otherwise known as the secular, inclusive state of the sovereign Syrian nation.

The message of this endgame is that refugees should not only be welcomed when they arrive, but the problem that made them leave must be remedied. We must get rid of Assad. We must arm the “rebels” with “anti-aircraft weaponry” and create safe havens and no-fly zones. In order to save the refugees we need more war, not less.

This is the call for regime change, the intent all along of this war by those who have prosecuted it.

The Syrian government has not requested Australia, or the United States to militarily intervene in Syria; it rightly views USA and its allies as responsible for Syria’s infestation with terrorists in the first place. Neither has the United Nations sanctioned action against Syria. This makes the war against Syria not only immoral, but illegal. To take part in such a war is a war crime.

If nothing else, Australia is about to embark on an enormously expensive exercise to destroy another country at the call of our powerful “friend”, using weaponry we purchase from it for the purpose. Meanwhile at home, services are being cut, the economy is tanking and jobs are being destroyed.

Australians must speak up now! We must strongly express our opposition to Australia’s involvement in one more criminal US war. Let us show we are determined to prevent Australia being dragged deeper into the quagmire of war in the Middle East. ✪

## PNG removes appeal rights for asylum seekers

**In what seems to be a knee-jerk response to the Supreme Court constitutional challenge to Manus Island, the Papua New Guinea Immigration department has summarily removed the right of appeal from asylum seekers on Manus Island.**

At an “open” meeting of Manus Island asylum seekers on September 1, around 30 asylum seekers from the various compounds (surrounded by more than 40 security guards) were told that they would no longer be able to appeal against negative refugee determination decisions.

Until now, asylum seekers have been able to appeal against a negative determination. But a PNG immigration official told the meeting, the PNG Minister for Immigration had decided that people who got a negative result on the first interview would no longer be allowed to appeal.

The meeting was also told that the Minister said there would be no more cases in the court to stop them being deported. “There are two options; either you go back voluntarily by International Organisation for Migration (IOM) or you will be forcibly deported by PNG immigration,” the official told the meeting, “PNG has decided not to hold anyone with a negative result.”

The Supreme Court however has extended an injunction preventing the removal of 26 asylum seekers until the next directions hearing of the Supreme Court on September 7. The Supreme Court will also consider a general application for further orders against the refoulement of any of the Manus detainees.

The meeting of asylum seekers was also told there would be no chance to see a lawyer. Yet, the constitutional right to have access to a lawyer is one of the

fundamental issues being considered by the Supreme Court. None of the detained asylum seekers have ever been informed of their constitutional rights or allowed to have access to a lawyer.

“The decision to remove appeal rights from asylum seekers is one more indication of the arbitrary circumstances of asylum seekers on Manus Island. Around 50 percent of those who received a negative decision at their first interview were being accepted on review,” said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

“PNG Immigration is trying to pre-empt the decisions of the Supreme Court and violate the rights of asylum seekers. It is a shabby and transparent attempt to deprive them of their constitutional rights and to intimidate more asylum seekers to accept being returned.” ✪

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# Return to crisis

Mike Whitney

“Had the economy been fundamentally sound in 1929 the effect of the great stock market crash might have been small. ... But business in 1929 was not sound; on the contrary it was exceedingly fragile. It was vulnerable to the kind of blow it received from Wall Street. Those who have emphasised this vulnerability are obviously on strong ground. Yet when a greenhouse succumbs to a hailstorm something more than a purely passive role is normally attributed to the storm. One must accord similar significance to the typhoon which blew out of lower Manhattan in October 1929.”

Extracts from *The Great Crash: 1929*,  
John Kenneth Galbraith,  
First published 1955, Chapter 10:  
“Cause and Consequence”, Page 204.

**The virus that spread to stock markets around the world and nearly destroyed the global financial system in 2008 has re-emerged with a vengeance sending global equities deep into the red and wiping out more than US\$5 trillion in market capitalisation in less than two weeks. This month (August), before the opening bell, major market index futures in the US plunged more than 400 points signalling another violent day of selling ahead.**

Worries that a slowdown in China will impact global growth pushed Asian and European markets deep into negative territory while US futures indicate that the Dow Jones is headed for its ninth triple-digit day in ten sessions. The deluge of bad news has battered confidence in the Fed and “sent global equities to their worst monthly slump in more than three years”. Millions of Mom and Pop investors have sold out already and are headed for the exits. Here’s a recap from Bloomberg:

“Mom and pop are running for the hills. Since July, American households – which account for almost all mutual fund investors – have pulled money both from mutual funds that invest in stocks and those that invest in bonds. It’s the first time since 2008 that both asset classes have recorded back-to-back monthly withdrawals, according to a report by Credit Suisse.

“Credit Suisse estimates US\$6.5 billion left equity funds in July as US\$8.4 billion was pulled from bond funds, citing weekly data from the Investment Company Institute as of August 19. Those outflows were followed up in the first three weeks of August, when investors withdrew US\$1.6 billion from stocks and US\$8.1 billion from bonds, said economist Dana Saporita.

“‘Anytime you see something that hasn’t happened since the last quarter of 2008, it’s worth noting’,” Saporita said in a phone interview. ... Withdrawals from equity funds are usually accompanied by an influx of money to bonds, and an exit from both at the same time suggests investors aren’t willing to take on risk in any form.”

“Fed Up Investors Yank Cash From Almost Everything Just Like 2008”,  
Bloomberg

## China not the cause

While the slowdown in China may be the spark for recent volatility, it certainly isn’t the cause. There’s a growing consensus that the real problem originated in 2008 when the Fed refused to write-down the debts from the insolvent banking system thus creating the conditions for another calamitous financial crisis sometime in the future. And while the Fed’s zero rates and titanic doses of liquidity might have helped to ease the symptoms by flooding the system with cash, the underlying issues remain the same. Thus, as the medication has worn off, the virus has reappeared stronger than ever revealing the ineffectiveness of the Fed’s remedies and the urgent need for alternate therapies.

Stocks are massively overpriced due to

the setting of interest rates below the rate of inflation which creates a subsidy for speculators. The policy has had the precise effect that the Fed intended; it has generated a humongous asset bubble in stocks and bonds transferring trillions of dollars to Wall Street banks and financial institutions. According to Yale economist Robert Shiller, the only time stocks have been this “high or higher were in 1929, 2000, and 2007 – all moments before market crashes.”

Robert Shiller: “... Bonds, and increasingly real estate also look overvalued. This is different from other over-valuation periods such as 1929, when the stock market was very overvalued, but the bond and housing markets for the most part, weren’t. It’s an interesting phenomenon.”

At the same time bankers and hedge fund managers have been raking in record profits on financially-engineered products that neither add to overall productivity or improve the broader economy, ordinary working people have seen their wages stagnate, incomes plunge and their prospects for a comfortable retirement vanish. According to investment guru John Hussman:

“US wages and salaries have plunged to the lowest share of GDP in history, while the civilian labour force participation rate has dropped to levels not seen since the 1970s. Yet consumption as a share of GDP is near a record high.”

## Workers’ wages

The problem is that the Fed must prevent the real economy from growing, otherwise, workers’ wages will improve, prices will rebound, inflation will rise, and the Fed will be forced to raise rates. And, of course, higher rates are what Wall Street fears most, in fact, the six-year bull market was built entirely on cheap, plentiful liquidity that has inflated historic bubbles in financial assets across-the-board. Even the slightest uptick in rates will bring the whole fake edifice crashing to earth, which is why any talk of “normalisation” sends stocks into a nosedive.

This is why policymakers will continue to slash budget deficits and implement other austerity measures to cut off the vital flow of fiscal support to the real economy. A thriving economy with low unemployment, rising incomes and wages, and positive inflation is the death knell for zero rate shenanigans, like stock buybacks, where a company repurchases its own shares to push prices higher to boost executive compensation and reward shareholders. Buybacks are a type of stock manipulation that used to be banned but are presently, all the rage. Interestingly, *Barron’s* financial investment news attributes the recent turnaround in the market to a surge in buybacks that staunched the bloodletting on Wall Street. Take a look:

“Like the Wizard of Oz, who was revealed as nothing more than a man behind a curtain working some cool special effects, stock buybacks might not be the great and powerful market force they were thought to be.

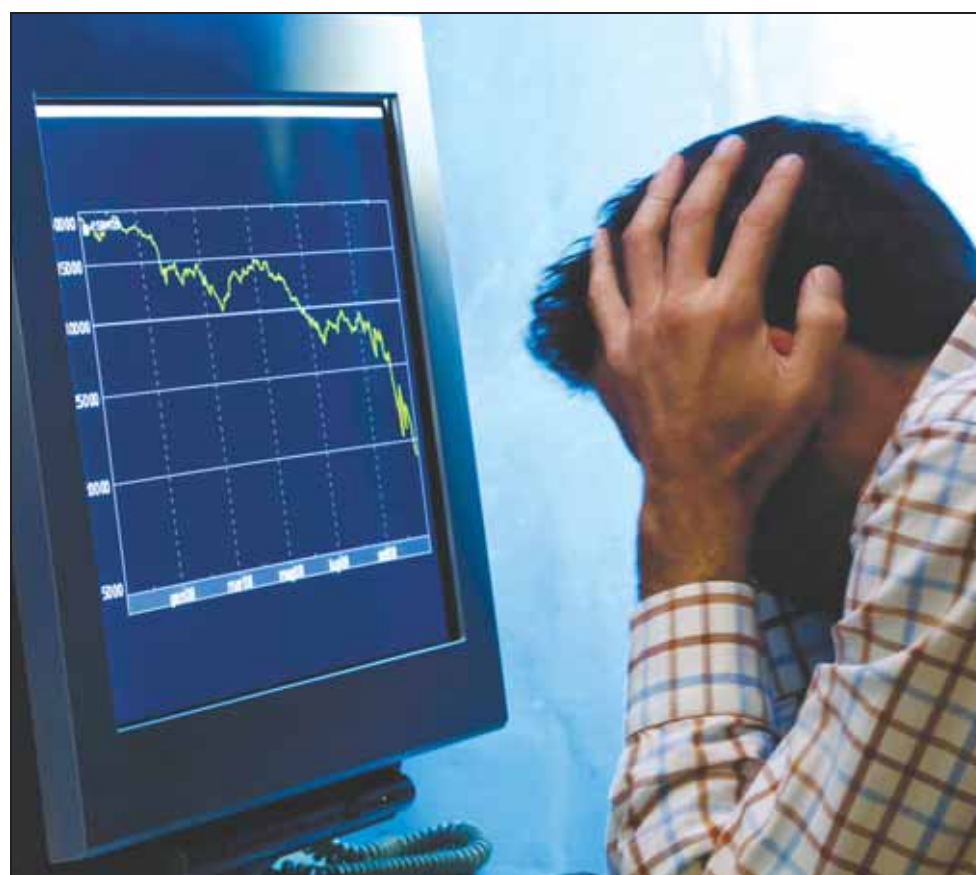
“What do I mean? Two weeks ago, the Standard & Poor’s 500 began to sell off as concerns about China, commodities, and emerging markets made headlines. But just as the popular benchmark looked like it was entering free fall, it suddenly reversed. Who was the mysterious saviour rescuing the markets? Articles published soon after the remarkable rebound were quick to point out that trading desks at Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley had seen the most corporate buying on record, suggesting it was share buybacks that kept the market afloat.”

“Pushback on Buybacks,” *Barron’s*

So, a surge in buybacks actually turned the markets around and stopped a selloff?

## Depression era levels

Indeed. This is how buybacks distort pricing, by countering normal supply-demand dynamics with infusions of capital that would normally be directed towards improving productivity. Weak regulations and cheap cash have changed the incentives structure so that



easiest way to enrich stakeholders is by piling on more debt, raking off hefty profits, and leaving the wreckage for someone else to clean up.

This is the nihilistic rationale that drives buybacks. Keep in mind, the Fed’s low rates were sold to the public as a way to stimulate investment in the real economy. As it happens, hiring for full-time jobs is still at depression era levels while business investment (Capex) has collapsed. The bulk of earnings are being devoted almost-exclusively to goosing stock prices to reward insatiable CEOs and their do-nothing shareholders. Check it out:

“The allocation of corporate profits to stock buybacks deserves much of the blame. Consider the 449 companies in the S&P 500 index that were publicly listed from 2003 through 2012. During that period those companies used 54% of their earnings – a total of US\$2.4 trillion – to buy back their own stock, almost all through purchases on the open market. Dividends absorbed an additional 37% of their earnings. That left very little for investments in productive capabilities or higher incomes for employees ...

“Why are such massive resources being devoted to stock repurchases? Corporate executives give several reasons, which I will discuss later. But none of them has close to the explanatory power of this simple truth: Stock-based instruments make up the majority of their pay, and in the short term buybacks drive up stock prices. In 2012 the 500 highest-paid executives named in proxy statements of US public companies received, on average, US\$30.3 million each; 42% of their compensation came from stock options and 41% from stock awards.

“By increasing the demand for a company’s shares, open-market buybacks automatically lift its stock price, even if only temporarily, and can enable the company to hit quarterly earnings per share (EPS) targets...”

“If the US is to achieve growth that distributes income equitably and provides stable employment, government and business leaders must take steps to bring both stock buybacks and executive pay under control. The nation’s economic health depends on it ...”

“Profits without Prosperity,” William Lazonick, *Harvard Business Review*

There’s no chance the Fed will raise rates in the current environment. Corporate earnings and revenues have been shrinking since the fourth quarter of 2014 which will make it harder for CEOs to justify adding to their debt-load

to repurchase more shares. As the appetite for buybacks wanes, stocks are bound to dip even lower putting more pressure on bank balance sheets and forcing corporations to divert more cash to debt servicing. The Fed’s threat to raise rates is merely a bluff to attract foreign capital to US markets and to prevent the dollar from falling off a cliff.

While it’s always possible that the markets could stabilise or stocks could rebound sharply, it’s more likely that we have reached a tipping point where the excesses are about to be wrung from the system through an excruciating downturn followed by an inevitable currency crisis. We expect the six-year-long fake recovery to end much like it did in 1929, where one demoralising sell-off followed the other, and where the crashing of stock prices fuelled the public’s distrust of the central bank, the government and all of the nation’s main institutions. Here’s a brief summary from Galbraith:

“The singular feature of the great crash of 1929 was that the worst continued to worsen. What looked one day like the end proved on the next day to have been only the beginning. Nothing could have been more ingeniously designed to maximise the suffering, and also to ensure that as few as possible escaped the common misfortune.

“The fortunate speculator who had funds to answer the first margin call presently got another and equally urgent one, and if he met that there would still be another. In the end all the money he had was extracted from him and lost. The man with the smart money, who was safely out of the market when the first crash came, naturally went back in to pick up bargains.

“The bargains then suffered a ruinous fall. Even the man who waited out all of October and all of November, who saw the volume of trading return to normal and saw Wall Street become as placid as a produce market, and who then bought common stocks would see their value drop to a third or a fourth of the purchase price in the next 24 months. The Coolidge bull market was a remarkable phenomenon. The ruthlessness of its liquidation was, in its own way, equally remarkable.”

Extracts from *The Great Crash: 1929*,  
John Kenneth Galbraith,  
First published 1955, Page 130

## Things Become More Serious

As of this writing, the Dow is down 317, the S&P 500, down 37, the Nasdaq, down 71. *Information Clearing House* ★

# Ukraine's neo-Nazi summer camp

Michel Chossudovsky

**Unknown to most Americans, the US government is channelling financial support, weapons and training to a neo-Nazi entity – which is part of The Ukraine National Guard – The Azov Battalion (Батальйон Азов). Canada and Britain have confirmed that they also are providing support to the National Guard.**

The Azov Battalion – which “officially” displays the Nazi SS emblem – is described by the Kiev regime as “a volunteer battalion of territorial defence”. It’s a National Guard battalion under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the equivalent of America’s Homeland Security.

Officially based in Berdyank on the Sea of Azov, the Azov battalion was formed by the regime to fight the opposition insurgency in the Donbass region. (Eastern and Southern Ukraine).

## Military training

The Azov battalion supported by its Western partners is not only involved in paramilitary operations in Eastern Ukraine. According to reports including the *Kyiv Post* (Ukraine mainstream media), it is running a Summer Camp military training project for young children as part of its broader training and indoctrination program.

According to *Russia Today* (RT):

“The camp was established to show the children that there are things in life besides school and mobile devices and to ‘give them our love’, Oleksii, a platoon commander in the Azov battalion and instructor at the camp, told Ukrainian ICTV channel. ‘One has to be strong; has to be courageous to defend the territorial integrity of our motherland he added.’”

RT report

Western media sources (quoted by the *Kyiv Post*) confirm that children as young as six years old are participating in the Azov Summer Camp located in the Vodytsya district outside Kyiv.

The *Kyiv Post* – which blames the Western media for its biased coverage – nonetheless acknowledges the diabolical nature of the military training project:

“... this particular camp is run by the Azov Battalion founded by lawmaker Andriy Biletsky, its former commander. Located in the wooded area of Kyiv’s Pushcha Vodytsya district, kids at this summer camp aren’t just playing soldiers – they’re getting actual military training from soldiers.”

Named Azovets, the camp has been the subject of negative coverage in the Russian media, pro-Russia websites and even UK tabloid *The Daily Mail*.

“Neo-Nazi summer camp: Ukrainian kids taught to shoot AKs by Azov battalion members,” reads RT’s headline for its story about the camp.

“Shocking pictures from inside neo-Nazi military camp reveal recruits as young as six are being taught how to fire weapons (even though there’s a ceasefire),” reads the headline

in the *Daily Mail*’s sensationalised and inaccurate article. (*Kyiv Post* August 29, 2015)

While the Kiev regime denies that Azov is a Neo-Nazi entity, the logos of both the Azov battalion as well as the Avovets Summer Camp (displayed on the Summer Camp T shirts) bear the symbol of the Nazi SS Wolfsangel with shadows of “the Nazi Black Sun” in the background.

## Recruitment of child soldiers

The Summer Camp training program constitutes the first stage of the recruitment of child soldiers in derogation of international law.

Invariably, the recruitment of child soldiers implies a training program which familiarises young children with the use of light automatic weapons.

The military trainers are part of the Azov paramilitary dispatched to the Summer Camp.

The *Kyiv Post* article describes in detail the nature of the “Neo-Nazi Summer Camp”. What the reports confirm is that an entity under the jurisdiction of Ukraine’s National Guard (financed by the Ukraine Ministry of Internal Affairs) is training and indoctrinating small children in the art of warfare:

“The Azovets summer camp accepts children of Azov Battalion members, as well as kids from Kyiv’s nearby Obolon district and further afield. It opened on June 22, runs weeklong programs of activities for groups of 30 to 40 kids. Officially, it is for children aged from nine to 18, but there are kids as young as seven there. A few of the kids had already attended it for several weeks in a row.

“What makes the camp most controversial is that it’s run by Azov fighters, some of whom have been labelled as far-right supporters and neo-Nazis. Critics say the battalion’s symbol is an inverted Wolfsangel that has oblique but uncomfortable associations with Nazism.

“In previous interviews with Ukrainian media, Biletsky says the symbolism is misunderstood. The letters ‘N’ and ‘I’ make up Azov’s insignia, which he says stand for ‘national idea’.”

Biletsky founded a neo-Nazi group in Ukraine called the Social-National Assembly, and there certainly are neo-Nazis among the battalion’s ranks, some sporting Nazi tattoos. Some media have reported that up to 20 percent of Azov’s fighters are neo-Nazis, though the battalion’s press officers are always at pains to emphasise that Azov, as a military formation, does not share the ideology of its founder Biletsky, or indeed have any ideology other than fervent patriotism.

When the *Kyiv Post* visited the Azovets camp on August 19 the kids were busy with a range of activities, including stripping down and assembling AK-47 assault rifles, target practice (with air guns), tackling assault courses, and practicing combat poses and patrolling. They also take part in various sports and games, do rappelling and climbing, and practice other more traditional scouting and woodcraft skills like tying knots.

“I’ve been here only for three days, but I’ve realised that it’s not a camp where you just play



Recruits take part in military exercises at the shooting range of the Ukrainian National Guard near the village of Novy-Petrivtsi not far from Kiev on May 8. (Photo: Sergei Supinsky)

games. We’re getting military training here,” one of the kids at the camp told the *Kyiv Post*.

“Out in the forest next to the camp, a group of kids was getting some weapons safety advice from an Azov trainer.

“‘Do you know what would happen if you kept your fingers on the trigger? If it were a real gun, you could kill your comrades. So, don’t do it!’” the trainer barks.

“‘Yes sir!’ the kids answer.

“The children then practice medically evacuating wounded soldiers from the battlefield. The militaristic atmosphere at the camp, including strict discipline, has plainly influenced some of the children.

“‘I got my hair cut really short yesterday’, says one boy. ‘Just because I want it. I look more like a soldier now.’”

Two older kids, who, like many of the children at the camp, have taken noms de guerre (Medic and Physicist) in imitation of Ukraine’s real soldiers, said they now wanted to join the Azov Battalion.

“I want to defend my homeland. There are comrades who support my idea. I think that if it’s necessary, I will fight,” 17-year old Physicist told the *Kyiv Post*.

The children at the camp are organised into four groups, depending on their age, with each group overseen by a trainer and caregiver. The camp’s day starts early, at seven am sharp, and ends at eleven pm. The children sleep in tents.

Access to Azov’s own website and supporting websites was closed off to the public last September when the battalion was integrated into the National Guard of Ukraine, but the camp has a page on the Russian social network V Kontakte (<https://vk.com/tabir.azovec>) where it is promoted, and where people can apply to become volunteers, or contact the camp to send their children there.

“The Mission of the Camp: To form the Ukrainian of a new era – a patriot, who is ready to actively participate in building and defending Ukraine,” the page’s description reads.

The military-patriotic songs that the children sing every day as a part of the camp’s program do seem to be one of the more popular activities for the kids. Late at night, sitting around a blazing campfire, they belt out their favourites – patriotic songs dating back to Ukraine’s previous independence movements in the early- to mid-20th century.

The *Kyiv Post* listened to the words of one of the songs. Its lyrics were about Ukrainian soldiers defeating their enemies.

Today that enemy is Russia. A boy who sits on a log softly whispers: “I want that this war will end and we will kill all the Russians.” (*Kyiv Post*, August 29, 2015)

## US military aid

This diabolical endeavour, which incites hate by innocent children against ethnic Russians as well as opponents of the Kiev regime is broadly supported by US military aid channelled to the Ukraine National Guard via the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The MIA coordinates the “anti-terrorism operation” (ATO) in Donbass.

While the US Congress has adopted amendments to its “Department of Defence Appropriations Act of 2015” to block the training of the Azov battalion’s Neo-Nazis, in practice the money trickles down.

Moreover, in addition to military aid channelled under the jurisdiction of the Pentagon, the California National Guard has established a partnership with the Ukraine National Guard, which includes the Azov Battalion:

“The California – Ukraine State Partnership Program (SPP) Mission [under the auspices of the California National Guard] is to promote democracy, free market economies and military reform, by establishing long-term institutional affiliations ... The California-Ukraine partnership directly supports both the goals of the US Ambassador to Ukraine and Commander, US European Command. ...”

Office of Defence Cooperation (ODC),  
Chief: LTC Tracey D Rueschhoff

These are the people who are training Ukrainian kids to handle AK 47s at the Neo-Nazi Summer Camp. Its all for a good cause: “the flowering of democracy” in the words the *New York Times*.

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**Invariably, the recruitment of child soldiers implies a training program which familiarises young children with the use of light automatic weapons.**

# Europe's new barbarians

Conn Hallinan

**On one level, the recent financial agreement between the European Union (EU) and Greece makes no sense: not a single major economist thinks the US\$96 billion loan will allow Athens to repay its debts, or to get the economy moving anywhere but downwards. It is what former Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis called a "suicide" pact, with a strong emphasis on humiliating the left-wing Syriza government.**

Why construct a pact that everyone knows will fail?

On the left, the interpretation is that the agreement is a conscious act of vengeance by the "Troika" – the European Central Bank, the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund – to punish Greece for daring to challenge the austerity program that has devastated the economy and impoverished its people. The evidence for this explanation is certainly persuasive. The more the Greeks tried to negotiate a compromise with the EU, the worse the deal got. The final agreement was the most punitive of all. The message was clear: rattle the gates of Heaven at your own peril.

## A warning to others

It was certainly a grim warning to other countries with strong anti-austerity movements, in particular Portugal, Spain and Ireland.

But austerity as an economic strategy is about more than just throwing a scare into countries that, exhausted by years of cutbacks and high unemployment, are thinking of changing course. It is also about laying the groundwork for the triumph of multinational corporate capitalism and undermining the social contract between labour and capital that has characterised much of Europe for the past two generations.

It is a new kind of barbarism, one that sacks countries with fine print.

Take Greece's pharmacy law that the Troika has targeted for elimination in the name of "reform". Current rules require that drug stores be owned by a pharmacist, who can't own more than one establishment, that over the counter drugs can only be sold in drug stores, and that the price of medicines be capped. Similar laws exist in Spain, Germany,

Portugal, France, Cyprus, Austria and Bulgaria, and were successfully defended before the European Court of Justice in 2009.

For obvious reasons multinational pharmacy corporations like CVS, Walgreens, and Rite Aid, plus retail goliaths like Wal-Mart, don't like these laws, because they restrict the ability of these giant firms to dominate the market.

## North Dakota's similar law

But the pharmacy law is hardly Greeks being "quaint" and old-fashioned. The US state of North Dakota has a similar law, one that Wal-Mart and Walgreens have been trying to overturn since 2011. Twice thwarted by the state's legislature, the two retail giants recruited an out-of-state signature gathering firm and poured US\$3 million into an initiative to repeal it. North Dakotans voted to keep their pharmacy law 59 percent to 41 percent.

The reason is straightforward: "North Dakotans have pharmacy care that outperforms care in other states on every key measure, from cost to access," says author David Morris. Drug prices are cheaper in North Dakota than in most other states, rural areas are better served, and there is more competition.

## Attacking fresh milk

The Troika is also demanding that Greece ditch its fresh milk law, which favours local dairy producers over industrial-size firms in the Netherlands and Scandinavia. The EU claims that, while quality may be affected, prices will go down. But, as Nobel Laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz found, "savings" in efficiency are not always passed on to consumers.

In general, smaller firms hire more workers and provide more full-time jobs than big corporations. Large operations like Wal-Mart are more efficient, but the company's workforce is mostly part-time and paid wages so low that workers are forced to use government support services. In essence, taxpayers subsidise corporations like Wal-Mart.

## Labour "reform"

A key demand of the Troika is "reform" of the labour market to



**"We're in an era in which the winners become ever stronger and weakest move even further behind."**

make it easier for employers to dismiss workers, establish "two-tier" wage scales – new hires are paid less than long time employees – and to end industry-wide collective bargaining. The latter means that unions – already weakened by layoffs – will have to bargain unit by unit, an expensive, exhausting and time consuming undertaking.

The results of such "reforms" are changing the labour market in places like Spain, France, and Italy.

## More temp jobs, more poverty

After years of rising poverty rates, the Spanish economy has finally begun to grow, but the growth is largely a consequence of falling energy prices, and the jobs being created are mostly part-time or temporary, and at considerably lower wages than pre-2007. As Daniel Alastuey, the secretary-general of Aragon's UGT, one of Spain's largest unions, told the *New York Times*, "A new figure has emerged in Spain: the employed person who is below the poverty threshold."

According to the *Financial Times*, France has seen a similar development. In 2000, some 25 percent of all labour contracts were for permanent jobs. That has fallen to less than 16 percent, and out of 20 million yearly labour contracts, two-thirds are for less than a month. Employers are dismissing workers, then re-hiring them under a temporary contract.

In 1995, temporary workers made up 7.2 percent of the jobs in Italy. Today, according to the *Financial Times*, that figure is 13.2 percent, and 52.5 percent for Italians aged 15 to 24. It is extremely difficult to organise temporary workers, and their growing presence in the workforce has eroded the power of trade unions to fight for better wages, working conditions and benefits.

## Economic division of Europe

In spite of promises that tight money and austerity would re-start economies devastated by the

2007-2008 financial crisis, growth is pretty much dead in the water continent-wide. And economies that have shown growth have yet to approach their pre-meltdown levels. Even the more prosperous northern parts of the continent are sluggish. Finland and the Netherlands are in a recession.

There is also considerable regional unevenness in economic development. Italy's output contracted 0.4% in 2014, but the country's south fell by 1.3%. Income for southern residents is also plummeting. Some 60% of southern Italians live on less than US\$13,400 a year, as compared to 28.5% of the north. "We're in an era in which the winners become ever stronger and weakest move even further behind," Italian economist Matteo Caroli told the *Financial Times*.

That economic division of the house is also characteristic of Spain. While the national jobless rate is an horrendous 23.7%, the country's most populous province in the south, Andalusia, sports an unemployment rate of 41%. Only Spanish youth are worse off. Their jobless rate is over 50%.

Italy and Spain are microcosms for the rest of Europe. The EU's south – Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, and Bulgaria – are characterised by high unemployment, deeply stressed economies, and falling standards of living. While the big economies of the north, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany, are hardly booming – the EU growth rate over all is a modest 1.6 percent – they are in better shape than their southern neighbours.

Geographically, Ireland is in the north, but with high unemployment and widespread poverty brought on by the austerity policies of the EU, it is in the same boat as the south. Indeed, Greek Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos told the annual conference of Ireland's left-wing, anti-austerity party Sinn Fein that Greece considered the Irish "honorary southerners."

Austerity has become a Trojan horse for multinational corporations, and a strategy for weakening

trade unions and eroding democracy. But it is not popular, and governments that have adopted it have many times found themselves driven out of power or nervously watching their polls numbers fall. Spain's right-wing Populist Party is on the ropes, Sinn Fein is the second largest party in Ireland, Portugal's right-wing government is running scared, and polls indicate that the French electorate supports the Greeks in their resistance to austerity.

## An unelected dictatorship

The Troika is an unelected body, and yet it has the power to command economies. National parliaments are being reduced to rubber stamps, endorsing economic and social programs over which they have little control. If the Troika successfully removes peoples' right to choose their own economic policies, then it will have cemented the last bricks into the fortress that multinational capital is constructing on the continent.

In 415 BC, the Athenians told the residents of Milos that they had no choice but to ally themselves with Athens in the Peloponnesian War. "The powerful do whatever their power allows and the weak simply give in and accept it," Thucydides says the Athenians told the island's residents. Milos refused and was utterly destroyed. The ancient Greeks could out-barbarian the barbarians any day.

But it is not the 5th century BC, and while the Troika has enormous power, it is finding it increasingly difficult to rule over 500 million people, a growing number of whom want a say in their lives. Between now and next April, four countries, all suffering under the painful stewardship of the Troika, will hold national elections: Portugal, Greece, Spain and Ireland. The outcomes of those campaigns will go a long way toward determining whether democracy or autocracy is the future of the continent.

People's World ☘

Sydney

## Update on Guatemala

6pm-8pm Saturday September 12

Peter Symon House – 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills

The situation in Guatemala is desperate. President Otto Perez Molina has been forced out of office and people are demanding the suspension of the national elections, a provisional government and a National Constitutional Assembly to draft a new constitution. On August 27 business and government offices closed, thousands of protesters took to the streets. Guatemala is in the midst of a corruption scandal that reaches the highest levels of government. The attorney general's office urged the Guatemalan President to resign "to prevent unacceptability that could destabilise the nation." Even the National Council of Bishops has issued a statement saying that President Molina should resign "to avoid greater social unrest that could have unpredictable consequences." The US embassy and the business sector want a "constitutional outcome" leaving the status quo.

Hear Ovidio Orellana the URNG (Unity-Wide Left Movement) representative in Australia

Entertainment, light refreshments – Drinks available

A lucky draw for a prize from Guatemala

Entry by donation – All proceeds to URNG election campaign

Organised by the Sydney District Committee of the CPA and URNG-MAIZ Australia





# Zero hours, zero powers

David Cameron's shameless pretence of leading "the real party of working people" is exploded by the runaway rise of zero-hours employment.

Almost three-quarters of a million people are now languishing on these abusive contracts, not knowing from week to week how many hours they will get or what their income will be – a rise of a fifth in a single year.

And those are just the Office for National Statistics figures.

As Labour leadership frontrunner Jeremy Corbyn notes, these stats are just "the tip of the iceberg," both because zero-hours contracts are not the only form of underemployment stalking the workforce and because the ONS survey may actually be understating the problem.

Forget the Business Department's guff about this surge in super-exploitation having a "part to play in a modern, flexible market" and providing a "pathway to employment."

If zero-hours was a pathway to secure, regular jobs we would not see the number of such contracts spiralling out of control. But that is exactly what is happening.

Forty percent of workers trapped on zero-hours contracts say they would prefer to work longer. This is not a "flexible" situation for them. Instead, it risks becoming the new normal, as Jon Ingham of recruitment website Glassdoor observes.

"With 255,000 of these contracts held by 16 to 25-year-olds, it doesn't feel like the best start in their careers," he says. "But for many it's

all they know so they just get swept along and accept this 'pay as you go' employment as the norm."

This is a "norm" which sees workers earn 60 percent less each week than people with permanent jobs. It means two in five zero-hours workers get so little work they do not qualify for essential lifelines such as statutory sick pay.

The Tories' "modern" labour market is one where you don't know whether you can feed your family or pay the bills in the coming week, you can't afford to get ill and you can't plan ahead financially.

In short, a return to the exploitation, poverty and insecurity that the labour movement has spent the last century battling to defeat, whether through winning the weekend and the eight-hour day (neither of which exist for too many of us nowadays) or through building up the social security safety net that was intended to banish the spectre of starvation forever.

Working people cannot just lie down and accept the way the rules of the game are being rewritten by the rich.

It is true that the Conservative Party's refusal to act on zero-hours is encouraging more and more employers to plump for the option that gives them maximum freedom to pick up and drop workers on a whim.

It's also true that Tory cuts share responsibility for the growing crisis – since cash-strapped local authorities have a pressing incentive to hire the cheapest and least responsible contractors.



And sadly it is also the case that zero-hours workers can be the hardest to organise – being able to cut an employee's hours at a whim is a forbidding weapon in the hands of bosses who wish to intimidate or victimise staff who join a union or try to stick up for themselves and their colleagues.

But organise them we must.

That's why it was great to hear from GMB general secretary Paul Kenny about the workers who are fighting back, campaigning for regular hours at workplaces as diverse as a warehouse for online clothing retailer Asos, the kitchens at an upmarket hotel and a Marks and Spencer storage depot.

We can't wait on MPs to beat these contracts. We have to do it ourselves.

*Morning Star* ✪

***A return to the exploitation, poverty and insecurity that the labour movement has spent the last century battling to defeat.***

## The false Israeli facade

During the post-war decades, apartheid South Africa set great store by its relations with sports bodies and fans around the world. Its rugby and cricket players were intended to be ambassadors for friendship between nations and peoples.

Indeed, for 50 years apartheid's supporters here in Britain insisted that such "constructive engagement" with South Africa on the playing fields and in company boardrooms would encourage our white cousins to treat the black majority a little more fairly.

In the end, apartheid was brought down by a combination of mass and armed struggle inside South Africa, backed by the socialist countries and by diplomatic, trade, cultural and sports sanctions imposed from outside, often as the result of popular campaigning.

For almost 70 years, much of the world has allowed successive Israeli governments to occupy territories in defiance of international law, including not only Palestinian land but chunks of Egypt, Lebanon and Syria as well.

Today, despite a pile of UN resolutions, the Israeli state still denies the national, democratic and basic human rights of the Palestinian people.

The US and Britain still refuse to impose sanctions on the spurious grounds that a "peace process" still exists, presumably to resume as soon as Israel decides who should represent the Palestinian people.

At the same time, Israeli governments continue to blockade Gaza, occupy the West Bank and proclaim that occupied East Jerusalem will never become the capital of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

The blatantly racist "right of return" law in Israel allows anyone judged to be of Jewish descent anywhere in the world to come and settle there, while millions of Palestinians are denied the right to come home to the land of their families for generations.

Within Israel, too, native Palestinian Arabs are treated as second or third-class citizens despite having many equal rights in law. Almost invariably, their residential and farming areas suffer inferior public provision when it comes to economic investment and social facilities of every kind.

In fact, the law provides the framework within which the Israeli authorities persecute human rights campaigners, academics, political activists, publishers and journalists who dare challenge the Israeli

apartheid system or advocate sanctions against the Israeli state.

Not surprisingly, then, many thousands of Palestinians continue to languish in prison as a result of their political activities. Meanwhile, the Israeli drive to present a civilised, even friendly, face to the outside world continues.

It even defies the laws of geography, as Israeli representatives participate in the Eurovision Song Contest and the Union of European Football Associations (Uefa) competitions.

This makes it all the more important to protest in Cardiff this Sunday, when Wales play Israel in a Euro 2016 qualifier.

No doubt many fans are eager to cheer on the home side, buoyed by the Welsh team's elevation above England to ninth place in the world football rankings.

Some have indicated they will be joining the march before going to the match.

But one of the invited speakers will not be there.

Iyad Burnat had two ribs broken by Israeli soldiers a week ago, when leading a peaceful march against state theft of Palestinian land.

*Morning Star* ✪



## Region Briefs

Pakistan condemned the US's recent drone attack in the country's North Waziristan tribal area killing six people. The Pakistani Foreign Ministry said that the attack undermined its territorial sovereignty, created fear among people and broke international laws. It urged the US to stop similar attacks in future. This was the second attack in August, another seven people had been killed in the first one by two missiles launched from a US drone.

More than 120,000 people protested in front of the Japanese parliament building demanding the country's Prime Minister, Abe Shinzo abolish controversial security bills. According to organisers of the protest, this was the largest rally in Tokyo for many years, participated in by people and of all political persuasions. A large number of similar protests were held across the country. One opposition leader, Katsuya Okada, said that people were angered about the bills because they violated Japan's pacifist constitution. The Communist Party Chair, Kazuo Shii, said that Abe avoided direct answers to questions related to the bills, and Shii vowed to abolish them in the upper house. The lower house officially passed the bills last month, and they are currently under debate in the upper house.

Vietnam's National Salary Council's third meeting recently approved a 12.4 percent regional minimum monthly wage pay raise in 2016. The average pay rise would be over AU\$20, and the exact number would be different in accordance with different living standards and development levels in four regions. Chairman of the council and Deputy Minister of Labour, Pham Minh Huan, said that 92.4 percent of participants in the meeting agreed to wage increases. The Vietnam General Confederation of Labour approved a proposal to subsidise 10 percent of the increase, in order to help both workers and employers.

Massive parades were held in Vietnam and China on September 2-3, celebrating Vietnam's 70th National Day and China's 70th anniversary of the victory of resisting Japanese aggression in World War 2. There were 30,000 people, 800 reporters and 145 press agencies involved Vietnam's parade; 12,000 troops with 1,000 foreign troops from 17 countries participated in the Chinese parade, marking the victory that cost 35 million Chinese lives. The Chinese President in a speech at the parade said, "China will never seek hegemony or expansion. It will never inflict its past suffering on any other nation".

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### On working class consciousness

**It is difficult to reconcile that former Labor Party Minister Martin Ferguson is representative of what the Labor Party stands for. Mr Ferguson has for some time taken on the role of a pariah when he speaks of his alleged concerns for the Labor Party.**

His opinions lack reliability and credibility in much the same way as if someone from the ALP suggests that pariahs such as Clive Palmer and former Liberal powerbroker senator

Noel Crichton-Browne are in some way qualified to comment on the current values of the Liberal Party.

While there are problems within the ALP they won't be solved by listening to Labor figures who are as bereft of working class consciousness as is Martin Ferguson who has more in common with his business mates than ALP stalwarts such as Alannah McTiernan and Sue Lines who regularly attend left wing political rallies in Perth - including the one held earlier outside our state parliament in support of local jobs and maintaining a skilled local workforce.

It is hard to see what values Martin Ferguson stands for except his own self interest and weakening the organisation that has spurned him for good reason - notwithstanding his ALP lineage.

The ALP is after all supposed to be the political arm of the organised working class. While the ALP does have some work to do to ensure that its candidates for parliamentary office are chosen through a more

transparent and merit based process it also has some work ahead of it to assure ordinary working class Australians that it is acting in their interests.

Richard Titelius  
WA

### Questions need answers

**These are the questions I sent to the NSW Legislative Council's Budget Estimates Committee.**

1. Why has the funding for domestic violence services being removed from Community run organisations to religious and other charity organisations?
2. Why have specialist community run services like domestic violence services and in particular for Indigenous women and children been placed with general homeless services?
3. Why has there been no requirement made that refuges

Sydney

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catering for domestic violence victims especially, must provide a 24/7 service?

4. Why was the tendering process not transparent as to what it was seeking from tenderers and the confidentiality process used to obscure whether the tender process was undertaken in a fair and equitable manner?
5. Why were the workers silenced when the tendering process was going on?

6. Why did not the NSW government consult with community services managers, boards and workers, about the outcomes the government was seeking with its intended changes and to gain a better understanding of the nature of services being provided through community-based specialist refuge services?

**A former refuge worker**

## Culture & Life

by Rob & Max Gowland

## Gangster arrogance

**The arrogance of the right-wing gang of thugs that make up Australia's federal government at present is really appalling. Isn't it? As *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported last month, "Environment groups will be forbidden from challenging large developments in court as the Abbott government responds to the controversial decision that stopped Australia's largest coal project - Adani's Carmichael coal mine - in its tracks."**

"Attorney-General George Brandis will move to repeal a section of Australia's environment laws that allows conservationists to challenge environment approvals for mining projects and other large developments."

Our frankly evil Attorney General is calling it a "crackdown on vigilante green groups". Bullshit, Mr Brandis. The law came down against your coal-mine, so you decided to abolish the law! Mr Brandis has proposed simply deleting the clause which allows "anyone affected" to mount their own legal challenge to a development project.

Mr Brandis says the present law is an open invitation to "vigilantes" to sabotage Australia. He wants the opening closed. How? He declares we should ban "anyone who has acted for the protection, conservation or research of our environment within the last two years" from being allowed to challenge a project in court. (love the way he throws "research" into

the list of sins! He's never going to forgive those damned scientists for being aware of that endangered snake).

Now the only people who can mount a challenge are "affected landholders". You have to own a piece of it, or you have no right to challenge. Well, that narrows the field just a bit, doesn't it! The coal industry must be busting open the champagne about now. They'll still have to deal with landholding neighbours, concerned about projects doing damage to their farms, vineyards, drinking water, etcetera - but they'll never again have to deal with the educated general public, the working scientist or environmental officer, or even with the political will of the general public. 'Cause they've all just been blackballed. Openly banned from the right to challenge a thing they know is wrong.

And who stripped our right of involvement from us? Our own attorney general did this to us. If this man were my attorney, I'd have him sacked. I'd also have him investigated on suspicion of colluding with that notorious local hoodlum, "Big Coal".

Also in August, the Prime Minister appeared on ABC TV one morning, flanked by the Immigration Minister and the head of the Australian Crime Commission. He announced that \$18 million, entirely derived from the proceeds of crime, would be used to fund three new "border protection" programs. He went on

to say: "Australian taxpayers should be pleased that the proceeds of crime will now be used to fight crime, unlike under the previous government, in which ..."

Here the screen went black for several seconds, and the news director could be heard saying "Where are we going? What do we do?" More black screen, then back to the ABC studio for an apology about the loss of the feed. Did anybody see the PM's statement covered on any other channel? I want to know the rest of that sentence! How exactly was he going to criticise the previous government for not funding themselves with the proceeds of crime?

Border protection of a sea-locked nation is one of the most expensive, least productive programs this country has ever had. Tony's keen for us to assume that his program means the taxpayer won't have to pay for all of it. Of course, if the Immigration Department depends upon the seizure of criminal assets to fund its new programs, then the agency gains a need for criminal activity to continue, not stop.

It must continue and it must be substantial enough to withstand a certain level of its product being seized by the agency without the criminal network being seriously harmed by those losses. Wouldn't want to kill the cow, would we? Not now we've joined the ranks of those who actually suckle from its teat.

This isn't crime-fighting. It's insurance for the cross-border criminal trade. A certain

amount of harassment from the authorities, a certain number of unwanted patsies sacrificed annually by their syndicates, everybody looks good and everybody gets a cut. It's the same deal the Americans have with the Mexican syndicates. Hence the growing number of ex-FBI people appearing on TV to complain that they quit the agency when they found out it was no longer fighting the cross-border criminal trade, simply running it.

My mind flashed back to Tony's policy of paying people smugglers to turn their boats around, a tier of income the smugglers have never previously received.

While pondering this, I switched over to another channel, and discovered that the supposedly impartial judge who's running the "anti-corruption" enquiry into the Australian union movement had just been exposed as a Liberal party booster, forced by this revelation to cancel his plans to speak at a party fundraiser.

Well, surprise, surprise.

Of course, that didn't stop him, after due and serious consideration (and probably consultation with the leader of his favourite party, Tony Abbott) from disregarding demands that he step down in view of his obvious bias.

Did I say something earlier about this mob's arrogance? Al Capone had a similar attitude. (And similar politics.) ☘



Our frankly evil Attorney General is calling it a "crackdown on vigilante green groups". Bullshit, Mr Brandis.



Rob Gowland  
previews  
ABC & SBS  
Public Television

Sunday September 13 –  
Saturday September 19

When I was on the editorial board of the *Australian Marxist Review*, we had an article submitted claiming that vaccinating children against measles caused autism. It was nonsense, of course, but nonsense that has surprising traction. Suspicion of science is not restricted to the likes of Tony Abbott. The tragedy is that, thanks to the fear that such ignorance encourages, nervous parents are skipping their children's shots.

As a consequence, diseases that were largely eradicated in developed countries like the USA and Australia a generation ago – whooping cough, measles, mumps – are returning, sometimes with fatal results.

SBS is revisiting the subject with *Vaccines: Calling The Shots* (SBS Monday September 14 at 7.30pm) a newly re-edited version of the award-winning documentary *Jabbed: Love, Fear And Vaccines* that tracks epidemics around the world, explores the science behind vaccinations, and sheds light on the risks of opting out.

There are six million Roma Gypsies in Europe, the continent's largest ethnic minority and one of the most persecuted. It is estimated that 250,000 Roma now live in Britain. As a frequently persecuted people, they have maintained their traditions and customs with fierce determination, as the only way to preserve their identity. Largely isolated from the mainstream of modern social life, their cherished traditions are often anachronistic hangovers from earlier times and cultures, like arranged marriages and child marriages.

In the documentary *The Gypsy Matchmaker* (ABC2 Wednesday September 16 at 9.30pm), a Gypsy father living in Britain goes searching for a suitable bride for his 14 year-old son. When the lad sensibly asks his father why he has to get married at such a young age, his father – in all seriousness – tells him that Gypsies mature much earlier than other people. "Don't worry", he says, "I will find you a suitable girl."

The father is totally convinced that what his father did is what he should do, and will brook no argument. Such wilful ignorance is hard to watch. The son's questioning attitude, however, suggest that the next generation might have absorbed enough of modern Western culture – getting their information from films and television as well as Roma oral traditions and of course non-Gypsies their own age – to perhaps see a significant change in the future.

For the present, the Roma's tradition of arranged child marriages alone puts them at odds with the police and child protection services. Not a good thing in a country where political pressure to curb immigration is at an all-time high.

I used to work with a young woman who, in her spare time, was the devoted secretary of the Australian chapter of the Friends of Katharine Grayson. She maintained that it was not a fan club, being concerned with *all* movie musicals. But when her idol came to Australia, she took time off work to squire her around and then accepted the offer of a job with Ms Grayson in Hollywood, handling all the former star's dealings with fans. Her dream job, essentially.

The value of fans to the business of movies was recognised very early in the development of the cinema industry, before, in fact, film-goers were even aware of the names of the actors in the films they saw. It didn't take long, however, before stars were born and personal appearances by movie stars could bring thousands of fans to watch and scream.

In *Tom Felton Meets the Superfans* (ABC2 Wednesday September 16 at 8.30pm), Tom Felton, who played the villainous Draco Malfoy in the hugely successful Harry Potter films, explores the phenomenon of fans who take their passion to apparent extremes. He calls these people "superfans", and he has one of his very own, a middle aged woman who over the past seven years has followed him to almost every event he attends. He is understandably unsure whether to regard her as a fan or a stalker.

The film is his directorial debut, and he makes a good fist of it, although it is noticeable that the interviews that work best are those with his *Harry Potter* co-stars Daniel Radcliffe and Rupert Grint and the author of the books, JK Rowling. When he tries to interview Captain Kirk, William Shatner, on the other hand, his mind goes blank and he can't think of any thing to ask.

He visits the British manifestation of the global phenomenon known as Comic Con and dresses up as The Joker to "blend in". There



Tom Felton (on the right) with a fan – *Tom Felton Meets the Superfans* (ABC2 Wednesday September 16 at 8.30pm).

are thousands of fans there, many dressed as characters from movies as well as comics. Once upon a time, people went to fancy-dress events as famous characters from history or Greek mythology. A cynic would say there is more marketing money to be made from pop culture icons than history or the classics, or perhaps it's just a reflection of our declining standards of cultural education.

Talking of cynicism, the fifth episode of the current season of *Utopia* (ABC Wednesday September 16 at 9pm) has it in spades. Entitled *Terminal Problems*, it sees Rob Sitch, as the harassed head of the Nation Building Authority, trying to get the new airport at Badgery's Creek past a PM frightened by a possible electoral backlash in Western Sydney.

As usual, Kitty Flanagan's character, Rhonda, epitomises the publicist who is so rapt in the spin that she is utterly unable to see the reality. She puts my teeth on edge.

The British empire once stretched so far around the world its leaders could boast that it was the empire "on which the sun never sets". That, of course, was some time ago, before most of her colonies, after some struggle, gained their independence. Nevertheless, despite the success of the national liberation movement, which Britain opposed with considerable violence, today there are no less than 14 parts of the world that are still officially UK Overseas Territories.

In *Britain's Secret Treasure Islands* (SBS Saturday September 19 at 7.30pm) explorer Stewart McPherson travels 70,000 kilometres by RAF planes, ice breakers and freight vessels to visit all 14. This week's episode explores the marine life of these colonial outposts. ☼

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Editorial Office  
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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

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Sydney

# POLITICS IN THE PUB

September 10

## ABORIGINAL HEALTH IN NSW: CLOSING THE GAP?

Peter Shine, Director Aboriginal Health, North Sydney Local Health District;

Brad Delaney, Chairperson, Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney;

September 17

## AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE END OF CIVIL LIBERTIES: THE ABBOTT COALITION AGENDA

Peter Manning, Adjunct Professor UTS;

Davis Shoebridge, Greens Upper House MP NSW State Parliament;

September 24

## BIG BROTHER, BLOOD MONEY & THE DEEP STATE

Nozomi Hayase, Dr, writer on the global corporate state at Common Dreams & Open Democracy, former writer at Wikileaks Central;

Bernard Keane, Political editor of Crikey, co-author of *A Short History of Stupid*, author *War on the Internet and Surveillance*;

October 1

## BREAKING OUT OF AUSTRALIA'S NEO-LIBERAL STRAITJACKET: THE PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVE PROJECT

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Tom Skladzien, Dr, Research Officer AMWU;

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# Who is responsible for the refugee crisis in Europe

Bill Van Auken

**The gut-wrenching images of a three-year-old Syrian boy washed up on a Turkish beach, lying face-down in the sand, his lifeless body then cradled by a rescue worker, have brought home to people all over the world the desperate crisis that is unfolding on Europe's borders.**

The family of the toddler, Alan Kurdi, had come from Kobani, fleeing along with hundreds of thousands of others. A protracted siege by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and an intense US bombing campaign has left the northern Syrian city in ruins, its houses as well as water, electrical, sanitation and medical infrastructure destroyed. The boy was one of 12 who drowned in an attempt to reach Greece, including his mother and five-year-old brother. His distraught father, the family's sole survivor, said he would return to Syria with their bodies, telling relatives that he hoped only to die and be buried alongside them.

There is plenty of blame to go around for these deaths, which are representative of many thousands more who have lost their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean or suffocated after being stuffed like sardines into overheated vans.

Canada's Conservative Party government ignored a request made in June by the boy's aunt, who lives in British Columbia, to grant Alan's family asylum.

The countries of the European Union have treated the surge in refugees as a matter of repression and deterrence, throwing up new fences, setting up concentration camps and deploying riot police in an effort to create a Fortress Europe that keeps desperate families like Alan's at bay and condemns thousands upon thousands to death.

But what of the US? American politicians and the US media are deliberately silent on Washington's central role in creating this unfolding tragedy on Europe's borders.

The *Washington Post*, for example, published an editorial earlier this week stating that Europe "can't be expected to solve on its own a problem that is originating in Afghanistan, Sudan, Libya and – above all – Syria." The *New York Times* sounded a similar note, writing: "The roots of this catastrophe lie in crises the European Union cannot solve alone: war in Syria and Iraq, chaos in Libya ..."

What, in turn, are the "roots" of the crises in these countries which have given rise to this "catastrophe"? The response to this question is only guilty silence.

Any serious consideration of what lies behind the surge of refugees into Europe leads to the inescapable conclusion that it constitutes not only a tragedy but a crime. More precisely, it is the tragic by-product of a criminal policy of aggressive wars and regime change interventions pursued uninterrupted by US imperialism, with the aid and complicity of its Western European allies, over the course of nearly a quarter century.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the US ruling elite concluded that it was free to exploit America's unrivalled military might as a means of offsetting US capitalism's long-term economic decline. By

means of military aggression, Washington embarked on a strategy of establishing its hegemony over key markets and sources of raw materials, beginning first and foremost with the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia.

This strategy was summed up crudely in the slogan advanced by the *Wall Street Journal* in the aftermath of the first war against Iraq in 1991: "Force works."

What the world is witnessing in today's wave of desperate refugees attempting to reach Europe are the effects of this policy as it has been pursued over the whole past period.

Decade-long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, waged under the pretext of a "war on terrorism" and justified with the infamous lies about Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction," succeeded only in devastating entire societies and killing hundreds of thousands of men, women and children.

They were followed by the US-NATO war for regime change that toppled the government of Muammar Gaddafi and turned Libya into a so-called failed state, wracked by continuous fighting between rival militias. Then came the Syrian civil war – stoked, armed and funded by US imperialism and its allies, with the aim of toppling Bashar al-Assad and imposing a more pliant Western puppet in Damascus.

The predatory interventions in Libya and Syria were justified in the name of "human rights" and "democracy," receiving on this basis the support of a whole range of pseudo-left organisations representing privileged layers of the middle class – the Left Party in Germany, the New Anti-Capitalist Party in France, the International Socialist Organisation in the US and others. Some of them went so far as to hail the actions of Islamist militias armed and funded by the CIA as "revolutions."

The present situation and the unbearable pressure of death and destruction that is sending hundreds of thousands of people into desperate and deadly flight represent the confluence of all of these crimes of imperialism. The rise of ISIS and the ongoing bloody sectarian civil wars in both Iraq and Syria are the product of the US devastation of Iraq, followed by the backing given by the CIA and US imperialism's regional allies to ISIS and similar Islamist militias inside Syria.

No one has been held accountable for these crimes. Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, Powell and others in the previous administration who waged a war of aggression in Iraq based upon lies have enjoyed complete impunity. Those in the current administration, from Obama on down, have yet to be called to account for the catastrophes they have unleashed upon Libya and Syria. Their accomplices are many, from a US Congress that has acted as a rubber stamp for war policies to an embedded media that has helped foist wars based on lies upon the American public, and the pseudo-lefts who have attributed a progressive role to US imperialism and its "humanitarian interventions."

Together they are responsible for what is unfolding on Europe's borders, which, more than a tragedy, is part of a protracted and continuing war crime.

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Father of Syrian boy washed up on Turkish beach recalls boat horror.

Carrying on the fight for a just, democratic and sovereign Australia

Adelaide

## Eureka Dinner

### Saturday November 28

6:30 pm start 7 pm meal 8 pm speakers

Australian Education Union premises  
163 Greenhill Road, Parkside, Adelaide

Cuisine: Veg & Non-Veg dishes

Bookings: [soeurekasa@gmail.com](mailto:soeurekasa@gmail.com) or 0412 652 227

Payment: \$25 waged \$15 unwaged



## Communist Party of Australia

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