



Abbott the job destroyer

Anna Pha

The workers at SPC Ardmona (SPCA) and the farmers that supply the cannery and their communities are amongst the latest victims of a system that just throws workers and communities on the scrap heap, like fruit left to rot on the ground. SPCA is one in a number of impending plant closures. It is also one of a number of companies with their hands out for corporate welfare and threatening to close if it is not forthcoming. Toyota, Ford, General Motors and Alcoa in Geelong all look set to close their plants in the next couple of years and the agricultural sector is in crisis while the government continues to preach "market solutions".

Abbott lashed out at the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and its members who will lose their jobs at SPCA, blaming them for the death of the fruit canning industry. No sympathy for workers with "excessive" provisions in their workplace agreements – large over-award allowances, high wages, nine weeks annual leave, etc.

Treasurer Joe Hockey described clauses of the agreement as "astounding". "If that is what they negotiate, then please do not come to the government asking for other taxpayers' money when those agreements fail," he said.

The corporate media have hopped on board, doing their bit to repeat what government ministers say and tarnish the image of trade unions and sacked workers in the eyes of the public.

Pure fiction

These claims were quickly refuted by the AMWU and SPCA managing director Peter Kelly. The cost of allowances for all production staff in 2013 was \$116,467 – less than 0.1 percent of the business' annual cost of goods. The "wet" allowance, cited by Abbott had not been paid at all in 2013. Kelly said workers received a standard 20 days of leave and not nine weeks.

The closure of SPCA would have serious ramifications for the region. As many as 3,000 jobs are at risk in Victoria's Goulburn Valley, once an important food bowl. Most of SPCA's employees have been there 10 or 20 years. There are few other jobs in Shepparton where the cannery is.

"A lot of our workers at SPCA don't even earn \$50,000, they find it hard to pay the bills and here's a bloke with all his politician's allowances trying to say it's too much," AMWU cannery delegate Mick Cannon said.



"Abbott's trying to make us workers the scapegoats for his government's decisions to destroy jobs."

Most SPCA workers are paid significantly less than the average ordinary hours wage in manufacturing of almost \$67,000, or of an average worker's earnings of \$74,000.

Coalition ranks divided

With Victorian state elections looming in November, Liberal Premier Denis Napthine is concerned. His government had agreed to match the federal government if it put in \$25 million towards redevelopment of the canning facilities. The company was set to spend around \$160 million. The federal government refused, unless the company slashed wages and conditions which, to its credit, it has refused to do.

Abbott's intransigence has caused sharp divisions within Coalition ranks, amongst Liberal Party backbenchers as well as with National Party members.

Local Liberal MP Sharman Stone in effect accused the PM of lying about the working

conditions of SPC workers. "It is really deeply disappointing to me when I see more and more of these furrphies rolled out to try and blacken the character of the workers themselves and the business," Stone said.

"That sort of stuff is deeply hurtful. What it is saying is that the workers themselves, the 750 left ... they're responsible for the death of the industry."

She said the government was attempting to widen its attack on the union movement beyond the building industry. "This seems to be a convenient way to draw a line in the sand to accuse this company of being destroyed by unions and outrageous wages," she said. Stone is looking to initiate an inquiry into the food industry.

Rural crisis

Fruit growers, some of whose family farms have been operating in the area for 100 year, will go bust. Not surprisingly, National Party Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce has come out strongly against the Liberal-dominated Cabinet's decision. He has the backing of

three other Nationals – Darren Chester, John "Wacka" Williams and George Christensen. Christensen put forward the idea of a government-backed rural development bank.

Joyce has consistently spoken out in support of debt-ridden and drought-stricken farmers. Some farming communities have not had significant rain for two years. Joyce, not withstanding his conservative politics on some issues, has consistently fought for farmers and raised concerns over the growing number of suicides on the land. He wants Cabinet to agree to a multi-million dollar package for them, but has had no luck so far.

Joyce points out that there is a huge difference between helping out a large multinational company and farmers whose savings and livelihoods have dried up. SPCA is a subsidiary of the US transnational corporation Coca Cola Amatil (CCA). An extra \$25 million would not hurt a company which recently announced its shareholders would receive more than \$200 million in dividends.

Continued on page 2

3 

Gov't property and services: Big Business wants the lot!

5 

Film review: Utopia

10 

Culture & Life
Poverty and wealth

12 

How the South shaped Pete Seeger

Guardian

Issue 1626

February 12, 2014

United action, not collaboration

The announcement of a \$100 million Royal Commission into trade unions culminates in months of adverse publicity in the Fairfax and Murdoch media and by the Abbott government and major employer bodies. There has been a constant barrage of allegations of corrupt union officials, criminal and bikie gang infiltration of unions, extortion, etc. At the same time employers have been making their demands for lower wages, abolition of penalty rates and award conditions. The government has declared "the age of entitlement" over, with plans to dismantle the social welfare system, privatise everything in sight and destroy Medicare, public education and the public service. The National Audit Commission, the Productivity Commission and various other employer representatives have been preparing blueprints and spin to sell to the public to try to justify their agenda.

The force standing in the way of this pro-employer, anti-worker agenda is organised labour. Hence the massive smear campaign and a totally unjustified Royal Commission to lay the basis for further union-bashing legislation and even deregulation of the CFMEU. Former High Court Judge Dyson Heydon (a Howard appointee) will head the Royal Commission. Heydon has a reputation as an extremely conservative judge, strongly opposed to "judicial activism", where courts are prepared to change or adapt precedents in common law taking into account human rights and changes in community attitudes such as towards women and Indigenous Australians.

Just days before the announcement of the Royal Commission, Paul Howes, national secretary of the Australian Workers Union, stunned the union movement with a speech to the National Press Club (February 6) calling for collaboration with the Abbott government and employers. Howes echoed the recent media and Coalition allegations "about some unions" – of "corruption", "criminal behaviour", "treachery", "thuggery", scary slogans", etc. "You undermine every battle we have fought – every victory we have achieved – every sacrifice that we, and the generations that came before us have made. There is no place for us in any corner of our movement."

He then continues to describe the present adversarial industrial relations system as "dragging us down", with references to "productivity and competitiveness", again echoing Abbott government and employer attacks on unions. Having broken ranks with the ACTU and other unions calling for the police to investigate (which they are) the few individuals alleged to have committed criminal or corrupt activity, Howes puts forward the concept of a "Grand Compact" with the Abbott government and employers based on the approach of the Accord between the ACTU and Hawke Labor government in the 1980s.

He proposes replacing the present "hyper-adversarial culture" with one of "greater collaboration" and "harmony" based on "trust and good faith" and concessions. "The union side could begin by conceding that there has been a pattern of unsustainable growth in wages in some isolated parts of the economy", again reinforcing government and employer claims.

So what did the Accord deliver for workers and trade unions? The first outcome was wage restraint by unions and the gradual undermining of working conditions as unions abandoned the class struggle and cooperated with employers in their pursuit of higher profits. Any wage increase had to be paid for by sacrificing jobs and working conditions. Real wages declined, many hard won conditions were lost and the scene was set for enterprise bargaining to replace a strong centralised system where enterprise agreements were only add-ons to industry-wide standards.

It resulted in a compliant trade union movement that failed to resist a structural adjustment program of economic deregulation (including floating of interest rates and currency), privatisation, trade liberalisation (its disastrous results for manufacturing still being felt today) and competition policy. Attempts by more militant unions or workers to struggle were put down by the union movement itself. Unions were weakened ideologically, membership declined. In effect, the Accord disarmed the working class in the face of heightened class struggle by employers who gave nothing in return.

We now face a period with employers and a government determined to embark on another round of major economic restructuring, slashing of wages, further deregulation and privatisation and take-back of past social and economic gains. The unions have a choice: whether or not to learn from the Accord experience. "Paul Howes is advocating unilateral disarmament by the working class in the sharpening class struggle. That is the exact opposite of what workers need to do to defend their jobs, wages and conditions", CPA General Secretary Bob Britton told the *Guardian*. "We need to build united action to defeat the attacks coming from the Abbott government."

PRESS FUND

After Tony Abbott's rabid attack on the ABC over its coverage of the alleged abuse of asylum seekers, Malcolm Turnbull initially defended it. Last week he did a sudden about-face, repeating Abbott's demand for the ABC to formally apologise to the Navy. Last Saturday the Defence Minister did the same, explaining his silence on the issue with the excuse that he'd needed two weeks to cool down! Barnaby Joyce will be in trouble; after participating in the ABC's Q&A program he declared he was off for a beer with his left-wing ABC mates. The Press Fund helps us track Abbott's moves in his undeclared war on the ABC, but we need your contributions, so please send us something for the next issue if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's two contributors, as follows:

Todd Nickle \$50, Brian Hawke \$20, Bob and Joy Brown \$200, June Ayres \$10, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$15

This week's total: \$300 Progressive total: \$700

Abbot Point – now what?

Last week the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), the agency with, to quote their website, "the fundamental obligation" of protecting the GBR Marine Park, announced its decision to grant North Queensland Bulk Ports a permit to dump three million cubic metres (5-6 million tonnes) of dredge spoil in the Marine Park (and World Heritage Area). The granting followed Federal Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt's approval of the development application in early December. The permit, under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975* and the *EPBC (Sea Dumping) Act 1981*, was the final bureaucratic step for the proposal.

The dumping would be part of the dredging project approved by the Minister, dredging that would be necessary to enable the creation of the world's largest coal export port at Abbot Point, slap bang in the GBR World Heritage Area and within coo-ee of the Whitsundays.

Coal is, of course, one of the greatest contributors to climate change – and it is that climate change which is, as GBRMPA acknowledges, the greatest threat to the Reef.

But we are even further into cloud cuckoo land than that demonstrates.

The same day that the permit was granted, was the final day for public comment on the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area Strategic Assessment, completed after months of work by GBRMPA and work by the Queensland government. The draft reports released acknowledged that the condition of the Reef south of Cooktown (i.e. where the people are) as well as biodiversity throughout the Area, is "poor and declining".

And it doesn't even stop there. In an even more ironic twist, February 1 was the deadline for the Australian and Queensland governments to provide their latest report to the World Heritage Committee (the body with the power to remove "world heritage" status) on what they are doing to improve protection of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area!

Outrage at what is perceived as, at least, a dereliction of duty by the federal government and GBRMPA, has been expressed around the world.

NQCC shares this outrage – and, after careful consideration by the Management Committee over the weeks leading up to the decision, is now looking at taking legal action against the Abbot Point decisions.

Much to our delight, GetUp and Fight for the Reef have both kicked off online fund-raising campaigns in support of legal action.

North Queensland Conservation Council was very closely involved in and instigated much action in the process of public consultation, including participation in GBRMPA-led workshops and surveys, lengthy and detailed submission, social media posts, media interviews, market stalls and rallies. Unfortunately, this, as well as the enormous work of many other conservation organisations and individuals, and the outpouring of concern from the community, made no difference.

To the extent possible, we will keep members informed of the process we are undertaking and, in the meantime, encourage you to help the fighting fund along with a generous donation. NQCC ☘

Abbot the job destroyer

Continued from page 1
Entitlements over for some

Abbott said businesses seeking government assistance needed to get their industrial relations "house in order". Treasurer Joe Hockey said it was up to companies to do the heavy lifting, that the "age of entitlement" was over.

SPCA is being asked to cut wage rates, slash or abolish penalty rates, reduce leave provisions and other entitlements as a condition of receiving government assistance. Never mind if they are legally binding under enterprise agreements.

On the surface the refusal to give corporate hand-outs gives the impression of being "even-handed" – as if "the age of entitlement" is over for both companies and workers. But it is actually an attack on workers who would be on the receiving end of the cuts being demanded of employers. The aim of the wage and other workplace cuts is to increase company profits. Likewise the goal of budget cuts to social security and public sector jobs is to fund the next round of company tax cuts in 2015.

The "age of entitlement" is not over for big business!

Causes of crisis

There is no denying that the manufacturing and agricultural sectors are in crisis. But this is not a result of workers pricing themselves out of the market on "extraordinary" wages and conditions. The blame lies squarely with the capitalist system which is based on the pursuit of ever increasing profits and exploitation of workers and government policies aimed at facilitating these outcomes.

The high dollar hurts exports and makes imports cheaper. Floating of the currency means the government has no control over it.

The arbitrary lifting of tariffs, quotas and other restrictions on fruit has resulted in an influx of cheaper products, increased the risk of diseases and pests entering the country. The so-called "level playing field" is not very level, not when US and EU competitors receive massive government subsidies.

No farmer can compete with the dumping of fruit at below cost. This has been compounded by the monopoly purchasing power of Woolworths and Coles – forcing prices down to rock bottom unsustainable levels and then turning to cheaper imports.

A similar story can be told about the car industry and other sectors of manufacturing. The car companies also have a lot to answer for. They failed to upgrade in line with growing popularity and necessity for smaller, green vehicles such as seen in Europe. They have established production plants in "third world" countries with deregulated, slave labour conditions, all the while planning an exit.

They got what they could out of governments who feared the political backlash if they refused regular requests for hand-outs. No government has carried out a serious inspection of their books to ascertain how much intra-company transfer of profits takes place. Nor have governments imposed the sort of conditions required for their future to be ensured.

There are plenty of policy options open to any government interested in protecting and developing Australia as a food bowl for the region and maintaining a manufacturing sector. It is criminal that a country such as Australia is losing valuable farming land to mining corporations and farmers are being forced to dig up their trees. We are fast approaching, if we have not already reached, the point of being a net importer of food products.

A policy for the future

The government is not interested in whether these industries survive or not. There is no sign of patriotism when it comes to the land or manufacturing. They are more interested in financial, tourism, education and mining sectors investments by foreign capital.

When companies crucial to manufacturing shut up shop, their enterprises should be taken over by the government and either converted to other types of production (eg from cars to buses or train carriages for public transport) or continue production such as in the case of fruit canneries.

Many brand names have disappeared altogether or gone offshore or rely on imported inputs. Icons like Heinz, Edgells, Arnott's, Golden Circle, Berri, Ardmona, Goulburn Valley, to name a few. Each restructure, closure or replacement of Australian fruit and vegetables by imported products means another hit for rural Australia.

Workers and their trade unions are not responsible. Quite the contrary, they have made many sacrifices and moderated demands in the hope of keeping their workplaces open and saving these industries.

When the government says "the age of entitlement" is over it is referring to an all-out attack by employers on workers' wages and working conditions and the government's attack on social welfare and the social wage (Medicare, public education, etc).

The main force capable of standing in the way of this agenda is the trade union movement, hence the government and media attempts to portray them as corrupt, having links with bikies or extracting unsustainably high wages and extraordinary conditions. ☘

Gov't property and services: Big Business wants the lot!

Peter Mac

The Business Council of Australia has advocated privatisation of Australia Post in a submission to the Abbott government's Commission of Audit. It's also arguing that ASC Pty Ltd (formerly the Australian Submarine Corporation), the Australian Government Solicitor, the Australian Rail Track Corporation, Defence Housing Australia, Medibank Private, and NBN Co (the National Broadband Network Company) should all be privatised.

Moreover, they want the government's holdings in Snowy Hydro and other corporations, as well as valuable real estate owned by government bodies, to be sold.

Last year Australia Post made a loss of \$187 million because of the rise of email and net communications and the consequent slump in letter deliveries. It should be possible to restructure Australia Post so that the level of letter delivery staffing corresponds to the demand, while maintaining postal letter deliveries. Excess staff could be retained for other services, such as the internet and especially parcel delivery, the demand for which has skyrocketed.

The Minister for Communications and the management of Australia Post are now considering introducing facilities so post offices can provide passports, land title information and other services.

The Communication Workers Union has also suggested that Australia Post should offer banking services, especially in country areas, where the big four banks have closed down many of their offices.

But federal Treasurer Joe Hockey has adamantly ruled this out. As the union has noted with bitter irony, in the case of Australia Post banking services the government has suddenly lost its enthusiasm for commercial competition.

Australia Post is likely to implement many of the changes that have been suggested as a means of improving its commercial viability. But the government is then likely to sell off the entire organisation, which would have a devastating impact in rural areas.

Who gets rich quick?

Business lobbies and the Abbott government argue that selling government organisations makes sense because commercial firms would run them more efficiently. But firms achieve "efficiency" by raising the fees for services which were previously cheap or even free – or by eliminating unprofitable services altogether. The firm benefits, the taxpayer loses.

Regarding the sale of government property, particularly real estate, the chairman of CoreNet Global recently declared: "In corporate real estate theory no corporation should own property because the capital locked up in that property could be used for a better return for the corporation."

If that sweeping generalisation was true no corporation would own its place of business. Buying such a property frees the corporation from the necessity to pay rent, so the capital isn't "locked up"; it's actually saving the corporation money.

It's certainly true that private or publicly-owned corporations sometimes choose to rent rather than buy property, especially if they don't have the capital to purchase, or if their occupation is short-term. But often the decision is made to buy because there is no "better return for the corporation" than the money it saves by not paying rent.

The theory is, however, being used to justify sale of valuable government real estate. The demands for ABC services are certain to increase, and the organisation will be around indefinitely – unless, of course the government succeeds in eliminating or privatising one or more of its areas of operation.

The private sector argues that the best investment for the proceeds of sale of government property is in new infrastructure projects. But that argument also has holes, because funding the project by that method, rather than by taxes, means that the infrastructure comes with a permanent burden of rent in some other area of government.

The big strategy

Speaking of tax, the Tax Office intends to shed 900 jobs over the



(Photo: Anna Pha)

next six months, and is now seriously considering implementing a scheme known as the "External Compliance Assurance Process", under which the accountants of companies with annual turnovers of between \$100 million and \$5 billion, rather than the Tax Office, would determine the amount of tax the companies paid.

A spokesman for the Tax Institute declared proudly, and with a perfectly straight face: "With the high levels of professional ethics in the profession, companies are not going to get a free ride"

The accountancy firms these corporations have hired to help them minimise their tax liabilities are the very ones that will be expected to ensure the corporations do the right thing by the taxpayer under the new scheme. And they will still be paid by the corporations, not the government. The scheme is clearly a case of "putting the fox in charge of the chookhouse".

Economists have recently stated that the government should not sell off its remaining businesses, because the former sale of Telstra, Qantas and Sydney Airport was not a good deal for the Australian public. John Quiggin from Queensland University commented: "In general, the price received for assets has been less than their value in continued public ownership. And conversely, in cases where privatisation was proposed but did not go ahead, the actual earnings received have been more than the return from the estimated sale price".

The proposal to sell off

government businesses and properties must be seen as part of the government's overriding strategy of facilitating private sector profitability. That involves minimising government restraints, selling off valuable government-owned real estate, privatising as many government operations as possible, helping to minimise the tax liabilities of corporations – and suppressing organisations such as the ABC, which might offer criticism of its actions.

And those are just some of the reasons why we should replace this government as soon as possible. ☒

Pete's Corner



STOP ABBOTT

SAVE MEDICARE

**NO FEES FOR GPS
FREE AND FULLY FUNDED HEALTHCARE
NO PRIVATISATION OR CUTS**

RALLY
1PM SATURDAY 15 FEBRUARY
SYDNEY TOWN HALL

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT CAT ON 0405 770 302 OR EWAN ON 0404 349 334

Public Forum on anti-people "trade" deal

Richard Titelius

As the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement hurtles towards an indecently fast and secret finalisation between the states of 12 countries and a number of large transnational corporations, concerned citizens around the globe have been organising a resistance to this anti-democratic and anti-people "free trade" agreement.

In Perth a group known as the Perth Trans Pacific Partnership Community organised a public forum at the Alexander Library Theatre which was attended by about 70 people.

The proceedings were opened by Perth Whadjuk Noongar couple Robert and Selena Eggington who gave a welcome to country. Eggington spoke about the recent John Pilger documentary film *Utopia* (see review page 5) in which he had appeared and talked about the ongoing discrimination and marginalisation on

Aboriginal people when looking for employment, education, housing and other government services.

Eggington spoke about the TPP Agreement and how it attacked the weak and vulnerable in society.

Natalie Lather, a Ph D student in climate change and poverty, said that the treaty was an offspring of the US-Australia free trade agreement. Lather said that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has stressed that the TPP is about promoting free trade by getting rid of "Behind the Border Impediments", which is shorthand for ensuring governments cannot interfere in the business dealings and profit-making of corporations – some of who are richer and more powerful than nation states.

Senator Scott Ludlam of the Greens spoke of the immense powers being ceded to corporations to decide what a government can and can't do in the interest of the people who

democratically elected them to parliament. Ludlam cited the case of the cigarette company that was suing the Australian government in a court in Hong Kong over its plain cigarette packaging laws which they claim are restriction to trade. Ludlam also quoted Noam Chomsky from a recent *Huffington Post* interview where Chomsky said of the TPP that, "They were highly protectionist measures designed to undermine freedom of trade and boost corporate political power and investor rights."

Mia Pepper from the Conservation Council of Western Australia discussed the Environmental Chapter of the TPP which places restrictions on the ability of states to oppose the granting of mining leases on environmental or ecological grounds.

Already there have been several examples. The Canadian province of Quebec, in October 2013, tried to have a moratorium on fracking and was sued by Lone Pine Resources for \$250 million under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Also US gold mining corporation Pacific Rim, in 2012, sued the nation of El Salvador as it tried to prevent a large mine being built that would have used a cyanide heat-leaching process to wreak havoc with that nation's water resources.

Janet Grogan from Foodwatch spoke of the fight to keep Western Australia GM-free and give WA farmers to right to grow non-GM crops and WA consumers to have GM labelling and GM-free food.

Grogan said that the ability for farmers to save seeds for future crops was vital to their viability and sustainability. "In 20 years seed ownership had transferred from the hands of farmers into those of multinational



chemical and pharmaceutical corporations such as Monsanto and Bayer, of which 90 percent of all GM seed patents are owned by Monsanto," emphasised Grogan about the potential hazards of ceding corporate power to corporations such as Monsanto.

Grogan noted, "The chief negotiator of the TPP Agreement Agricultural Chapter is a former chief executive of Monsanto."

To assist corporations deal with nation states, the corporations are pushing negotiators of the TPP to adopt Investor-State Dispute Resolution Settlement procedures which even the previous Liberal Howard government was reluctant to adopt. Such a settlement procedure could pave the way for resistance to GMOs being seen as an "anti-free trade practice".

Grogan said there was also an

alarming move by the EU to set up a Plant Variety Agency where farmers were required to submit their seeds for assessment and if they failed to do so they could be prosecuted.

In Melbourne there was a rally on February 7 attracting over 120 people which also protested the TPPA. Speakers included Steve Dargavel of the AMWU, Tom Warne-Smith of the Environmental Defenders Office and Sam Castro, an anti-GM protester and member of Whistleblowers, Activists and Citizens Alliance (WACA).

Castro said that following the rally it was decided to maintain the momentum from the action and an earlier forum by taking the movement to rural areas of Victoria to help farmers understand the issues with regards to agriculture and coal seam gas. ☘

Concern after cuts to remote refuge funds

Changes to the funding model for women's refuges in remote Western Australia will place Aboriginal women and children at severe risk, Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre (MFWRC) chief executive June Oscar has warned. "In the remote communities of the Kimberley's Fitzroy Valley, funding cuts have forced us to contemplate the removal of our basic human rights – the right to feel safe, the right to be free from harm," she said.

"Our women's refuge, a shelter of safety, care and crisis response and relief, is soon to be dismantled to a skeletal structure."

MFWRC staff told the *Koori Mail* newspaper that the WA Department for Child Protection and Services had cut funds to four remote Aboriginal women's refuges in the Kimberley and Pilbara and that funds would be redirected to metropolitan areas.

"They based their decision on statistics indicating declining occupancy rates," Ms Oscar said. "It is a discriminatory judgment, condemning us for not being able to meet the requirements of a technically difficult reporting program that has been imposed on the refuges without the necessary on-the-ground training for local staff.

"If this was the basis for their decision, why have we not been part of a consultation process? Each women's refuge faces complex challenges at having to cope with a drastic reduction in support and, potentially, life-threatening outcomes for their clients."

Department for Child Protection and Family Services Director General Terry Murphy said the shelters at Roebourne, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Wyndham had high vacancy rates.

"The proposed model will provide the Marninwarntikura Women's Shelter with funding consistent with other safe houses and provide better outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic violence in the Fitzroy region," he said.

Ms Oscar said she understood that funding models changed.

"But, a decision imposed on us which disregards our knowledge and expertise, which shows no foresight into its damaging consequences and rips a safety net from beneath our feet, is certainly the wrong one," she said.

"In the Fitzroy Valley, we have worked tirelessly to develop holistic models of care with the long-term aim to eliminate all forms of violence. We have built one block of success on another.

"However, if the foundations are removed it will all crumble. Governments must remain mindful that we are a severely traumatised community, inflicted by grief and violence, our resilience fractured with fragilities.

"It is we who are most aware of our need to break these cycles."

A campaign has been started to lobby WA Premier Colin Barnett to reverse the funding decision.

"At the moment, the state government's message is clear: There is no support available to us; there are more pressing needs than our right to a safe existence," Ms Oscar said.

"No matter what changes, we have to ensure that there is an accessible and secure space of safety for our community. Is it too much to ask for this basic universal human right?"

To support the campaign Google "petitions.org vulnerable communities wa" Koori Mail ☘

Come clean over future of Snowy Hydro

With increasingly reliable political leaks suggesting Tony Abbott's Commission of Audit will recommend privatising a raft of public assets – including the highly-profitable Australian icon Snowy Hydro – local MPs Peter Hendy and John Barilaro have been called upon to publicly rule out any planned sale by their respective governments.

The Electrical Trades Union's (ETU) privatisation concerns – which were labelled a "scare campaign" by Mr Hendy and others when first raised in late 2012 – rapidly appear to be turning into a very real nightmare for the local community and the almost 1,000 employees who rely on Snowy Hydro for their livelihoods.

Prior to the 2013 federal election, Mr Hendy told the community that they had nothing to worry about when it came to Snowy Hydro, but the ETU said it is looking increasingly likely that Mr Hendy may have deceived local residents with those statements.

Stop the Sell Off campaign director Adam Kerslake last week called on both local politicians to categorically rule out any privatisation of Snowy Hydro.

"Power industry unions first

raised fears that Snowy Hydro would be privatised more than a year ago, with certain local identities dismissing it as a union scare campaign," Mr Kerslake said.

"But since the election, privatisation rumours and speculation has reached a fever pitch, with power industry unions concerned that they are about to turn into a very real nightmare for local businesses and the community.

"The big threat for a town like Cooma is that any buyer, most likely a foreign company or government, will already have an established head office elsewhere, meaning up to 200 high quality head office jobs in Cooma would be lost overnight.

"This doesn't take into account other operational areas, which could take total job losses for the region to in excess of 500, with negative flow-on effects for the entire community, in particular local businesses.

"For every 13 jobs taken out of Cooma, \$1 million is lost from the local economy, so local businesses and other sectors such as real estate will undoubtedly be impacted.

"We have had zero guarantees from local MPs Peter Hendy and John Barilaro, who seem content to

sit on their hands and simply allow a Snowy Hydro sale to happen."

Mr Kerslake said it was time for local members of parliament to respond to the wishes of the local community by pledging to take a public stand against the potential privatisation within their respective governments.

"Peter Hendy and John Barilaro must categorically rule out any privatisation of Snowy Hydro," Mr Kerslake said.

"If they can't do that, they must explain to the community why they are not willing to stand up and represent the people that elected them.

"We also want to know exactly what representations Peter Hendy has made to the Prime Minister, Treasurer or the Commission of Audit on behalf of the local community opposing the privatisation of Snowy Hydro, and if there have been no representations, then why not?"

"Given Snowy Hydro is publicly owned by the Commonwealth, NSW and Victorian governments, we are calling on all three to clearly outline their future plans for this important piece of national infrastructure." ☘

Film review by Richard Titelius

Utopia

During the month of January John Pilger's new movie has been premiering across Australia, mostly in universities and centres of political and social activism. I attended one such screening to a packed venue of about 80 people cohosted by the Nyoongar Aboriginal Tent Embassy in inner city Perth.

Its underlying premise is that Australia's treatment of its Aboriginal people is akin to South Africa's Apartheid system which attempted to formally segregate white people from black. Pilger draws comparisons such as deaths in custody and the prevalence of racism.

The opening scene sets the pace of the movie by comparing the \$2,500 a week holiday apartments on the northern beaches of Sydney looking out over the Pacific Ocean, to the Aboriginal community of Utopia 250 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs.

There, far too many people are forced to sleep in each dwelling, there are problems with the sewerage system which causes health problems and an absence of fresh fruit and vegetables (because of the high cost to transport them to this remote location) causes additional health and nutritional problems.

This problem is duplicated in isolated and remote communities around Australia and can also be seen amongst urban and rural town communities. Pilger also visits the small community of Mutujulu which is situated near Uluru in the red heart of Australia and contrasts the lavish eco tourist accommodation with this community's dilapidated asbestos buildings which leave 70 percent of the dwellings unoccupied.

Utopia also takes us to police

lock-ups around Australia from Wee Waa, NSW in 1981 where Eddie Murray died with a smashed sternum while in police custody to Mr Ward in the north eastern Goldfields of WA who on Australia Day in 2009 died while being transported in a poorly equipped police van where the temperature soared to an unbelievable 56 Celsius. The prison transport company and the WA Department of Corrective Services were later found guilty in a Worksafe prosecution of having failed to provide a safe workplace.

This is Pilger's seventh foray into making documentaries on the national shame of Australia's treatment of its First Peoples. Material is drawn from a number of his earlier films especially the first of his seven films, *Secret Country* (1984). The movie is also rich in archival material from other sources especially the ABC, both a 1962 black and white doco from Sydney which is laudable in its treatment of the subject material and a 2007 *Late-line* program.

Elsewhere in the movie Pilger explores in his dry acerbic manner what Australians think today of Aboriginal people on Australia Day (the scene shot on Circular Quay in 2013 is priceless!).

Also the snubbing by the Australian government of numerous United Nations reports on the treatment of Indigenous people to the mineral wealth ripped from the earth by mining companies which generates obscene levels of profit.

The film also visits Rottnest Island off the coast of Perth, Western Australia, where a holiday resort has been made out of a former jail used in the 19th Century to imprison Aboriginal people who were considered



John Pilger meets kids in their "homeland" in *Utopia*.

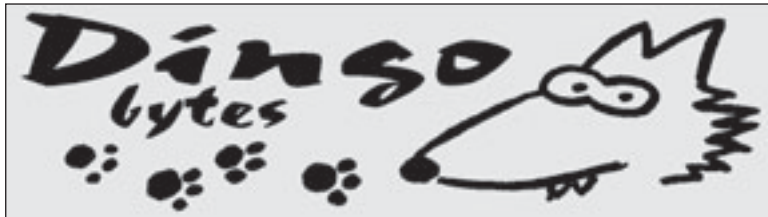
as trouble makers (from all over the state).

The film is also about struggle and successful resistance and points to the Wave Hill/Gurindji struggle of 1966/1975 and the strike for better wages and conditions of Aboriginal cotton field weeders and pickers who were paid slightly more than a dollar and hour and were often subjected to aerial weed spraying while doing their work.

As Australia recalls its colonial origins and considers its future nationhood it would do well to come to terms with providing justice to its First Nations People.

Real reconciliation is not possible without justice – and justice will not happen without a treaty.

The movie is highly recommended viewing. Do not wait for a TV screening unless it is on NITV, as Pilger has succeeded in offending every other network in Australia with his exposures of their deficient and biased reporting. ☘

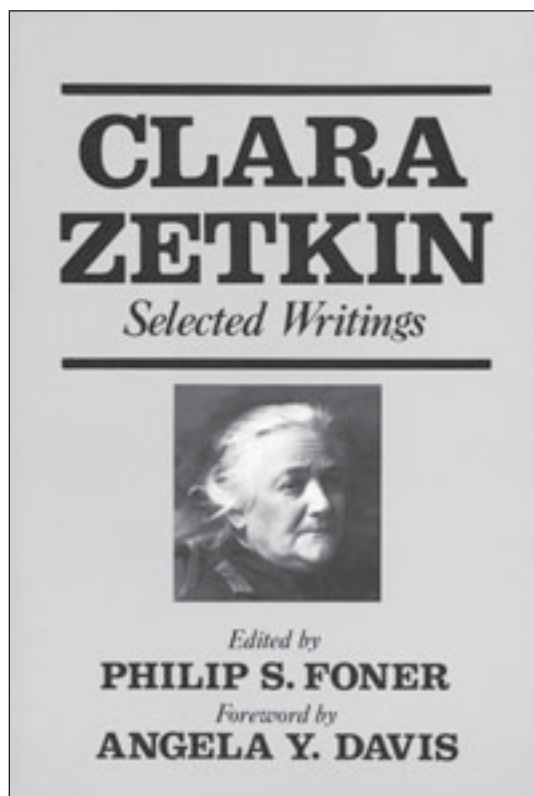


NSW Supreme Court Chief Justice Tom Bathurst is urging a serious debate on mandatory sentencing. The O'Farrell government had passed laws requiring judges to impose a minimum eight-year jail term for fatal one-punch assaults if drugs or alcohol are involved. The maximum sentence is 25 years. The NSW top judge condemned the government for introducing mandatory minimum jail terms and rejected claims that judges were "soft on crime". He also said that it was a mistake to "see an excessively punitive approach as the only way courts can recognise the interests of the victims". Populist measures can severely undermine the justice system and can actually prevent a fair outcome. The Chief Justice thinks encouraging judges to produce summaries of their judgements in criminal cases in simple and concise language to show why they come to a particular decision will go a long way in educating the media, MPs and community representatives.

Professor Gillian Triggs is the president of the Australian Human Rights Commission. She had plans to visit Nauru detention centre to gather information on around 100 children held there as part of the inquiry into the detention of more than 1,000 children in mainland detention centres and Christmas Island. The inquiry is to release its report in nine months' time. The inquiry is investigating how life in immigration detention affects the health, well-being and development of children. It will also examine the separation of families across detention facilities (some children are separated from their parents) and whether there is adequate care provided for unaccompanied children in the detention centres. However, the request to visit Nauru was denied on the grounds that the Human Rights Commission's jurisdiction did not extend beyond Australia's borders. In 2004 a similar inquiry was held and the report "The Last Resort" was the outcome of that inquiry. At the time the number of children in detention was significantly reduced because of the recommendations in the report. The Abbott government is not forthcoming with either information on the refugees or the issues such as self-harm in detention. Non-government human rights bodies were able to visit both Nauru and Manus Island detention centres. However, the Australian Human Rights Commission is a statutory body with a mandate to protect human rights – thus it will be more difficult for the government to neglect its findings.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has strongly criticised the government's plans to expand the "work-for-the-dole" scheme. First introduced by the Howard government, it failed even then. The scheme was punitive, non-effective and the results were poor. Only one in three participants were still employed three months after the program ended. It is not only the ACTU which is against the scheme. The Australian Council of Social Services policy director Jacqueline Phillips said compulsory, work-for-the-dole programs were "ineffective, costly and harsh". Experience shows that work-for-the-dole programs do not help people get jobs, she stressed.

Clara Zetkin: Selected writings



Edited by Philip S Foner
Foreword by Angela Davis
Paperback 206 pages
\$25 including p&h

The communist activist Clara Zetkin is widely associated with International National Women's Day but she also deserves to be better known for her Marxist analysis of women's oppression.

"... the labour movement will surely commit suicide if, in the efforts to enrol the broad masses of the proletariat, it does not pay the same amount of attention to female workers as it does to male workers", she wrote in her journal *Gleichheit* (*Equality*) of November 1, 1893.

"Like her heroic contemporary, VI Lenin, she sought to understand the special oppression of women by placing it within the larger context of the socioeconomic evolution of humankind and consequently attempted to analyse most of the major events within the history of the class struggle of her era," Angela Davis writes in the foreword to the book.

The interesting and important collection of writings are still as relevant and of interest as when they were written. A great gift for International Women's Day!

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 Ph 02 9699 8844

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

Pay Pal – cpa.accounts@cpa.org.au

Credit cards incl card type, name, number & exp date. All Cheques/Money Orders to "CPA".

Downer's history rewrite on Timor Leste

Andy Alcock*

It was inevitable that when the Timor Leste government decided to appeal the unfair 2006 Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea (CMATS) deal in the International Court of Justice in The Hague in late 2013 that those who had played very dubious roles throughout the Timorese struggle for independence would indulge in a flurry of the re-writing of this history.

This article by Alexander Downer in a January 2014 edition of the *Melbourne Herald* is a very telling example of what we have seen in the past and what we will see more frequently in the future.

Already other key conservative figures who played dubious roles in the Timor saga, eg Howard, Evans, Woolcott and Keating, when they mention Timor Leste publicly now, they refer to the country in very general terms while carefully avoiding any mention of the dastardly roles they played in the whole affair. They also omit to mention their vilification of those who supported independence even before the Indonesian illegal invasion of 1975.

In this particular article, Alexander Downer speaks as though Australia was very generous to Timor Leste in the CMATS negotiations. However, he conveniently omits to mention that before the 2006 negotiations, the Howard government withdrew its support for the UN Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). If Australia was being fair to Timor Leste, it would have abided by this Convention because it allowed for a much fairer distribution of the resources in the Timor Sea. Under UNCLOS, all deposits north of the median line belong to Timor Leste and all those south of the line belong to Australia.

In his statement, Mr Downer would have us believe that CMATS was very generous because Australia ceded resources to Timor Leste in the Greater Sunrise region of the Timor Sea. What he omitted to say was that the area of the Greater Sunrise region is entirely in the Timor Leste half of the Timor Sea and because the Howard government had withdrawn from UNCLOS, the CMATS deal would mean that Timor Leste was losing several billions of badly needed finances to Australia. This is not so generous after all considering what the people of Timor Leste have suffered over the past 500 years continuing until the end of the Timor occupation.

Timor Leste is one of the poorest countries in the world and many of its people still go hungry. The situation is so concerning that the UN launched its Zero Hunger Challenge in Timor Leste on January 10 this year. How can people like Mr Downer try to have us believe that it is morally acceptable for Australia, the wealthiest country in our region, to be taking resources from the poorest in the region?

This is especially so as its people have suffered much during a period of history during which Australian leaders not only went along with the occupation, but armed and trained the army of the aggressor nation. It did this, despite the fact that the East Timorese suffered immensely at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army because of its great support to Australian soldiers during WW2.

The discontent with CMATS is not just something that a "virulent minority" has pushed for as he claims. This appeal is happening because the current Timorese government was unhappy with the unfair agreement. It signed it in 2006 to get urgently needed funds to support its suffering people and did not see that it had any other choice. But it is not only the Timorese who feel that this was an unfair deal that they had been pushed into it. There are many Australians and others internationally who agree with the Timorese.

It is worth reading the book *ShakeDown* by Australian journalist Paul Cleary, who was involved in these negotiations working for the Timor Leste government. He describes just how hard Australia played during the negotiations. This included part of the Australian team



Timorese women and children search for cans to sell.

How can people like Mr Downer try to have us believe that it is morally acceptable for Australia, the wealthiest country in our region, to be taking resources from the poorest in the region?

barging into a meeting of the Timor Leste government Cabinet to tell them that they would not get what they wanted.

Alexander Downer in his article also claims that the Timorese were fighting an insurgency against the Indonesians. What the Timorese were actually doing was defending their nation against an illegal invasion by the Indonesian military. The Timorese did not fight back to inconvenience the international policies of Australia; they did it because they wanted their freedom, which is considered under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to be a basic human right.

If Australian governments of that time, conservative Liberal or conservative ALP, had abided by international law, they would have advised Suharto not to invade East Timor, but they acquiesced to a great historical wrong because they lacked the moral fortitude to say no to Suharto and to the US Military Industrial Complex. It must be remembered that the CIA helped to undemocratically and brutally install Suharto as the Indonesian dictator in 1965 and it was Henry Kissinger and Gerald Ford who sanctioned the occupation of Timor the night before the full-scale invasion occurred.

Mr Downer in the article tells us that "there were a torrent of allegations of human rights abuses against the Indonesians." This is true. What he does not say is that it is beyond all reasonable doubt that most of them were true. The history of the occupation leaves no doubt about this. A third of the population was wiped out due to the policies and brutal actions of the TNI (Indonesian military). Rape, torture, mass murder were used as strategies against the Timorese and there is overwhelming evidence of them in the international media and the reports of UN agencies, the Red Cross, and human rights organisations etc.

Most would agree with the late UN administrator in Timor Leste, Sergio Vierra de Mello, that the Australian peace keepers made a significant contribution to expel the TNI murder

machine, but as Dr Clinton Fernandes said in his book on the subject, the Australian leaders were very "Reluctant Saviours".

Yes, John Howard approached President Habibie to have a referendum, but he did not really want Timor Leste to become independent.

The UN organised the independence referendum and the only security put in place for this to occur was to allow unarmed UN police personnel into the country while the mass-murdering TNI was still there. This was mostly thanks to the Howard government. Not only was the TNI still there, it was organising and arming huge numbers of militias who were harassing and murdering people suspected of wanting independence. Most observers could see there would be huge problems, but members of the Howard government claimed that there would not be a problem. They claimed that there might be a few rotten apples in the TNI, but the leadership would not allow anything to happen.

However, the Australian government knew about the arming of militias because it had received reports from its own intelligence and staff. According to Lansell Taudevin, an AusAid worker in both Indonesia and East Timor, he reported on seeing TNI trucks bringing in loads of arms to East Timor from West Timor to be distributed to militias. His warnings were ignored by senior AusAid personnel, so he published a book exposing what was happening, *East Timor – Too Little Too Late* (DS 1999). He was sacked.

There should have been a UN peacekeeping force in place before the holding of the referendum to ensure that there was adequate security for it to happen safely. As it turned out, after the referendum, the TNI with the support of its militias conducted a further reign of terror, which resulted in the death of up to 2,000 more Timorese civilians and the destruction of 80 percent of the nation's infrastructure. It was also extremely dangerous for the UN personnel and foreign correspondents working there.

It also has to be said that John Howard and Alexander Downer, who now claim they supported Timor Leste's independence, actually advised the Timorese to vote to stay with Indonesia.

Because the Australian government believed its own propaganda, the Australian Defence Force was not fully prepared for being part of the UN peacekeeping force, the UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET). The one positive thing out of this very tragic history was that, even though Australian politicians became reluctant saviours, Australian soldiers played a very significant and positive role in peacekeeping operation that finally saw the retreat of the TNI and its militias.

Mr Downer might feel sad about what is happening over the CMATS deal now, but it has to be said that the Timorese would have not suffered so greatly and would not be in the sad situation they find themselves in today had Australian, US and other western leaders said no to Suharto's plans to invade their country in the first place. Mr Downer cannot blame the ABC for that. It is a tragic fact of history and no amount of re-writing will alter that.

He should be aware that there are many Australians who are sad as well. They are sad that their leaders have treated Timor Leste so shabbily over so many years – supporting the aggressor nation that invaded them, spying on their newly independent government with a view to taking the profits from their oil and gas and now, trying to pervert the course of justice by confiscating key documents and the passport of a key witness.

Australians generally pride themselves on being fair-minded and supporting the "underdog". In the case of Timor Leste, our leaders have let us down.

*Andrew (Andy) Alcock is Information Officer
Australia East Timor Friendship Association
(SA) Inc 🇺🇦

Ukraine and the rebirth of fascism in Europe

Eric Draitser

The violence on the streets of Ukraine is far more than an expression of popular anger against a government. Instead, it is merely the latest example of the rise of the most insidious form of fascism that Europe has seen since the fall of the Third Reich.

Recent months have seen regular protests by the Ukrainian political opposition and its supporters – protests ostensibly in response to Ukrainian President Yanukovich's refusal to sign a trade agreement with the European Union that was seen by many political observers as the first step towards European integration.

The protests remained largely peaceful until January 17 when protesters armed with clubs, helmets, and improvised bombs unleashed brutal violence on the police, storming government buildings, beating anyone suspected of pro-government sympathies, and generally wreaking havoc on the streets of Kiev. But who are these violent extremists and what is their ideology?

The political formation is known as "Pravy Sektor" (Right Sector), which is essentially an umbrella organisation for a number of ultranationalist (read fascist) right wing groups including supporters of the "Svoboda" (Freedom) Party, "Patriots of Ukraine", "Ukrainian National Assembly – Ukrainian National Self Defence" (UNA-UNSO), and "Trizub".

All of these organisations share a common ideology that is vehemently anti-Russian, anti-immigrant, and anti-Jewish among other things.

In addition they share a common reverence for the so called "Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists" led by Stepan Bandera, the infamous Nazi collaborators who actively fought against the Soviet Union and engaged in some of the worst atrocities committed by any side in World War II.

While Ukrainian political forces, opposition and government, continue to negotiate, a very different battle is being waged in the streets.

Using intimidation and brute force more typical of Hitler's "Brownshirts" or Mussolini's "Blackshirts" than a contemporary political movement, these groups have managed to turn a conflict over economic policy and the political allegiances of the country into an existential struggle for the very survival of the nation that these so called "nationalists" claim to love so dearly.

The images of Kiev burning, Lviv streets filled with thugs, and other chilling examples of the chaos in the country, illustrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that the political negotiation with the Maidan (Kiev's central square and centre of the protests) opposition is now no longer the central issue.

Rather, it is the question of Ukrainian fascism and whether it is to be supported or rejected.

For its part, the United States has strongly come down on the side of the opposition, regardless of its political character. Early last December, members of the US ruling establishment such as John McCain and Victoria Nuland were seen at Maidan lending their support to the protesters.

However, as the character of the opposition has become apparent in recent days, the US and Western ruling class and its media machine have done little to condemn the fascist upsurge.

Instead, their representatives have met with representatives of Right Sector and deemed them to be "no threat". In other words, the US and its allies have given their tacit approval for the continuation and proliferation of the violence in the name of their ultimate goal: regime change.

In an attempt to pry Ukraine out of the Russian sphere of influence, the US-EU-NATO alliance has, not for the first time, allied itself with fascists.

Of course, for decades, millions in Latin America were disappeared or murdered by fascist paramilitary forces armed and supported by the United States.

The mujahideen of Afghanistan, which later



Ukrainian protesters light candles in Kiev as they mourn those killed in clashes with police. (Photo: Oleg Sinyavskiy)

The US and its allies have given their tacit approval for the continuation and proliferation of the violence in the name of their ultimate goal: regime change.

transmogrified into Al-Qaeda, also extreme ideological reactionaries, were created and financed by the United States for the purposes of destabilising Russia.

And of course, there is the painful reality of Libya and, most recently Syria, where the United States and its allies finance and support extremist jihadis against a government that has refused to align with the US and Israel.

There is a disturbing pattern here that has never been lost on keen political observers: the United States always makes common cause with right wing extremists and fascists for geopolitical gain.

The situation in Ukraine is deeply troubling because it represents a political conflagration that could very easily tear the country apart less than 25 years after it gained independence from the Soviet Union. However, there is another equally disturbing aspect to the rise of fascism in that country – it is not alone.

Across the continent

Ukraine and the rise of right wing extremism there cannot be seen, let alone understood, in isolation. Rather, it must be examined as part of a growing trend throughout Europe (and indeed the world) – a trend which threatens the very foundations of democracy.

In Greece, savage austerity imposed by the troika (IMF, ECB, and European Commission) has crippled the country's economy, leading to a depression as bad, if not worse, than the Great Depression in the United States.

It is against this backdrop of economic collapse that the Golden Dawn party has grown to become the third most popular political party in the country.

Espousing an ideology of hate, the Golden Dawn – in effect a Nazi party that promotes anti-Jewish, anti-immigrant, anti-women chauvinism – is a political force that the government

in Athens has understood to be a serious threat to the very fabric of society.

It is this threat which led the government to arrest the party's leadership after a Golden Dawn Nazi fatally stabbed an anti-fascist rapper. Athens has launched an investigation into the party, though the results of this investigation and trial remain somewhat unclear.

What makes Golden Dawn such an insidious threat is the fact that, despite their central ideology of Nazism, their anti-EU, anti-austerity rhetoric appeals to many in the economically devastated Greece.

As with many fascist movements in the 20th Century, Golden Dawn scapegoats immigrants, Muslim and African primarily, for many of the problems facing Greeks.

In dire economic circumstances, such irrational hate becomes appealing; an answer to the question of how to solve society's problems. Indeed, despite Golden Dawn's leaders being jailed, other party members are still in parliament, still running for major offices including mayor of Athens. Though an electoral victory is unlikely, another strong showing at the polls will make the eradication of fascism in Greece that much harder.

Were this phenomenon confined to Greece and Ukraine, it would not constitute a continental trend. Sadly however, we see the rise of similar, albeit slightly less overtly fascist, political parties all over Europe.

In Spain, the ruling pro-austerity People's Party has moved to establish draconian laws restricting protest and free speech, and empowering and sanctioning repressive police tactics.

In France, the National Front Party of Marine Le Pen, which vehemently scapegoats Muslim and African immigrants, won nearly 20 percent of the vote in the first round of presidential elections.

Similarly, the Party for Freedom in the

Netherlands – which promotes anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant policies – has grown to be the third largest in parliament.

Throughout Scandinavia, ultra nationalist parties which once toiled in complete irrelevance and obscurity are now significant players in elections. These trends are worrying to say the least. It should be noted too that, beyond Europe, there are a number of quasi-fascist political formations which are, in one way or another, supported by the United States.

The right wing coups that overthrew the governments of Paraguay and Honduras were tacitly and/or overtly supported by Washington in their seemingly endless quest to suppress the Left in Latin America.

Of course, one should also remember that the protest movement in Russia was spearheaded by Alexei Navalny and his nationalist followers who espouse a virulently anti-Muslim, racist ideology that views immigrants from the Russian Caucasus and former Soviet republics as beneath "European Russians".

These and other examples begin to paint a very ugly portrait of a US foreign policy that attempts to use economic hardship and political upheaval to extend US hegemony around the world.

In Ukraine, the "Right Sector" has taken the fight from the negotiating table to the streets in an attempt to fulfil the dream of Stepan Bandera – a Ukraine free of Russia, Jews, and all other "undesirables" as they see it.

Buoyed by the continued support from the US and Europe, these fanatics represent a serious threat to democracy. If Europe and the United States don't recognise this threat in its infancy, by the time they finally do, it might just be too late.

The 4th Media ✪

Doctors collaborated in tortures in CIA's military jails

Independent research published recently contains revealing facts about the involvement of doctors and other health professionals in tortures in military jails of the USA.

According to the authors of the research titled "The abandoned ethics: medical professionalism and abuses against detainees in the war against terrorism", in the jails of the Pentagon and the CIA, where abuses were committed, doctors and other health professionals have become accomplices to abuses scorning their ethical obligations.

"The Defence Department and CIA demanded, in an inappropriate manner, of their health professionals to cooperate in operations of extracting security information in a way that caused serious pain to the detainees", it is pointed out in the report.

"In the name of national security, the military people distorted the oath [of Hypocrates] and the doctors were transformed into agents of the intelligence services", pointed out Dr Jerald Thompson, professor of medicine at Columbia University.

Another of the authors of the report, Leonard Rubinstein, professor of Public Health Law at John Hopkins University, referred to force-feeding the hunger strikers at Guantánamo, the hard interrogations and the drowning of suspects in the secret CIA jails.

The doctors or the nurses "legitimise these practises by their presence" and by saying that they are medically "acceptable", stated

Professor Rubinstein to the French Press Agency, highlighting that these abuses with medical cover "do not belong to the past in this country."

Among these practices the research, conducted by 20 lawyers, medical and military experts, mentions the "fabrication" of the participation in and the conduct of tortures and "brutal, inhuman and humiliating treatment" of people held in American jails in Afghanistan, Guantánamo or the secret CIA jails.

The authors of this research of two years duration demand that an inquiry be conducted by the Information Committee of the US Senate.

These conclusions were defined as "false" by the CIA and "illogical" by the Pentagon. Answering a question from the French Press Agency, the CIA supported the view that this report "contains serious inaccuracies and false conclusions".

"It is important to point out that CIA does no longer hold captives and that President Obama put an end to the program of detention and interrogation by decree in 2009," stated the CIA communications manager Dean Boyed. The same was the response by the Pentagon, whose representative Tod Bricil "clarified" that "not one of the critics has had real access to detainees, to their medical reports or to the processes" of the Guantánamo jail.

The authors of the research, however, are demanding that an inquiry be held by the Information Committee of the US Senate.

Roads of Peace ✪



Summit in Cuba reflects altered power dynamics

WT Whitney

The II Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) opened in Cuba on January 28, 2014, birthday of Cuban national hero and Latin American integrationist Jose Marti. The 33 heads of states on hand represented all Western Hemisphere nations south of the Rio Grande River, the region Marti called "Our America."

United Nations secretary general Ban Ki-moon and José Miguel Insulza, secretary general of the Organisation of American States, attended as guests. The OAS, loyal to US dictates, ejected revolutionary Cuba from its membership in 1963. By serving as CELAC president pro tem during 2013 and hosting this summit, Cuba made clear its return to the community of nations.

Cuban President Raul Castro opened the Summit and indirectly took note of OAS' altered status in the region: "Step by step we are creating a [CELAC] that is currently recognised in the world as the legitimate representative of the interests of Latin America and the Caribbean." CELAC has a "heritage of 2,000 years of struggle for independence." Its "ultimate goal" is "development of a spirit of greater unity amid diversity."

Castro called for "creation of a common political space ... where we can exploit our resources in a sovereign way and for our common wellbeing and utilise our scientific and technical knowledge in the interest of the progress of our peoples; where we can assert undeniable principles such as self-determination, sovereignty and sovereign equality of states."

Observing that Latin America and the Caribbean is the "most unequal region on the planet," he lamented that an overall 28.2

percent poverty rate co-exists with the "10 percent richest in Latin America receiving 32 percent of the total income." He detailed children's lack of schooling and health care. Castro highlighted the region's abundance of natural resources, fertile land, and water, pointing out that "all that wealth should become the driving force to eradicate inequalities."

Castro had asked for a minute of silence in honour of late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez who convened the founding CELAC congress in Caracas in 2011. Chile hosted the first summit in early 2013 after a term as president pro tem. Costa Rica becomes CELAC president following this summit. Responsibility for ongoing CELAC affairs rests with a committee comprising the past, current, and upcoming CELAC presidents and a Caribbean-area president. Foreign ministers and their staffs perform administration.

At its conclusion on January 29, the CELAC Summit declared the region a "zone of peace" subject to international law and principles of the United Nations Charter. Member states vowed to "banish forever the use of force and to seek a peaceful solution to controversies," also "to respect the inalienable right of each state to choose its economic, political, social and cultural system." Interference in the internal affairs of another country is off limits, as are nuclear weapons.

The Summit issued a far-reaching, 83-point "Declaration of Havana." The document reviews purposes and precedents and ratifies measures supporting the sovereignty of states, food sovereignty, sustainable and coordinated regional development, and protection of civil society and private institutions. It calls for solutions to climate change, poverty and hunger,

drug addiction, and flawed United Nations governance. CELAC backs Haiti reconstruction, Puerto Rican independence, streamlined foreign investment systems, and Great Britain's return of the Malvinas Islands to Argentina. The organisation seeks rights for Indigenous people and migrants and demands that the US economic blockade of Cuba stop.

The US government, on the outside, was not entirely silent. Diplomat Conrad Tribble tweeted from the US Interests section in Havana asking, "Is any journalist here for CelacCuba going to look for independent voices on Cuba's reality? It would be worth the trouble."

The Continental Forum for Promotion of Democracy, a "counter-summit," took place at Florida International University on January 25. Cuban exiles in the United States and opposition politicians and publicists from Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua attended. Journalist Jean-Guy Allard claims the group organising the event, the Buenos Aires – based Centre for Opening and Development of Latin America (CADAL), has CIA ties and is financed by the International Republican Institute. CADAL staged a summit-related forum in Havana on January 28 joined by leaders of domestic opposition groups.

Editorialising, Mexico's *La Jornada* news service judged that "CELAC's success in pulling off its summit shows, essentially, a political-diplomatic turnover in the continent. But governments have to work to consolidate this new deliberative political body for Latin America and the Caribbean and strengthen and maintain it, despite natural disagreements cropping up between governments and predictable attempts by US diplomacy to distort this forum."

People's World ✪

Teachers strike back

Luke James

BRITAIN: Michael Gove's most troubled week as Education Secretary got worse when teachers called a first national strike against his ideological assault on their profession.

More than 320,000 members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) will swap classrooms for picket lines in England and Wales on March 26 – and other unions could yet join in.

The action is in response to Mr Gove's plans to let individual head teachers decide pay, heap more work on teachers but keep them in the classroom until 68 and rip up the national curriculum. NUT leader Christine Blower said: "Michael Gove's persistent refusals to address our ongoing dispute over pay, pensions and conditions of service is unnecessary and deeply damaging."

"As a result thousands of good, experienced teachers are leaving or considering leaving the job and a teacher shortage crisis is looming with two in five teachers leaving the profession in their first five years."

Welsh teachers' union UCAC said it will take action for the first time, demanding that pay powers be

devolved to the country's government. The strike piles more misery and pressure on Mr Gove, who is fighting a civil war within his own Department for Education after sacking Labour peer Sally Morgan as Ofsted chairwoman.

And he was left isolated by his barmy call to tear down the "Berlin Wall" between state and private schools by making kids learn classics and run laps around the field as punishment.

Even England rugby veteran Brian Moore took to Twitter to maul his rhetoric, writing: "Cut school sports funds and make them equate exercise with punishment – brilliant."

The rebellion may swell when teaching union NASUWT decides whether to join the latest walkout.

Leader Chris Keates said that Mr Gove "must understand that the teaching profession is on the verge of a crisis. The relentless attack on every aspect of teachers' working lives is taking its toll."

A government statement said Mr Gove had agreed to union calls for fresh talks in a bid to avoid the strike.

Morning Star ✪

Support *The Guardian*
by donating to Press Fund

Pipeline and jobs controversy

Blake Deppe

The proposed construction of the Keystone XL pipeline has prompted protests from multiple groups and organisations, including environmentalists, Indigenous people, and some labour unions. As the southern leg of the pipeline is currently being built, it is generating waves of outrage, which were only exacerbated by a recent environmental impact statement by the US State Department, which claimed there would be no significant harmful impact from building the pipeline.

That State Department report, instead of addressing the concerns of pipeline opponents, talked around the environmental problems by saying that the global warming that is happening would probably still be happening, even without the pipeline.

The pipeline, owned by the TransCanada Corporation, was first proposed back in 2005, and is slated to carry tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, to the US Gulf Coast – notably, two areas that have endured seemingly endless grief and environmental damage from oil disasters.

The pipeline would transport 830,000 barrels of oil per day, running roughshod through sensitive ecosystems and Indigenous lands to do so. Major environmental groups have been opposed to Keystone XL from its inception, with other activists across the country backing their stance.

Some unions, like the Labourers' International Union of North America, have come out in support of the project, touting it as a jobs creator. Their stance is understandable given the extent of joblessness in our country. But others including the National Nurses Union have lent their voice to those of the anti-Keystone XL movement.

Keystone XL backers' arguments that the project ought to be championed as a jobs provider are being disputed. Many, including some labour activists, feel that the pipeline issue does not need to be divisive, and that they and environmentalists share the same underlying interests.

"Nurses will continue to oppose construction of this project," said Jean Ross, a registered nurse and NNU's co-president, "and will call on Obama to stand with our patients and our communities, not the big oil interests, to reject Keystone."

James C Little, president of the Transport Workers Union, and Larry J Hanley, president of the Amalgamated Transit Union, released a joint



statement agreeing with the NNU's stance.

They said, "We call on the State Department not to approve construction of the Keystone XL pipeline or to take any actions that lead to the further extraction of tarsands oil from Alberta, Canada. We share the Environmental Protection Agency's concerns over the potential impacts to groundwater resources from pipeline spills, and the inevitable damage to the health of communities affected by the increase of tar sands refinery emissions."

Many commentators feel that the State Department's analysis of the pipeline's impact was inconclusive and did not show definitively that President Obama should approve the pipeline in its entirety. 350.org writer Duncan Meisel noted, "It avoids the glaringly obvious fact that a pipeline carrying 800,000 barrels per day of the world's dirtiest oil would be a disaster for the climate and the lives of Indigenous communities, farmers, and homes along the route."

350.org Executive Director May Boeve called the impact statement "a green light to escalate our efforts. This fight got started at the national level when 1,253 people got arrested in front of the White House. We expect many more people will take part in civil disobedience and take to the streets before this fight is over."

Those words have already

proven true, for hundreds of actions in opposition to the pipeline are erupting nationwide, with many others planned. Several hundred protesters gathered in Washington DC's Lafayette Park on February 3 – merely one of 300 protests that took place across the country that day. These events were organised by groups such as 350.org, the Sierra Club, the Centre for Biological Diversity, the Natural Resources Defence Council, the League of Conservation Voters, Rainforest Action Network, and a plethora of others.

The fightback wasn't limited to specifically environmental organisations. February 6 once again showed that Keystone XL is an across-the-board issue: An alliance of Native American communities held a demonstration in Detroit that day, part of the "Idle No More" First Nations Canadian-US movement against the pipeline.

Those Indigenous groups released a joint statement entitled "No Keystone XL pipeline Will Cross Lakota Lands". In it, they said, "We stand with the Lakota nation, we stand on the side of protecting water, we stand for Indigenous land-based ways of life which will not be corrupted by a hazardous, toxic pipeline. Keystone XL will not cross over reservation boundaries. If [the continued construction of the pipeline] does get approved, we aim to stop it."

Friends of the Earth, an environmental group that also led demonstrations this week, called Keystone XL "an environmental crime in progress," and came out in support of the Indigenous groups' plight. "Important parts of their cultural traditions and livelihood are coming under attack because of tar sands operations," Friends of the Earth said.

"Not only have some communities been forced off their land, there are also those that are living downstream from [oil-tainted water sources] who have seen spikes in rates of rare cancers, renal failure, lupus, and hyperthyroidism. These problems will only get worse unless tar sands production is halted."

Those who share a justified concern about job growth may want to look at the jobs that can be provided by alternate, cleaner energy. Last year, research group The Solar Foundation released a report that found solar jobs to be booming in states including New Jersey, California, Arizona, Texas, and Michigan. "There are more solar energy workers in Texas than ranchers," the report found. "In California, they outnumber actors, and nationwide, America now has more solar workers than coal miners."

Solar workers who are employed installing solar panels typically make US\$38,000 per year, the study found

– slightly more than the median national wage of US\$34,750, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics (which The Solar Foundation used as a source for its study). The solar industry was found to employ 119,000 people throughout the US in 2013, a 13 percent increase from 2012.

This is one of the fastest growth rates for any energy industry, and those numbers are increasing annually. If the concern of some activists is what effect opposing Keystone XL will have on jobs, many feel they need to look carefully at what is happening in the solar industry.

"We need jobs," concluded union leaders Little and Hanley, "but not ones based on increasing our reliance on tar sands oil. There is no shortage of water and sewage pipelines that need to be fixed or replaced, bridges and tunnels in need of emergency repair, transportation infrastructure that needs to be renewed and developed.

Many jobs could also be created that help us reduce air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and improve energy efficiency. Energy conservation and climate protection will become the new means of "putting people to work and laying the foundations of a green and sustainable economic future for the United States."

People's World ☺

MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA, 2014

International Commission of Inquiry into the case of the Cuban Five

Date: 7-8 March, 2014

Place: The Law Society, Chancery Lane, London, UK
More information in: www.voicesforthe5.com

Third Week of Denounce and Solidarity "5 days for the Cuban5"

Date: June 4-11, 2014

Place: Washington DC, USA

More information in: www.thecuban5.org

III World Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba, "Cuba Solidarity 2014"

Date: October 27 - 31, 2014

Place: Havana, Cuba

More information in:

www.icap.cu & www.facebook.com/cubasolidaridad2014



India: Power supply spat

India's Supreme Court ordered state power producer NTPC to continue supplying power to distribution companies in the capital Delhi to avert blackouts amid a dispute over wholesale payments. It is the latest development in an escalating row between Delhi's newly elected ruler the Common Man Party and power distributors that have been warned to pay their providers or risk being cut off.

The distribution companies claim that by keeping tariffs low, politicians have strained their finances and forced them to resort to crippling power cuts.

"The consumer would be the

sufferer," said Justice SS Nijjar, one of two judges who made the order.

"Think about them."

BSES Yamuna Power, an arm of billionaire Anil Ambani's Reliance Infrastructure, sells electricity in the central and eastern parts of New Delhi and runs two distribution companies there in a joint venture with the state government. It had faced a threat from NTPC that its supply would be cut off from February 11 if it did not pay its bills.

The firm claims that unrealistically low tariffs and a revenue shortfall have meant that it could not pay its bills. But Reliance Infrastructure reported a 26 percent jump in its third quarter net profit over

the same period in the last financial year.

The Ambani family is the richest family in India and one of the richest in the world. The Delhi government had asked the region's electricity regulator to revoke distributors' licences if they halted supply, drawing howls of indignation from the firms, which claim that the regulator has failed to ensure that power tariffs keep pace with rising costs.

India's power sector has been marred by years of rising debts, fuel supply shortages and corruption.

Morning Star ☺

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Pete Seeger RIP

All people world-wide who value the ideals of social justice, human rights, peace and international disarmament, equality for all and environmental responsibility will be very sad at the passing of the American folksinger, Pete Seeger.

This great human being used his musical talents to compose songs that promoted these important values and he was prepared to stand alongside people fighting for justice whether it was a popular thing to do at the time or not.

He was famous for composing "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" (1961) and "Turn, Turn, Turn" (1962), an anti-war anthem, "Bring

"Em Home", an anthem in opposition to the Vietnam War.

Seeger had before this been active in supporting the republican, anti-fascist cause during the Spanish Civil War and Roosevelt's entry into World War II to defeat Nazism and fascism. Very conservative Americans would have considered him to be a "premature anti-fascist".

He was a founding member of the folk music group, the Almanacs in 1941 and this became the Weavers in 1950. The group produced several albums of standard folk songs in the early 1950s which included songs that they composed like "On Top of Old Smoky", Follow the Drinking Gourd, "The Wreck of the John B", "If I Had a Hammer" and "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine".

The Weavers were put on hold in 1952 to 1955 because of Seeger's activities in supporting what was viewed as left-wing activities.

Seeger strongly participated in the civil rights, worker rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s and was forced to appear before the US Un-American Committee. In his later years, he was very involved in the environmental movement. He was one of the folksingers who

popularised the spiritual "We Shall Overcome", which became a major anthem of the peace movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

He won four Grammy Awards and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award for his musical work.

Pete's half-sister, Peggy Seeger, is also a political folksinger. She married British folksinger, Ewan McColl, and they performed together in many parts of the world including Australia. Their songs were also about peace, social justice, women's rights and the struggles of ordinary working people.

Pete Seeger was truly an American with a conscience. The world needs more people like him.

Andrew (Andy) Alcock
SA

Big capital's political clout

The East West road tunnel which is about to be given the go ahead in Melbourne is a beautiful example of planning decisions made by the billionaire dictators rather than by so-called democracy. The tunnel, originally planned in the

2008 Melbourne Metro Transport Report, was to alleviate traffic congestion by allowing travel under the city between the west to the east of Melbourne.

However, appearing out of nowhere, the state conservative government started spruiking a new idea which was to only fund the eastern part of the tunnel at \$8 billion and instead of continuing to the west it is eventually going south to the docks. Of course the only person who would want a new freeway to the docks is one of Victoria's great hidden dictators, transport mogul Lindsay Fox, but nowhere is his name ever mentioned in the government propaganda or capitalist press.

The government's propaganda states this is going to change the face of travel for Melbournians but this is false and it is confirmed by the fact that the government, knowing very little car traffic will be using it, has to subsidise its ongoing costs even when it is built.

Prior to the last federal election Tony Abbott was shown on TV offering \$1.5 billion towards the cost of this Eastern tunnel. He was filmed sitting next to a transport driver but if one was observant you would have

noticed that it was in one of Lindsay Fox's trucks, but no Lindsay Fox to be seen.

The great billionaire dictator of freeway planning in Victoria is purposely hidden from the public, the propaganda of the bourgeois establishment is to fool people into believing that planning is being done by "their" elected officials under the guise of "democracy" for the betterment of society. Of course if it was widely known that Lindsay Fox was getting \$8 billion of public money to benefit his business he would find it hard to be seen in public: that is why most billionaires have their politicians doing their dirty work.

As a way of repayment for this corruption, Lindsay Fox was later on being interviewed in support of Abbott's decision to no longer give out handouts to GMH because he stated they should be able to exist without tax payers subsidies. I do not know how he did not burst out laughing as he said it, considering his \$8 billion welfare cheque made out to him that was sitting in his right hand pocket.

Helen Brown
Vic

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Poverty and wealth



Governments are demanding cuts to government spending (especially to welfare), a move that will simply increase poverty.

Did you see the report last month from Britain's Joseph Rowntree Foundation that for the first time, the number of people in working families in that country who are living in poverty (a whopping 6.7 million people) is greater than the number of people in workless and retired families who are living in poverty (only slightly less at 6.3 million).

The number of people in developed capitalist countries living in poverty, homeless or dependent on welfare payments to buy food is growing all the time. The exponential growth in the gap between rich and poor was highlighted in another report issued in January, this time by Oxfam, which found that seven out of every ten people live in countries where income inequality has increased since the 1980s.

Oxfam's executive director Winne Byanyima made the telling comment: "It is staggering that in the 21st Century, half of the world's population – that's 3.5 billion people – own no more than a tiny elite whose numbers could all fit comfortably on a double-decker bus."

Oxfam's researchers said it was likely the full concentration of wealth was in fact even more skewed, with estimates claiming that more than £11 trillion is held "unrecorded and off shore".

Britain's government, like Australia's, continues to deny that there is any kind of systemic crisis. Instead, they blame everything on the apparently extravagant and "unsustainable" lifestyle of the ordinary people, who expect high wages now and

pensions when they retire as well as other extraordinary handouts (like dole payments when they're unemployed). Both governments are demanding cuts to government spending (especially to welfare), a move that will simply increase poverty.

And yet, surely few would deny that a social system that condemns ever-greater numbers of its citizens to a descent into poverty, must have outlived its usefulness. But of course, there are always one or two who are bereft of any concern for the well-being of the majority. One such would have to be Boris Johnson, the Tory Mayor of London. Commenting on the country's growing income disparity, Boris made the profound comment that "the biggest cornflakes always rise to the top of the box". So that's all right then.

Well, actually Boris, it's not. The idea that the rich must also be "the best and brightest" has been around as long as there have been rich people to promote it. However, the rich have usually established their empires through ruthless greed and ambition, backed up by the hiring of muscle to beat up and silence critics or opponents. Henry Ford, industrialist and financial supporter of rising young German agitator Adolf Hitler, had an actual army of club-wielding thugs on his payroll to keep his auto-workers in line.

According to the High Pay Centre, an independent non-party think-tank established to monitor pay at the top of the salary pyramid, Britain's top bosses had made more money by January 8 than the average UK worker will make in the whole of the year.

FTSE 100 CEOs are paid an average of £4.3 million, or more than £1,000 an hour. But the fat cats who run the capitalist system are not content with being paid so much more than the mass of the people. Executive pay in the UK has increased by 74 percent over the last decade, while wages for ordinary workers have remained flat.

Mind you, to be fair, some of Britain's biggest corporations are conscious of the need to try to help the less fortunate in society. First Utility, the country's biggest private energy firm, has been advising its 120,000 customers on how to reduce their soaring bills, by "taking showers together" and "drinking less tea".

Said First Utility: "Showering together can save £34 a year, while turning off the telly and turning out the lights can knock another £18 off your bill." While First Utility's customers sat in the dark and wondered what was playing on the TV in rich people's houses, they were probably also wondering about the effrontery of a company lecturing its customers on how to keep their costs down when it had just raised its prices by a whopping 18 percent!

Meanwhile, Britain's Prime Minister, David Cameron, has been doing his best to promote the idea of getting rid of public housing. A very large percentage of homes in Britain are owned by the local Council or Housing Authority. They are scattered throughout the community, not gathered together in low-wage ghettos, and their rents are fixed and low. Cameron, like Abbott out here, thinks that public housing is anathema, an affront to private enterprise and an unnatural restraint upon market forces.

If there were no public sector, rents would be free to climb as high as private landlords could push them. And that would be fine and right with Cameron and Abbott. For them, housing is a privilege that comes to you only when you have scrounged together enough money.

Cameron has been pushing a "HelpToBuy" scheme (a bit like our "First Home Buyer's Grant"). He posted on-line a video in which "Sharon and Maisie show me their lovely new home – just one of the families helped onto the housing ladder by HelpToBuy." Only one problem: Sharon was recognised as the very well-off sales director at Endfields Property Services, Southampton estate agents, and the property she has bought is from the books of her own company – without any help from Cameron.

Just one more case confirming – as if it needed confirming – that the rich and their politician mates have the identical ethics and morals as the criminal classes, whose methods they emulate assiduously. The sooner these parasites are driven from our midst – and off our backs – the better off the people of the world will be.

For a start, let's reverse the trend of the last few decades and instead push for the implementation of the slogan: "Tax The Rich!" Put wealth tax and corporate tax back where it should be, at the top of the taxation ladder, providing its proper share of government funding. ✪



Sunday February 16 –
Saturday February 22

Those of you who watched last week's first episode of the two-part series *David Attenborough's Rise Of Animals* (ABC1 Sunday February 16 at 7.30pm) will know that this short but informative tour through the evolutionary history of creatures with backbones is well worth watching. In an age when reactionary politicians join with obscurantists of every hue to use the beauty and complexity of evolution to argue in favour of a "grand designer" and to argue against scientific opinion and the scientific method, it behoves all of us to be well informed about such fundamental scientific issues as evolution.

This very up to date mini-series uses a lot of discoveries and research being done today by archaeologists and fossil hunters in China. It is refreshing to see a science program that is not Eurocentric (still less "US-centric"). The very tiny fossil skull of the earliest mammal so far found is so small it almost beggars belief that it was found at all.

Attenborough lays out the evolutionary history of the mammals in a clear, concise but easy to follow story that leaves no room for the backwardness of the Fred Niles of this world. Most interesting perhaps is the program's recognition that we are still evolving.

In this week's episode, Attenborough begins with a visit to the Lufeng Basin of Southern China, where local experts have discovered one of the earliest true mammals ever found, the tiny *Hadrocodium*. Current science tells us that this is the common ancestor to all mammals!

Also in Northern China, David gets to study the earliest members yet found of two groups of mammals that abandoned egg-laying altogether and began to give birth to their young alive – the marsupials and the placentals.

He also looks at the rise of the Megafauna, after the demise of the dinosaurs. These giant mammals, however, were no match for the various versions of *Homo* that now came on the scene, a creature adapted for running and stabbing and with a large brain to outwit its prey.

The time-lapse coverage of events in the series *Seconds From Disaster* – episode one 9/11 (ABC2 Monday February 17 at 7.30pm) – seems ideally suited to a program about what happened in the US on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. *What* happened, not why it happened or who organised for it to happen. These latter questions are the key ones and central to identifying what conspiracies may have been involved. This program, however, is not concerned with these two questions, only with clarifying *what* happened. That in its self is useful, but one would have wished for so much more!

The program does answer some troubling questions however (like, why didn't they just shoot the planes down? It becomes clear that that was never really an option. Apparently, what people *think* the US Air Force can do and what it can actually achieve is not the same thing!) Within its limited brief, I think the program does a very good job.

Much less satisfying is episode two of the same series, *Seconds From Disaster: Pearl Harbour* (ABC2 Tuesday February 18 at 7.30pm). This time, the episode's



David Attenborough's *Rise of Animals* (ABC1 Sunday February 16 at 7.30pm).

emphasis is not only on what happened, but on what the Japanese hoped to gain and why they failed.

The program argues that the Japanese Navy's priority of destroying the US battleships that it perceived as standing between Japan and its desire for a Pacific empire was a strategic error. It meant that they did not pursue the US aircraft carriers that were not in Pearl Harbour on the day of the attack. Carriers were to prove to be the backbone of the US fight-back. The Japanese also seriously underestimated the US public response to the attack. Far from weakening their will to fight, "remember Pearl Harbour" became a rallying call for the US.

The reconstruction of the actual attack, using cgi, is quite well done. Soon, we won't need newsreel footage of historical events at all: we'll just recreate them on a computer. And doesn't that pose some interesting ideas?

I have decided that the bright young things that the ABC turns to these days when they want to create a comedy show are just not on the same wavelength as I am. I was raised watching the great screen comedians, from the giants of the silent screen like Chaplin, Keaton, Laurel & Hardy, etc, through the great comic movies of the sound era, from Britain (*Oh, Mr Porter!*, *Kind Hearts & Coronets*, *Hobson's Choice* etc etc), France (*M Hulot's Holiday*, *Fan Fan La Tulipe*, *La Regle de Jeu*), Sweden (*Smiles of a Summer Night*) and of course the USA: *His Girl Friday*, *Sullivan's Travels*, *Midnight*, and so on.

Then we had the benefit of seeing the great vaudeville comics like Jack Benny, Burns & Allen, WC Fields and the Marx Brothers, who polished their comic timing and their understanding of the nature of "the gag" on stage and on radio (before live audiences) before ever appearing

in movies. The Marx Brothers used to "try out" their movie gags before surprised audiences in Hollywood movie theatres, to get the timing right and to adjust the gags to make sure they made audiences laugh.

Television brought us Morecombe & Wise, Dave Allen and other comics trained in the hard school of the British comedy clubs circuit. Today, there are still lots of funny people doing stand-up in Britain, the USA and Australia. So why does the ABC persist with ever-so-clever but unfunny sketch comedy based on put-downs, or on the mistaken belief that unpleasant people are inherently laughter-producing. They are not.

Which brings us to *This Is Littleton* (ABC2 Thursdays from February 20 at 9.30pm). A small team of writer-performers present "characters" all of whom are supposed to reside in the fictitious town of Littleton. I didn't laugh once. ☹

Melbourne

Workers & Community Rally to defend the right to protest in Victoria

Stop the Napthine summary offences act draconian amendments now!

Rally: Tuesday, 18 February
Time: 10:00 am

Assemble at Trades Hall & march to Parliament House, Spring St, Melbourne

We are union - www.weareunion.org.au

Subscription to **The Guardian**

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

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

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

Phone in details on 02 9699 8844

Or send to: Guardian Subscriptions

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

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

Card# _____

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

Signature: _____

The Guardian

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

Editor: Tom Pearson

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

Printed by Spotpress
24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl Marrickville 2204

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

Enmore Newsagent

195 Enmore Rd (near Edgeware Rd) Enmore, NSW
This Sydney newsagent regularly stocks *The Guardian*

POLITICS IN THE PUB

February 13

WHY THE RENEWAL OF THE ALP DEPENDS ON LABOR WINNING BACK ITS BATTLERS WITH A PROGRESSIVE AGENDA

Shaun Wilson, Dr, Sociology Macquarie Uni;
Amanda Perkins, Union activist;

February 20

THE TRANS PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT – NEITHER PARTNERSHIP NOR TRADE – A CORPORATE THREAT TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Don Edwards, MSF (Doctors without Borders);
Pat Ranaid, Research Associate, Sydney Uni and Campaigner
Australian Fair Trade & Investment Network;

February 27

A FOREIGN AGENCY INTERFERENCE – ISRAEL VERSUS THE AUSTRALIAN SUPPORTERS OF THE BDS

Jake Lynch, Director, Centre Peace & Conflict Studies, Sydney Uni;
Cathy Peters, Committee for Justice & Peace in Palestine, former
Marrickville Councillor;

March 2014

THE FAR RIGHT AGENDA OF THE ABBOTT GOVERNMENT NOW REVEALED – EG: GONSKI EDUCATION REFORMS BETRAYED; MORE PRIVATISATIONS; CUTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE; REGRESSIVE TAX & WELFARE CUTS; HOW TO RESPOND?

Angelo Gavrielatos, Fed. Pres. Australian Education Union;
Jenny McAllister, National Secretary, ALP;

Every Friday 6pm 'til 7.45

Gaelic Club

64 Devonshire Street Surry Hills

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

www.politicsinthepub.org.au

The power of Southern song: How the South shaped Pete Seeger

Before he became a folk music legend, Pete Seeger wanted to be a journalist. It was this perspective as a reporter and storyteller that defined Seeger's approach to singing and playing music: sounding out a warning about injustice, introducing us to new people and perspectives, and reconnecting us to our own, often hidden traditions of ordinary people struggling for change.

Seeger, who passed away on January 27, took pride in learning and sharing songs from around the world, but no place seemed to shape the New York native, both musically and politically, more than the US South.

In 1936, at the age of 17, Seeger's father – then working for the New Deal's Works Progress Administration – took Pete to a folk festival in Asheville, North Carolina. It was here that Seeger heard Samantha Bumgarner play a five-string banjo for the first time and fell in love with the instrument. He also discovered North Carolinian Bascam Lamar Lunsford, the "Minstrel of the Appalachians" who ran the festival and taught Seeger his signature cascading finger-picking style.

After dropping out of Harvard, Seeger's first job was working for Texan folklorist Alan Lomax to catalogue and record folks songs for the Library of Congress. Through Lomax, Seeger met his longtime compatriot Woody Guthrie and was exposed to Southern musicians like Louisiana blues legend Lead Belly and Kentucky labour singer Aunt Molly Jackson who would shape his musical and political outlook.

The Cultural Front

While in New York, Seeger joined a vibrant circle of musicians active in left-wing causes. Among Seeger's closest comrades in the "Cultural Front" was Lee Hayes, the towering labour singer from Arkansas who provided a link for Seeger to both Southern music and the often-hidden history of the region's progressive movements.

Hayes had learned sacred harp music in his minister father's church and worked at the embattled pro-union Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas in the 1930s, and also with the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, an activist training school that connected Seeger to the civil rights movement.

In 1940, Hayes and Seeger joined with others to form the Almanac Singers, a name inspired by Hayes' observation that back in Arkansas "a family had two books. The Bible to help 'em to the next world. The Almanac, to help 'em through the present world." Closely tied to the activist unions of the Congress of Industrial Organisations, the fluid Almanac lineup included Guthrie; Josh White, an African-American singer and activist from South Carolina; and Sis Cunningham, a white Commonwealth College graduate and former teacher at North Carolina's radical Southern Labour School for Women.

Going South

The Almanacs soon disbanded, but their popularity with progressives led Seeger to become the balladeer for Henry Wallace's New Deal-inspired Progressive Party bid for president



Pete Seeger.

in 1948. The campaign included a fateful week-long tour in the South, where Wallace's black and white team was met with violence at its first stop in North Carolina. Seeger later remembered that Wallace's advisors wanted to cancel the trip, but Wallace insisted they push deeper into the South. As a reporter for the *Baltimore Afro-American* wrote, "An integrated group, travelling through the South in 1948... We were sitting targets expecting to be blown up at any minute."

The hostility Seeger witnessed in the South was dispiriting, but it also sharpened his interest in the emerging Southern civil rights struggle, a focus he and Lee Hayes continued when they formed The Weavers in the fall of 1948. Before being commercially destroyed by Cold War hysteria, the Weavers had more success than the Almanacs, and many of their most popular songs had Southern roots: "On Top of Old Smoky", which Seeger picked up in Appalachia; "Pay Me My Money Down", a slave song from the Georgia Sea Islands; and "Darlin' Cory", a mountain song about lost love and moonshine.

The year 1948 was also momentous for another reason: That was when *People's Songs Bulletin*, a publication of the People's Songs group Seeger and Hayes led, published the words to "I'll Overcome Someday", a gospel song they credited to African-American composer Charles Albert Tindley. Seeger said he learned it from Zilphia Horton, who ran cultural programs at the Highlander school; she

had heard it from striking tobacco workers in Charleston, South Carolina in 1945.

As Seeger was always quick to admit, the origins of many of the songs he played, relayed by oral tradition, were murky, and "We Shall Overcome" is no exception. (A caustic 2012 book argues the source is another gospel singer, Louise Shropshire.) But there's no question Seeger was key to popularising it – playing it for Martin Luther King, Jr at a Highlander reunion in 1957, and transmitting it to rising folk artists like Joan Baez, who went on to sing it at the 1963 March on Washington.

Other, less well-known Seeger songs chronicled different aspects of Southern political and racial history. "The Story of Old Monroe", which Seeger wrote with Malvina Reynolds in 1962, told the story of Robert F Williams, the militant NAACP leader in Monroe, North Carolina who advocated armed self-defence against the Ku Klux Klan. Echoing a similar theme, Seeger was the first to record another Reynolds song, "Battle of Maxton Field", hailing a successful effort by armed Lumbee Indians to drive the KKK out of Maxton, in 1958.

One More Grain of Sand

Seeger, of course, never stopped singing and speaking out, including delivering a spirited performance of "This Land Is Your Land" at President Barack Obama's inauguration in 2008, more than 50 years after McCarthyism and blacklists devastated his career.

Through it all, the South's rich musical and cultural traditions, as well as the harsh realities of racist violence and other injustices in the region, were a defining influence.

In his 1967 memoir *The Incomplete Folk Singer*, Seeger includes a journal entry from 1964, when he came to Mississippi at the invitation of civil rights organisers to teach at movement-organised Freedom Schools. At one workshop, he remembers having to tell the audience that authorities had found the bodies of murdered activists James Earl Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner (a tragedy Seeger later sang about in the gentle but powerful ballad, "Those Three Are On My Mind").

It was a painful moment, one that would cause anyone to wonder what good they were doing, and whether change was truly possible. But Seeger always believed that it didn't matter how long the odds were – the issue was which side you were on, and whether or not you'd cast your lot with ordinary people struggling for a better world. As he wrote from Mississippi:

"And what am I accomplishing, some will ask? Well, I know I'm just one more grain of sand in this world, but I'd rather throw my weight, however small, on the side of what I think is right, than selfishly look after my own fortunes and have to live with a bad conscience."

Institute for Southern Studies ✪



Communist Party of Australia

Guardian

Website: www.cpa.org.au/guardian
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Central Committee:

General Secretary: Bob Briton
Party President: Vinnie Molina
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
P: 02 9699 8844 F: 02 9699 9833

Website: www.cpa.org.au
Email: cpa@cpa.org.au

Sydney District Committee:
Wayne Sonter
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
P: 02 9699 8844 F: 02 9699 9833

Newcastle Branch:
newcastle@cpa.org.au

Riverina Branch:
Allan Hamilton
2/57 Cooper St Cootamundra 2590

Melbourne Branch:
Andrew Irving
viccpa@netspace.net.au
Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall
Lygon St Carlton Sth 3053
P: 03 9639 1550 F: 03 9639 4199

SA State Committee:
Bob Briton,
PO Box 612, Port Adelaide BC,
SA 5015 Ph: 0418 894 366
www.adelaidecommunists.org
Email: sa@cpa.org.au

West Australian Branch:
Vinnie Molina perth@cpa.org.au
PO Box 98 North Perth WA 6906
P: 0419 812 872

Brisbane Branch:
PO Box 33, Camp Hill, Qld 4152
P: 0449 202 189
cpabris@live.com.au

Tasmania Branch:
Bob Briton tas@cpa.org.au
P: 0418 894 366