



Axe

Abbott

Anna Pha

The main objectives of the federal budget are cuts to social spending, culling the public service and privatisation of public assets and government functions. This is being done in the name of fixing “Labor’s mess”, tackling a “debt and deficit disaster” and ending “unsustainable” spending on social welfare and the public sector. The truth is that there is no budgetary crisis, government debt is not about to spin out of control, social welfare spending is NOT unsustainable and the public service is already beyond “lean and efficient”.

It is struggling to carry out its functions after years of pruning. The budget is based on lies to cover up an anti-people, neo-liberal agenda dictated by big business.

At the time of writing, the budget has still to be released, but the steady trickle of announcements over the past week point to one of the cruellest, anti-people budgets in Australia’s history, even outdoing the Howard Coalition’s first budget.

The class nature of the cuts is clear. Their main targets are working people, families, the unemployed, Indigenous Australians, age pensioners, people with a disability, women, students and others most in need. Access to benefits and pensions will be cut, as will payments for many people. It appears the less you have the harder you will be hit; targeting the vulnerable. The inequality gap is set to widen, with hundreds of thousands more Australians impoverished.

There is set to be mass sackings of public servants, cancellation of community programs and services, “reforms” to Medicare and higher education, contracting out of services and higher costs resulting from privatisation and deregulation.

Seventy-four government departments, agencies and bodies are in for the chop,



Save Medicare Rally earlier this year in Sydney. (Photo: Anna Pha)

community programs to lose their funding (or have already lost it). The environment and climate change, science, research, the arts and a range of advisory bodies are to lose their funding. Anything that might enhance the culture of the nation, assist people in need or does not make a profit for the private sector is in line for the axe as the government sets about culling the public sector and community funding.

In a desperate attempt to try to justify the cuts, Finance Minister Mathias Cormann released a 64-page document on the eve of the budget, under the title “Labor’s Mess”. It is one of the crudest and most dishonest pieces of propaganda to hit the decks for a long time. It attempts to reinforce the line of “debt and

deficit disaster” if there is a “no policy change scenario”.

It claims that the underlying budget deficit is \$47 billion, when the most recent official estimates put it at \$24 billion or 1.5 percent of GDP – the envy of many governments. Likewise the Liberal Party’s claims of debt blowout are dishonestly inflated.

It seeks to manufacture a crisis and even attributes the consequences of the Abbott government’s actions to Labor, to inflate Labor’s budget deficit! These actions include the loss of income from the abolition of the carbon tax, Hockey’s \$8.8 billion handout to the Reserve Bank of Australia, and the allocation of billions of new infrastructure spending on roads.

While the worst of the budgetary cuts are set for the 2016-17 (post-election) and years following, the foundations are being laid for a massive takeover by the corporate sector of many of the public sector’s functions and a fundamental change in the role of government. The blueprint for these, drafted by the representatives of big business, is contained in the National Commission of Audit report. (See *Guardian*, “National Commission of Audit – Corporate hostile takeover”, #1637, 07-05-2014)

The government has indicated it supports the main thrust of the report, although there might be some variations in detail such as when the retirement age of 70 kicks in.

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Guardian

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Corruption – different forms, same source

The Royal Commission into “union corruption” has kicked off in spectacular fashion with former Australian Workers’ Union (AWU) official Ralph Blewitt telling the inquiry he put \$90,000 of union members’ money towards buying a Melbourne home. Mr Blewitt previously claimed that he and fellow AWU official and boyfriend of Julia Gillard at the time, Bruce Wilson, had set up a slush fund to elect favoured candidates to trade union posts. Sensationalising tabloids and smugly conservative broadsheets will have a field day.

Many doubt the credibility of the witness, including his own sister who has labelled him as a “crook and rotten to the core.” But the damage to the reputation of unions in the mind of the public will be done. There are five unions being lined up for special treatment before the Royal Commission: the AWU, the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), the Communications, Electrical, Electronic, Energy, Information, Postal, Plumbing and Allied Services Union of Australia (CEPU), the Health Services Union (HSU) and the Transport Workers Union (TWU). ACTU assistant secretary Tim Lyons has warned all affiliates to be ready to be dragged before the inquisition.

The HSU will give up another rich supply of dirt. National secretary Kathy Jackson established a slush fund with the cynical name of the National Health Development Account for electing right-wing candidates to union posts inside and outside the HSU. Contributions came from far and wide.

The big end of town has some nasty experience of seemingly helpful inquiries getting out of hand. The Costigan Royal Commission into the Federated Ship Painters and Dockers Union promised to lift the lid on all sorts of criminality and dodgy practices to the embarrassment of the union movement. As the inquiry unfolded, however, the sources of the corruption and the fact that rogue elements within the Painters and Dockers were very small players, indeed, started to become clear.

Clues to the origins of questionable practices pointed to the very top of “respectable” society. Stores of print media ink previously reserved for attacking the union were suddenly deployed in a call for the winding up of the Royal Commission before any more reputations were destroyed by this “kangaroo court”. It is fine and proper if the law can be used to bludgeon the labour movement but quite another thing if members of the establishment get drawn into harm’s way.

The NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption kicked off an inquiry into whether AWH, a water company linked to disgraced former Labor parliamentarian Eddie Obeid, used corrupt influence to overcharge the public water authority and position itself for a lucrative public private partnership. Initial Liberal Party glee evaporated as the workings of its own fund-raising machine and its own luminaries’ connections to questionable financial dealings became public knowledge. Liberal Premier of NSW Barry O’Farrell was the first Coalition casualty, followed by Upper House MP Marie Ficarra and other Libs Senator Arthur Sinodinis was forced to step down as Federal Assistant Treasurer while investigations proceed.

What a fine old mess! Is there a common thread to all these traumatic investigations and lurid revelations? Big private interests and the system that sustains them. Private interests that will do anything to get the drop on their competitors; that seek to milk the public coffers as greedily as possible; that pursue the greatest profits possible from the labour they exploit by neutralising trade unions’ ability to organise. That system will survive these latest scandals in the same stage managed way it always has up until now.

The greatest danger is to the trade unions – the working class’ main instrument for self-defence at present. The practices of a small number of right-wing movers and shakers will be used to tar the whole movement. The actions of genuine, militant trade unionists will be depicted as “thuggery” and/or “extortion”. Though unions set out to defend workers against the workings of the corrupt capitalist system, it is the trade unions that the media will seek to make synonymous with corruption. Look how it has made the emotive expression “union boss” part of everyday language.

Right now it is time to stand up for strong, independent trade unions committed to defending and advancing workers’ interests; to stand by those principled individuals who will be targeted by the Royal Commission and against the opportunists who ride high on the workers’ backs.

PRESS FUND

A representative of an Australian medical organisation recently claimed that patients overuse Medicare, making 11 visits to their GP each year on average. Not so! The average number of treatment items per patient is 11 per annum, but this involves only six visits per annum, because patients can have more than one item per visit. The *Guardian* is fully committed to protecting the public health system from attack by the Abbott government, which often uses phoney statistics. However, we really need Press Fund contributions, so please, if you possibly can, send us a contribution for the next issue. Many thanks to this week’s supporters, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$5, Eddie Seymour \$50, “Round Figure” \$15

This week’s total: \$70 Progressive total: \$2,990

PS: Our apologies, Eric Durston, for misspelling your name, and thanks for your contribution!



A small group gathered last week in Martin Place, Sydney outside the USA Consulate with the aim to break the silence that the main stream media has in regards to the Cuban 5. The important issue is to reach the ordinary people because once they become interested in the Cuban 5 case they can see the manipulation and injustice by the USA legal system. They distributed over one hundred flyers. The next event for the Cuban 5 is in Washington 4-11 June, 5 days for the Cuban 5 and in Sydney’s Martin Place 5 June at 5pm. Support the Cuban 5.

Budget based on lies

Continued from page 1

“Heavy lifting”

“I’m going to be able to look people in the eye ... and say we are all in this together,” Abbott said, pointing to his proposed temporary levy on those with high incomes.

No one is exempt from “heavy lifting”, according to Hockey. “Individuals must do more for themselves, they must become more self-reliant, and the business sector must shoulder more of the burden,” Hockey said.

Individual “self-reliance” is spin for reducing or throwing people off disability, unemployment and age pension and other benefits.

As for big business, Hockey says it must “shoulder [the] burden” by buying public assets! Almost everything will be up for grabs in coming years including the sale of remaining enterprises and real estate. They’ll be lifting the profits. What remains of service provision will be outsourced to the private sector to do some more “heavy lifting” as well as some functions of government.

At the same time the federal government looks set to hand over its responsibilities for areas such as health, education, community services and housing to the states. It will hold onto defence, foreign affairs, intelligence, policing, border protection and collection and distribution of taxation revenue: a government first and foremost in the service of the corporate/military matrix.

The government, despite all its rhetoric about budget deficits, still plans to cut corporate taxes. The cuts to spending on people pave the way for the big business tax cuts. The longer term agenda is to abolish the taxation of company profits.

The call for the abolition of taxing company profits is becoming louder, with economists in the *Australian*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *Spectator*, *New York Times*, and other pro-big business publications pushing the idea.

Desperate cash-strapped states, picking up federal government responsibilities, are more than likely to support an increase in the GST.

The aim is to wind back direct company and state taxes and place greater reliance on the GST and other sales (eg excise) taxes. This is part of an ongoing process, commenced by Labor in the 1980s and continued by the Howard and Rudd/Gillard governments.

There is a great deal of talk about the necessity of budget surpluses and the evils of debt. But the policies of privatisation, company tax cuts and slashing of social spending spell

disaster, not just for those on the receiving end, but for the economy itself.

Forty years ago, before the privatisations began, when governments (state and federal) owned banks, insurance companies, utilities, public transport, the national telecommunications network, postal services, airlines, airports, ports, office accommodation, housing, etc, the public sector was backed by considerable material assets and a steady flow of income from a number of them.

There was a degree of common wealth, which along with the government’s ability to raise income through such means as taxes, provided the basis for security and the ability to borrow at lower interest rates than the private sector. There were many social injustices and, like capitalism in all of its stages, it lurched from crisis to crisis. But government guarantees still meant something.

They could rescue a bank or assist struggling businesses as well as expand consumption and create jobs during periods of economic crisis, just as Labor did during the onset of the most recent global crisis of capitalism.

Much of this common wealth, achieved by decades of struggle led by the working class, has gone with little or nothing to show for it except the introduction of user pays and higher charges, poorer quality of services or even loss of service, loss of accountability.

What will happen when governments have few remaining assets and the flow of income is depleted through tax cuts? When commercial rents, electricity, communications and other bills facing government go up? Or when remaining income declines during a crisis and the budget cannot be kept in surplus? And the private ratings agencies descend with junk bond ratings for the government?

In the UK and US bankruptcy is already a very real issue at local government level.

There is nothing wrong per se with a budget deficit or government debt. The key question is the ability to be able to manage the debt, to pay the interest and manage mounting debts. The other important issue is why the debt was incurred. For example, if it was of social or economic value, contributed to job creation and generated further income.

People’s option

If the government’s primary concern was really creating a budget surplus then there are other ways than slashing social spending

and privatisation which have such disastrous social and economic consequences.

The government could and should be looking at raising company tax rates, closing the many loopholes that let companies such as Apple shift \$9.8 billion in profits offshore to tax shelters in Ireland. There are other measures such as cutting military spending, abolishing the \$6 billion private health insurance and fossil fuel rebates, and ending negative gearing which also drives up house prices.

Investment in job creation programs such as conversion of former car plants to construction of public transport vehicles and solar power units would not only bring increased taxation revenue and reduce unemployment, but make a valuable contribution to addressing climate change.

Apart from all the hardship and suffering that will result, present “small government” policies, which strip governments of their assets and reduce their incomes, are setting those selfsame governments up to fail. Sovereign bankruptcy is the inevitable outcome.

Every round of tax cuts, every privatisation, makes it more difficult for a progressive government at some later date to restore services, pensions and other social spending. If the cuts and privatisation are not stopped very soon, they will become irreversible, like smashing an egg and trying to put it together again.

The government argues there is no choice and it is relying on the Labor Opposition to do little to oppose its contents. And so far it has proved correct, with Labor’s focus on broken promises rather than the content of the government’s policies. Labor has even lashed out over the temporary deficit tax of 2.5 percent on people with higher incomes. It is the only Abbott decision worth supporting, except the higher tax rate should be larger and permanent.

There is strong opposition, considerable fear and concern over what the government is doing. At the same time, there is little confidence in Labor. The struggle to defeat this big business agenda must be won outside Parliament, on the streets, in our communities and workplaces.

It is vital that all the left and progressive forces, including trade unions, Australian Greens, Communists and community organisations build a mass, united movement capable of forcing pro-people change and electing progressive candidates at the next election. ☘

Asylum seeker policy: A tangled web of deceit

Peter Mac

Two weeks ago Prime Minister Tony Abbott cancelled a visit to Indonesia, immediately after the Australian Navy intercepted a fishing boat carrying 18 asylum seekers. Immigration Minister Scott Morrison refused to confirm or deny Indonesian reports that two extra asylum seekers were forcibly transferred into the boat, which was then forced back into Indonesian waters.

The government will probably try to blame border protection and defence personnel if the story is confirmed. The government did that previously, blaming and punishing Navy officers for straying into Indonesian waters while towing asylum seeker craft back, even though they were implementing government policy.

Abbott claimed at the time that he cancelled the trip because he was too busy with Budget preparations, but it's clear that he was not willing to face the President and his ministers immediately after the incident.

In public the President has accepted at face value Abbott's excuse that he had to deal with budget preparations, and has invited him for another meeting in June. However, in Indonesia deep antagonism is building towards the Abbott government's "border protection" policy.

The Indonesian Defence Minister, Marty Natalegawa, described the latest incident as a "very serious development". He warned that the current tow-back policy "coerces asylum seekers, threatens them and violates their human rights" and that "Australia is acting as if it can simply move the problem to its neighbour".

Big trouble in PNG ...

Abbott had claimed that under its agreement, Papua New Guinea would accept for resettlement all Manus Island detainees found to be genuine refugees. However, the PNG government now says it will only accept those with skills useful for national development, and that the final decision rests with the PNG Prime Minister.

The PNG government has announced it found some to be

refugees. However, the numbers haven't been disclosed, and there's no way the Australian public can know whether the processing of applications for asylum have been dealt with fairly, i.e. whether it is based on objective criteria, or just on someone's preference.

Meanwhile, the Immigration Department has declared that reported incidents of abuse of Manus Island detainees "did not happen". However, in the wake of the recent attacks that left one detainee dead and 62 injured, former members of the Manus Island staff have publicly expressed their concerns.

One former Salvation Army worker was told by other Australian staff that the Cronulla (anti-Muslim) riots were the best thing that ever happened. She also said detainees were given an anti-malaria drug that staff had been forbidden to take because of its dangerous side effects.

The government's cruel policies have created an appallingly demoralised prison at Manus Island. Former staff members have reported incidents of rape, torture and assaults, but such incidents are ignored. When the Salvation Army officer reported an assault she was told she was stupid, and male staff members began referring to her by a numbering system in which they "rate" women staff.

The governor of Port Moresby expressed deep concern about the treatment of the detainees, which he said was "repugnant to our traditional and contemporary culture and to our Christian values".

... and more coming up in Cambodia

The Nauruan government will only grant settlement to those with a proven refugee status, and only for five years. Subject to agreement from the Cambodian government, the Abbott government wants refugees rejected by the PNG government, as well as 1,000 refugees from Nauru, to be transferred to Cambodia.

Cambodia is still trying to recover from the horrific genocide inflicted by the Khmer Rouge 40 years ago. Phil Robertson from Human Rights Watch has pointed out that



"Cambodia has neither the financial nor technical resources to provide the necessary services" for asylum seekers that are required under the Refugee Convention.

Transferred asylum seekers would almost certainly find themselves living in excruciating poverty, like the thousands of Muslim refugees who fled to Cambodia from Myanmar within the last decade.

And the Cambodian government might take the same approach to the asylum seekers as the PNG government, cherry-picking for resettlement only those with skills most needed by the state. If so, what will happen to the others? Will the Australian government condemn them to be transferred in a never-ending odyssey from one poverty-stricken nation to another?

And finally, what will happen to those deemed not to be genuine refugees? The Edmund Rice Centre recently carried out a survey into the experiences of 40 asylum seekers

forcibly returned to their countries of origin. Thirty five (88 percent of the total) found themselves in danger as soon as they arrived. Many were beaten or tortured and several were killed.

The road ahead

There are currently about 30,000 asylum seekers held on the mainland and offshore detention centres, including almost 1,200 children. Under the UN Refugee Convention, to which Australia is a signatory, the Australian government bears direct responsibility for their safety and well-being.

It's certainly not meeting those responsibilities, but there are hopeful new developments. There are 26 babies who were born in Australia in the Christmas Island Detention Centre. Lawyers have asked Morrison not to transfer and their their asylum seeker parents to Nauru and Manus Island.

Lawyers acting for Manus Island

detainees who witnessed the murder of detainee Reza Barati, and who say they later received death threats, have launched a High Court action to gain protective custody in Australia.

A writ issued on May 1 accuses the Australian and PNG governments of crimes against humanity for the arbitrary and indefinite detention of asylum seekers in "tortuous, inhuman and degrading conditions". It claims that detainees have been exposed to murder, attempted murder, threats of cannibalism and extreme bodily harm.

At stake is the question of whether asylum seekers should be returned to Australia for processing, and whether any more should be sent to Manus Island. If the court finds that they shouldn't, by implication the Nauru centre should also be shut down – in short, the entire offshore processing policy might come to a grinding halt.

And it couldn't come a moment too soon. ☹

Pete's Corner



Sydney

The Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine present

COMMEMORATING AL-NAKBA IN FILM

Al-Nakba is the catastrophe or dispossession of the Palestinians resulting from the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Screened in three sessions, the program includes films from Palestine, Morocco and Israel.

Saturday 17 May
Dendy Cinema Newtown
Sessions start 2pm, 4pm and 6.30pm

\$20 per session (\$14 conc)
Ticketing details and bookings: <http://www.trybooking.com/ERTJ>

More info via Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/295418997281587>

Contact: Barbara Bloch
bbloch@optusnet.com.au 0414 876 641

We must fight for our future!

Statement, Young Communist League, May Day 2014

The labour movement has a proud history. It has made many substantial gains for the working class. Through the strength of its organisation and unity of purpose it has won better wages and work conditions, gained shorter work hours and paid holidays and a whole range of social and welfare services.

The labour movement has fought to overcome exploitation, stop war and protect the environment. It has fought for free, universal education, a comprehensive public health system and public housing. It has supported human rights and respect for the Indigenous and oppressed peoples of the planet.

To win, labour has always needed to harness its collective power against the opposition of the ruling class of capitalist exploiters.

But now, all around the world, capitalism is in the perfect storm of crisis: any gains labour made over

the last century are under threat as the capitalist class tries to claw them back, trying to get out of its self-made crisis at the expense of the vast majority of humanity.

Its crisis is so deep – no capitalist government can do other than drive workers into poverty at home and into wars abroad.

Capitalism teeters on the edge of economic collapse. It is in a state of permanent war and turning society into a global police state. The capitalist system is unable or unwilling to address the environmental catastrophe into which it is dragging humanity. It certainly has no prospect of offering any concessions to labour. There is no longer any scope to reform capitalism.

The capitalist system has no future. It can no longer offer this generation or the ones to come a future. To end the crisis into which capitalism drives us we must end capitalism.

This means young workers must start to deepen our understanding of how capitalist society works and develop our organisation so we can draw on our collective strength to overthrow the tyranny of capital and take the power into our own hands.

This is the socialist solution, where workers, united as a class, take power and transfer society's means of production from the private to the public sphere and start to operate it for people's needs not billionaire's profits. Planning and cooperation, not exploitation and crisis will become the way we run our economy.

With this purpose in mind it is vital we defend what we have and oppose the measures the ruling class in its crisis now tries to impose on us – wage cuts, job cuts and destruction of social wages (pensions, unemployment benefits), selling off of public assets and privatisation of health and education services;

promotion of racism, discrimination and warmongering, criminalisation and imposition of increasingly harsh laws on workers and the poor, and wholesale shifting of wealth into the pockets of the wealthiest.

These attacks are aimed right at our very ability to lead a decent existence so we must fight them, but taking up such struggles will also build our experience and organisational skills. It will teach us the political skills and alliances we need to successfully fight the bigger battle in front of us – the struggle to overthrow the global class of exploiters and free ourselves from the capitalist system altogether.

Young communists have come to understand that if we are to live in an enlightened, civilised society in future we will have to fight to create that future. We commit ourselves to that struggle. We call on others to join us in this common venture to create a better world!

The Young Communist League fights for a decent future for the present and coming generations.

It aims to establish a Communist presence for the many frustrated and confused young who feel the present system does not offer them a meaningful future, nor the ability or chance to change the system, through:

Education: Explaining socialist theory in context of modern Australia and the world situation.

Organisation: Creating reliable networks through which youth can communicate and organise.

Action: Being the spearhead in fighting the injustices committed against youth and in creating a better future.

For further information contact:
ycl.au@hotmail.com or go to:
www.ycl.org.au ✪

WA public servants consider strike action

Richard Titelius

Since September 2013 when members of the Community and Public Sector Union Civil Service Association (CPSU/CSA) lodged their claim with the state Liberal government of Colin Barnett and began their campaign for a new General Agreement, they have not made inroads in securing a meaningful outcome to their General Agreement 6 claim.

The union initially proposed a 4% increase for each of three years, which they then changed in late March 2014, at a mass members meeting, to 3.5%.

After the rally at the Perth Convention Centre and lunch time stop work meetings in the Perth CBD and other parts of the state; despite the most earnest efforts of the members, the government responded by restating its original position of 2.5% and no changes to conditions.

In an effort to increase the pressure on the government to engage in meaningful negotiations to resolve the claim, the union called a meeting of its delegates to discuss options available in pursuit of their claim.

At a mass meeting of CPSU/CSA delegates called on April 29, delegates voted overwhelmingly to consider strike action to force the government to respond to their claim.

Union delegates have been directed to convene meetings in their workplaces to educate and inform members of what is in their claim. Branch secretary Toni Walkington emphasised that it was the intransigence of the government in negotiations with union representatives from the union which has pushed public servants to consider strike action.

A firm and resolute position by the CPSU/CSA is necessary not only to progress their claim, but to save their conditions and maintain their job security. The Barnett government seeks to undermine job security with legislative "reform" to the Public Sector Management Act 1992, which covers the conditions of employment under which public servants are employed.

The resolution which is being put to all CPSU/CSA members to vote upon is, "This delegates meeting resolves to ballot members on the question: Should we strike for 24 hours on May 28 in support of fair pay and conditions."

The ballot of members opened on Monday May 5, and will be conducted on line as well as an option for a hard copy ballot.

The Communist Party of Australia supports the campaign for a well resourced and efficient public service and that those who staff the public service, should be paid a living wage. ✪



Emperor Barnett being drawn along the May Day Parade by his public servant slaves.

Hazelwood Coal Mine Fire Local inquiry sessions end

Len Lean

Justice Bernard Teague wrapped up the local consultation with residents of the La Trobe Valley on April 17.

During the course of the public consultation the residents of Morwell, Traralgon and nearby areas left no doubt that they had been kept in the dark by authorities on long term health effects from the toxic gasses and particulate matter. They also criticised the Naphthine Victorian government for inadequate funding for the clean-up.

The 14,000 residents of Morwell are desperate for information about what health problems will come in five, 10 or 20 years. The Chief Health Officer, Rosemary Lester, has not told residents what the long term health problems may be. It's not difficult to find out as there have been a

number of international and national epidemiological studies on populations living near coal fired power stations and open cut coal mines. Their findings show alarming health effects from pollution. One Australian study in the Hunter region of NSW has found that adults (and whole populations) in communities near coal-fired power stations and coal combustion facilities have:

- Increased risk of death from lung, laryngeal and bladder cancer.
- Increased risk of skin cancer (other than melanoma).
- Increased asthma rates and respiratory symptoms.

Children, infants and foetal outcomes in communities near coal-fired power stations and coal combustion facilities have been found to have:

- Oxidative deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) damage.
- High rates of pre-term birth, low

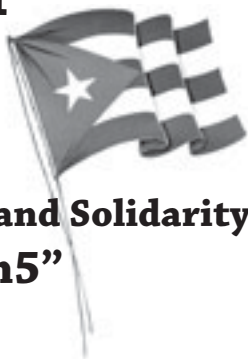
birth weight, miscarriages and still birth.

- Impaired foetal growth and neurological development.
- Increased asthma rates and respiratory symptoms.

Working example: the residents of Port Augusta SA live near the coal-fired Playford Power Station and have double the state average for lung cancer. The steel city of Whyalla has a coke furnace; residents have 51 percent more cases of lung cancer than the state average.

There is no such thing as clean coal and it must be replaced with renewable energy. Residents of Port Augusta have been campaigning for solar thermal energy to replace the high polluting old stations. People must keep pushing governments and stay focused until the goal has been reached. ✪

IN SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA



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

No cuts! No fees! No corporate universities!

Bob Briton

Protesters on the ABC's Q&A program last week certainly rattled guest panellist, federal Education Minister Christopher Pyne. A lot of the subsequent corporate and social media commentary got bogged down in the question of the right of participants to their chanting and banner dropping protest. But their message was spot on – the Abbott government is putting the foot on the accelerator of long-standing plans to hand higher education over completely to the corporate sector.

Treasurer Joe Hockey's first budget will reveal the next steps to be taken along the path but the neo-liberals' longer-term plan is already available. The recently released National Commission of Audit Report puts it all out there: the Commonwealth should take full control of universities to ensure the swiftest possible, total deregulation of the sector and students must foot the bill for privatised higher education through increased HELP (HECS) repayments. The ultimate goal of US-style full upfront fees, corporate universities and "philanthropy" is in sight.

"Ours is a deregulatory government," Pyne told The Policy Exchange think tank in London recently. "I can assure you unreservedly that the Coalition government will continue to take steps to set higher education providers free, provide them with more autonomy and challenge them to map out their futures according to their strengths."

"We have a lot to learn about universities competing for students and focusing on our students," he said. "Not least, we have much to learn about this from our friends in the United States."

The Audit Report and Pyne's various pronouncements make the neo-liberals' objectives in the struggle surrounding higher education perfectly clear. Howard era Education Minister David Kemp and the Grattan Institute's Andrew Norton also contributed with their recent review of Labor's "Demand Driven Funding System" which, in turn, did its part by deregulating

the number of places that could be offered at universities to allow for more full-fee paying students.

Not surprisingly, Kemp supports the proposal to let universities charge what they can get away with. In a piece in *The Australian* co-authored by Norton entitled *No ducking the issue, let's talk fees*, he concludes with a post-reform vision:

"Higher education funding would no longer be hostage to the state of the commonwealth budget. The whole system would be better funded, more resilient and more globally competitive."

So where will the funding come from? Out of the hide of students; they will be taken hostage. In its own words, recommendation 30 of the Audit Report calls for:

- decreasing the average proportion of higher education costs paid by the Commonwealth through the Commonwealth Grants Scheme from 59 percent to 45 percent and increasing the average proportion of costs paid by students from 41 percent to 55 percent;
- increasing the interest rate applying to HELP loans from the current rate (equal to movements in the CPI) to a rate which reflects the full cost to the Commonwealth of making the loan (incorporating the government borrowing rate, as well as the cost of bad debts and administration costs)
- increasing the repayment of HELP debt through reducing the threshold for HELP repayment from \$51,309 per year to the minimum wage of \$32,354 (with a low starting repayment rate of only 2.5 percent)
- changing the indexation arrangements for the HELP repayment income threshold from movement in Average Weekly Earnings to movements in the CPI

The heat is being turned up on the boiled frog, which in this case is current and aspiring university students.

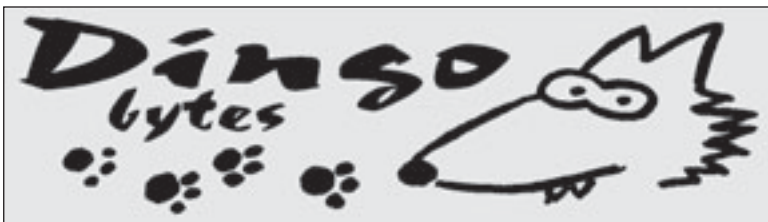
The Coalition is playing a devious game of dividing and conquering its opponents. Students are being reassured that they won't notice any change to the present situation until they hit a certain (notably low) post-study income



level. Wealthier research universities gathered into the Group of Eight lobby group like the idea of taking certain courses completely outside the public funding system so that students from very wealthy families could pay astronomical fees. At the other end of the scale, Victoria University has announced 300 job cuts in preparation for what university vice-chancellor Peter Dawkins calls the "new competitive tertiary market place."

Another notion is to fund private colleges and cash-strapped TAFEs in the same way as universities, i.e. allowing students to access the HELP-HECS system and compete with universities. Some spokespersons for this sector have come out in support of the government's plans. And Pyne has foreshadowed that taxpayer funds will be extended to for-profit universities to further blur the lines between public and private providers. The latter are being positioned to overrun the remnants of the public system.

In pushing this corporate agenda, the government spends a lot of time talking about the needs of students, "freedom" and the need to be "globally competitive". The same dishonest language was used to destroy public education in Chile. They have ended up with an inaccessible basket case of a system. However, we could learn a lot from the brave students, workers and affected communities of that country about how to fight back! ✪



Corporate tax-dodging is a time-honoured tradition. Armies of accountants, lawyers and tax havens are available to high fliers. It is easy for the Taxation Office to go after small fish – big ones usually escape. Google is a good example – its taxes in Australia are a paltry \$460,000. Sounds a lot at first but if you consider that its profit is \$46 million – it is nowhere near of what the company should have paid. It was estimated that globally Google's tax rate was just 15.7 percent last year. Google is not the only one, either. Apple had shifted an estimated \$8.9 billion in untaxed profits from Australian operations to Ireland over the past decade. There are many other global companies which play tax games to their advantage and to the disadvantage of the host countries. Governments should be paying closer attention to their shenanigans instead of letting them off scot-free.

The present government is not known for its love of science – if anything, it goes out of its way to undermine it even further through inadequate funding and outright slashing of staff. Climate change and its consequences are being studied around the world. Here the Australian Climate Change Science Program (ACCSP) is under threat due to the recommendation of the National Commission of Audit to axe it. "The future course of climate change matters greatly for Australia, and continued observation and modelling of climate is absolutely vital," said Dr Michael Raupach who used to work for CSIRO. "The ACCSP is an important component of our national effort, and the whole effort would be much reduced without this program," he added. The Abbott government has a dismissive attitude to any threat of global warming. It seems to be more inclined to hope and pray rather than rely on scientific research. Increasing heatwaves, rising sea levels and ocean acidification are just a few indications of the process that needs to be closely studied and addressed. World-wide research is taking place and if Australia cuts itself off from this vital research it will lose the expertise of the scientists who are working in the field and may also lose access to international research.

Services for homeless people are bracing for hard times indeed following the former NSW Community Services Minister Pru Goward shifting funds from CBD homelessness services, to the western suburbs. Service providers for homeless people noted an increase in the number of people sleeping rough in the city. Woolloomooloo, the Law Court in Macquarie Street, St James, and Wentworth Park in Ultimo, Martin Place and Circular Quay are the hot spots for homeless people. The way things are going, homeless numbers are bound to increase. Providing accommodation and basic services for the homeless should be a priority for any government.

Jobs are part of privatisation – Newman

Queensland's Services Union has called on the Premier Campbell Newman to justify selling off state assets after his comments last week that job losses are to be expected as a result of privatisation.

The comments came in response to rail operator Aurizon's announcement that up to 480 jobs would be slashed in Townsville and Redbank in the coming months. The Services Union Secretary, Neil Henderson, said workers across Queensland are concerned about what privatisation will mean for their job security.

"We've been out speaking to workers at the Gladstone Ports Corporation and the Energy Sector

this week and one thing is clear – Queenslanders don't support privatisation – and yesterday's announcement from Aurizon is exactly why," Mr Henderson said.

The Newman government is considering privatising the Gladstone Ports Corporation as well as the state's energy generation companies – Stanwell and CS Energy. Public opinion surveys and community forums about fixing the state's debt overwhelmingly show Queenslanders do not support privatising or outsourcing assets and services.

Yet Treasurer Tim Nicholls says, "... the government will have to make its decision on the best

economic advice", indicating the government will privatise state assets regardless of public opinion.

"If Tim Nicholls and Campbell Newman aren't going to listen to Queenslanders on the privatisation issue, then why are they spending \$6 million of taxpayer money to find out what taxpayers want. It's hardly what you would call a 'people's budget'?" Clearly, the government has made its decision and has no intention of doing anything different.

"We know this issue is important to families and communities across Queensland and we will keep fighting for a secure future for our state," Mr Henderson said. ✪

Eddie Murray to be remembered nationally

Gerry Georgatos

This year, one of the custodial deaths which launched the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, will be remembered, 33 years later, with a national day of action, rallies and marches and a three-decade-old-call for justice. Eddie Murray died while in police custody in 1981 and his family and supporters are demanding a new inquiry into his death, claiming missing clothes and a coroner's report which proved he suffered a broken sternum while in custody, were proof that he was murdered.

Last year, three decades later, 16 year old Yindjibarndi John Pat was remembered with a national day of action. The coordinated campaign generated a Western Australian government apology for the death of John Pat by police officers. It is 33 years since the police custodial death of 21 year old champion rugby league player Eddie Murray in north west New South Wales town of Wee Waa. His father and mother, the late Arthur and the late Leila Murray campaigned to the end of their lives for public inquiries and proper investigation of their son's death in the belief the Wee Waa police murdered Mr Murray.

The Murrays raised 12 children, ten who remain and within whom the death of their brother and the anguish and racism their parents endured in chasing down the justice, burns ferociously.

The Sydney president of the Indigenous Social Justice Association, Ray Jackson, will be one of the coordinators of the campaign. Recently, Mr Jackson and the Association were awarded one of the highest human rights awards by the French government for their many years of work in assisting families affected by custodial deaths.

"It is important that we remember Eddie Murray, be it 33 years later. The remembrance, 33 years after the killing of Eddie at the Wee Waa police cells is not only for justice alone but also for the family, which desperately needs closure," said Mr Jackson.

"For far too long far too many families of victims to custodial deaths have languished in limbo while truths have been hidden or covered up. We can never give up on the seeking of justice for the Murray family, for far too many families, they all need to know that justice is possible in this country. We must never give up on justice.

"We have to continue on with seeking the truth and not let the passing of time to be used against us. Every Aboriginal family and every non-Aboriginal family must be showed that justice is there for everyone, that it is possible.

"For Aboriginal people this is paramount because still for far too many the future looks dim, for there is a long history of justice being denied to Aboriginal people," said Mr Jackson.

Anne Murray was the last member of the family to see Mr Murray alive. Ms Murray has been passed the baton in chasing down the justice for her brother. She said her brother was bashed to death by the police, his body washed down, his clothes changed, and that there has never been a better time – in less racist times than then – for a public inquiry but one independent from police involvement.

"I was the last member of my family to see my brother alive. I was on the corner of George Street (in Wee Waa) opposite the Imperial Hotel, with my baby in the pram.

"He was fine, happy as always.

"Next thing we get a call that he committed suicide in a police cell.

"It is not true, he was murdered, and everyone in Wee Waa knows it, we know it, the police who killed him know it and it is time Australia should know it. It is time after 33 years, with so much pain and anguish for my mother and father who have now gone, that the first (successful) prosecution of murderous and lying police officers takes place – and we can get it

"Times have changed where now there may be some hope for true justice in the Courts or for a full and proper investigation or some genuine independent public inquiry, with the evidence presented that in more racist times the evidence was glossed over.

Never give up

"If my family give up, which we will never do, then that first (successful) prosecution of coppers will keep on waiting and there will be more deaths in custody. We get that first justice and the black deaths in custody will stop," said Ms Murray.

"When I next saw my brother, he was at the Coroner's. He was not wearing his clothes. He was bare from the waist up and I could see marks around his neck and bruises on his chest. The pants the coppers dressed him in were too big and too long, hanging over his feet, he had no shoes or socks.



BRISBANE: "Still no justice! Stop Black deaths in custody!" were the themes of a rally held at Emma Miller Place on November 2011, to mark 20 years since the release of the report of the Royal Commission into Black deaths in custody in 1991. (Photo: Socialist Alliance Queensland)

"I asked for his clothes, where are his clothes? They would not respond. In 33 years they have not responded. What happened to his clothes? What happened to his personal effects? His wallet has never been returned to us. Why?

"The clothes were the most vital forensic evidence, they could have determined what happened, they would have been covered in blood – proof that he did not suicide. Eddie would never take his life, that's a dirty lie by them. He was liked and loved, a champion rugby league player. Obviously the clothes were hidden and then destroyed. We want to know by whom, it's not hard as there weren't many officers on duty. We get this investigated and we have the murderers."

Mr Murray had been visiting his hometown – he lived and worked in Sydney and was playing rugby league for the Redfern All Blacks. He had come to the small cotton town to visit family and friends.

The Murray family were famous in Wee Waa, with Mr Murray's father, Arthur Murray, leading the fight for award wages and conditions for the Aboriginal cotton workers and for an end to spraying cotton with poisons while workers were in the field. The Murrays had also been involved in the fight for Aboriginal housing in town so they did not have to continue camping on reserves five kilometres away.

Racist harassment

Mr Murray's parents had often spoken of the racist harassment, including from police that the whole family faced. Mr Murray had been

arrested seven times for allegedly being disorderly and convicted of offensive behaviour twice, but in a stark comparison, he had never been arrested by police while living in Sydney.

"When I saw him outside the Imperial Hotel he was wearing creamy pants, his red and white shirt with the writing across it, Walgett Leagues," said Ms Murray.

Ms Murray said that the next day the family and on this occasion in the company of Lyall Munro Senior viewed Mr Murray's body. They went to the police station. The police showed them the blanket they claimed Mr Murray tore strips from to hang himself.

"The cop pulled out the grey blanket he claimed Eddie hung himself with."

"I tried to tear at it, and I turned around to the cop and said how did Eddie tear this when I can't tear it, it needs scissors to cut through it. And I said to him that we can see by the nature of the broken threads that it has been cut by scissors.

"My brother did not hang himself."

Ms Murray does not just want to campaign into the wind for justice, to just keep up the awareness raising, but backed by the family and a rising number of supporters she does want in addition to any cold case on her brother's death, a full independent inquiry. Ms Murray is pitching a battle to pull up an independent investigation into her brother's death in Wee Waa.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody had suggested this but did not achieve it, the Newcastle Legal Centre called for this but it did not happen, the Police Integrity Commission did not want to know about it, and a NSW Parliamentarian called for it but to no avail. But Ms Murray believes that at long last it may well just happen.

Justice crucial

As a researcher into custodial systems, I have reviewed the death in custody of her brother, and it appears Mr Murray was murdered, call it manslaughter or grievous bodily harm leading to death, whatever, he died exactly as Roebourne's John Pat did two years later, and as Mulrunji Doomadgee and Kwemntaye Briscoe more than two decades later died – at the hands of police

officers, and that violence should be accounted for. Until the police are brought to justice for these deaths then Ms Murray is right that there is no likelihood of a reduction of police deaths in custody.

Wee Waa is a small town, less than 1,700, 41 kilometres northwest of Narrabri on Kamilaroi Country. About 350 of the population are First Nations people. The Kamilaroi words Wee Waa mean "fire for roasting". Like most of the rest of the nation, the town has a history of racial tensions.

The death of Mr Murray was one of the custodial deaths that led to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

On February 25, 2004, former NSW Senator, now Federal, Lee Rhiannon, chased down the call for a parliamentary inquiry into the death of Mr Murray but to no avail.

"(The police) detained (Mr Murray) for being drunk and disorderly. The police could have taken him home but instead kept him in custody. He was heard to cry out from his cell, 'Why do you always pick on me? Why don't you pick on the white people?' Less than one hour later, he was dead.

"Before a police photographer arrived to take pictures of Eddie, his body had been removed from the cell in which he died. The next day his clothes were missing. When the Coroner looked into the matter, he found instances of unreliability in the evidence offered by police to the Court."

The Coroner's open verdict included that there existed the possibility of "death at the hand of person or persons unknown."

But it happened in a police cell.

In 1997, Mr Murray's body was exhumed and it was found he had suffered a smashed sternum – caused by blows to the chest. In August 2000, the NSW Minister for Police, Paul Whelan referred the case to the NSW Police Integrity Commission (PIC) but the PIC "declined the case".

The national day of action will take place in every capital city and Wee Waa, with a major remembrance and call for justice to be highlighted at the Sydney Town Hall.

A national day of action will take place in each Australian capital city and also in Wee Waa to mark the 33rd anniversary of his passing on June 12.

The Stringer ✪

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Book review by Peter Mac

TONY SPEAKS:

The wisdom of the Abbott

A little but important book

The little paperback is a highly revealing anthology of the current Prime Minister's statements. Three of the less rational examples will suffice, for a start:

"...I will never be anything other than pro-immigrant, and Australia is an immigrant country. Having said that, I simply note the observation that Paul Keating made a long time ago, that the best migrants are our own kids".

"As you know, Julia, a politician shouldn't be allowed out without a chaperone". (Ms Gillard replied "I think that only applies to you, but we'll leave that there").

(To a baby): "Come to the big scary man!"

Despite his occasional absurdity, it would be a bad mistake to dismiss Abbott as a fool. His real intentions have become shockingly clear in the conclusions of the National Commission of Audit's report, for which his government prepared the brief.

Concerning industrial relations Abbott quoted Domingo de Soto, who said: "If they freely accepted this salary for their job, it must be just ... If you do not want to serve for that salary, leave!"

Prior to the election Abbott described WorkChoices as "Dead, buried and cremated", but he later equivocated, commenting: "WorkChoices wasn't all bad."

Promising no extra taxes and conveniently ignoring the GST, he observed: "To the best of my recollection there were no tax increases whatsoever in the life of the [Howard] coalition government."

Promising manufacturing industry support he declared: "We have a good record when it comes to working with the car manufacturers to help them not just survive, but to flourish, and we will act in the same spirit in the future."

Concerning the status and rights of women he declared:

"... It would be folly to expect that women will ever dominate or even approach equal

representation in a large number of areas simply because their aptitudes, abilities and interests are different for physiological reasons",

"Amanda Vanstone could be relied on to provide a 'women's perspective' if necessary but otherwise brought a practical common sense to the consideration of political problems",

"The problem with abortion in Australia is that an objectively grave matter has been reduced to a question of the mother's convenience", and

"... this idea that sex is kind of a woman's right to absolutely withhold, just as the idea that sex is a man's right to demand ... both need to be moderated, so to speak."

His duplicity and sheer nastiness is demonstrated in his 2007 response to an action by Bernie Banton, campaigner for asbestos disease victims. Abbott commented: "I know Bernie Banton is very sick, but just because a person is sick doesn't mean he is necessarily pure of heart in all things, and this was just a stunt."

However, he later remarked about his statement: "Once I saw it in black and white in the paper the next morning I thought, 'No, this is a problem, I'd better call him up and apologise.'"

When asked how he reconciled his religious beliefs with the harsh treatment of asylum seekers, many of whom have suffered religious persecution, he snapped: "You know, the last thing I want to claim to be is a latter-day Mother Teresa. I mean I'm running for office, not for canonisation."

When asked what Christ would have done regarding asylum seekers, he sniggered: "Well, Jesus wouldn't have put his hand up to lead the Liberal Party, I suspect".

On another occasion he declared in all seriousness that "Border protection freed people from the oppression of people smuggling".

A clear and present danger

Last November, in a memorable Freudian slip Abbott exclaimed: "There will always be some issues that are contentious, but the best way to deal with them is openly, candidly and behind closed doors, and that is what I propose to do."

The closed door has indeed become a symbol of the Abbott regime. Two weeks ago he refused to disclose the real reason behind the sudden cancellation of his visit to Indonesia except to say he had to work on the budget. The cancellation related to the intervention of another asylum seeker boat by the Australian Navy, and to an attempt to tow it back into Indonesian waters. Abbott was not willing to face the Indonesian Government after this incident.

Ironically, the meeting concerned open government in the region!

Abbott maintains that the Howard government's intervention to ensure the independence of East Timor was entirely altruistic. He said "There was nothing in it for Australia", but later complained that "it would have been easier to drive a hard bargain with Indonesia than with a more obviously needy fledgling state over oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea".

He also declared: "Tasmania is a beautiful place and the last thing we want to do is compromise the environmental values of Tasmania, but we can't sacrifice the forestry industry on the altar of the environment."

His determination to serve the economically dominant fossil fuel industries is nowhere more evident than in his attitude to climate change, one of the biggest threats to the future of mankind.

He remarked: "I am, as you know, highly unconvinced by the co-called settled science on climate change", which on another occasion he called "absolute crap".

In 2011 he told the Minerals Council of Australia: "As I look out at the people in this room ... I see big employers, ... big exporters and ... people who contribute big time to prosperity that every single

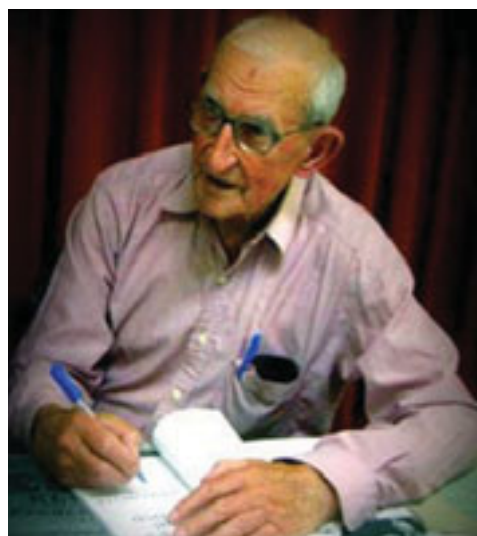


Australian wants and mostly enjoys. Our prosperity absolutely depends on the people in this room and others who are so regularly and consistently defamed by this government as big polluters".

Tony Speaks is worth reading, not only because it will give you plenty of good laughs, (possibly accompanied by a grinding of the teeth), but also because of the insight it offers into Abbott's real character and intentions.

We shouldn't forget that despite his often bizarre statements, Abbott was smart enough to grab the Liberal leadership and take the coalition into government. And now he's leading the nation into some very dangerous waters indeed.

Tony Speaks, the Wisdom of the Abbott, was edited by Russell Marks and published by Black Inc, and is available for about \$10 from newsagents and bookstores. ✪



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South Africa elections: ANC triumphs with some change

Mark Waller

PRETORIA: South Africa's fifth democratic national elections since 1994 and the end of white minority rule saw the ruling African National Congress retain power with another landslide victory. This gives the ANC a strong mandate to continue the policies pursued by the administration led by President Jacob Zuma, since he was first elected president in 2009. Then, the party won with 65.9 percent of votes. This year it lost a few percentage points, winning 62.2 percent of votes.

In 1994, when Nelson Mandela became the country's first democratically elected president, it swept the polls with a 62.6 percent win. The next two elections saw its margin increase to 66.3 percent in 1999, and 66.7 percent in 2004.

The centre-right Democratic Alliance (DA) has steadily gained ground as the official opposition party, rising from 12.4 percent in 2004, to 16.7 percent in 2009 and now 22.2 percent.

The biggest change in the party political terrain has been the rise of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by Julius Malema, who in 2012 was expelled from the ANC and the ANC Youth League (ANCYL) and faces fraud, corruption and tax evasion charges. The EFF has won 6.2 percent of votes and will have more than 20 MPs in the National Assembly.

The other small parties have been roundly thrashed. The inauspiciously-named COPE (Congress of the People), which split from the ANC following the removal of President Thabo Mbeki in 2008, and wider changes to the ANC leadership the year before, won fewer than one

percent of votes. This is down from 7.4 percent in 2009.

Similarly, the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), whose stronghold is in KwaZulu Natal won only 2.4 percent of votes, down from 4.5 percent in 2009, and way down from the 10.5 percent of votes it won in 1994. The IFP has long been the powerbase of the one-time Prime Minister of the KwaZulu bantustan, Mangosuthu Buthelezi. The apartheid government used the IFP as a violent buffer against the ANC in the dying days of minority rule. Its steady demise reflects the unwinding of its historic standoff with the ANC.

The Afrikaner right-wing Freedom Front Plus has also steadily waned since 1994. Then it won just 2.1 percent of votes, but now only managed 0.9 percent.

Mainstream media political pundits have been quick to point to a rapid decline of the ANC's fortunes due to corruption scandals, lack of leadership and policy indecision.

Raging controversy over the amount of state spending on security upgrades to President Zuma's home in Nkandla has tended to obscure the government's policy impact. It is this impact, not blind loyalty, that in emerged in the countless community debates broadcast mainly on local media before the election as uppermost in people's concerns. There is a sense that though the ANC certainly has its problems, it is the only political force with the vision to tackle poverty and underdevelopment.

Since 2009, the government has scored big successes in cutting HIV-AIDS and the ensuring full availability of anti-retroviral treatment, and in improving treatment of the country's biggest communicable disease killer, tuberculosis. Life expectancy has increased by an average of five years.

The recent R22-billion [US\$2.1 billion] injection of state investment in the auto sector saved some 46,000 jobs and added a further 9,000. Government infrastructure improvement has transformed many townships, adding roads, clinics and improving schools.

A new R1-trillion [US\$96 billion] economic and social infrastructure program aims to transform many poor areas by building new roads, rail links, ports, universities and schools. The electrification of poor areas has increased more rapidly with a further 1 million households connected in the last five years, bringing the total to over 5.4 million connections since 1994.

Government has also started supplying free solar water heaters to poor homes, installing over half a million in the last five years. In the contested area of land restitution, the government has re-opened the process of lodging land claims, in the face of much protest from the political conservative opposition.

The significant downside is that in some areas of the country the demand for better basic services and infrastructure continues to outweigh supply. Nearly three million small, low-cost housing units have been provided since 1994, mainly to replace shack housing. Millions of water and sanitation connections have also been made since 1994. But the lack of housing and insufficient water supply, sanitation and health clinics in many rural townships and villages spark almost daily service delivery protests up and down the country. There were some 13 000 such protests in 2013.

Unemployment continues to be ruinously high. This is despite government schemes and increased higher education investments, including a strong nascent industrial policy focused on developing domestic production.

All this, coupled with corruption in local government, which drastically affects the supply and quality of services, has fuelled resentment at the pace of transformation in South Africa.

It is one reason why the popularity of the EFF has rocketed. EFF supporters proudly sport red berets. Many of its leaders wear military fatigues, and expensive red leather jackets emblazoned with the party's logo. Julius Malema, its portly leader, goes under the title commander-in-chief. Party functionaries are called commissars.



South Africa's president Jacob Zuma holds up a banknote bearing the face of former president Nelson Mandela.

The EFF alleges that the ANC and its partners have sold out. It promises that under EFF rule South Africa would undergo rapid economic transformation, with nationalisation of mines, land expropriations from white landowners, a massive increase in social benefits, the provision of high quality large houses for all, and strong minimum wages across all sectors.

Much of the EFF's language and iconography has been lifted from the traditional left, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). They form two pillars of the tripartite ANC-led Alliance, which has been more prominently included in all levels of government under the Zuma administration, and which was the key constituent of the ANC as a broad liberation movement during the struggle against apartheid.

The SACP charges that the EFF is reminiscent of the German National Socialists (Nazis) of the 1920s, which stole the language of the left opportunistically to force through far-right agendas, with murderous consequences.

Its support base is largely among disaffected township youth, including many who are new voters or had previously supported smaller parties. There is little evidence that the EFF has siphoned off much support from the ANC.

The big question now in many people's minds is how the EFF will behave in parliament, whether it will perform as a party of the left, whether

it will cooperate with the ANC-led Alliance, and how it will pursue its policies, which overlap greatly with what the ANC, SACP and COSATU say though in more shrill and generalised language.

But the main opposition winner in the elections is the DA. ANC economic empowerment policies since 1994 have swelled the numbers of the black middle class and upper middle class. Ironically, the political and class allegiance of the newly enriched and financially empowered is starting to veer towards the conservative DA.

The DA has doubled its support among the ANC stronghold of Gauteng province, home to densely populated Pretoria and Johannesburg, including Soweto. The party has also astutely courted support from the Indian and "coloured" populations, which have tended to be neglected by, or have less robust ties to, the ANC compared to the majority African population.

The DA currently draws its support mainly from the wealthy white population, which continues to dominate South Africa's corporate sector. Like the EFF, it appropriates the language of liberation, the Mandela legacy and the discourse of non-racialism in a fervid attempt to generate its township appeal.

So, while South Africa's 2014 election results in many ways announce a business as usual continuity in national government and ANC rule, the political opposition terrain is changing apace.

People's World

Inquiry into riot deaths urged

Paddy McGuffin

BRITAIN: A Birmingham Labour MP has backed demands for a full public inquiry into the deaths of three men in the city during the 2011 summer riots. Shabana Mahmood described a report by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) into the deaths of the men as a "failure" which had brought the victims' families no closer to justice.

Haroon Jahan and brothers Shazad Ali and Abdul Musavir were killed after being struck by a car as they tried to defend local businesses in the Winson Green area from looters on August 10 2011.

The IPCC report found that a senior officer had been reckless in offering immunity to witnesses to the deaths. Eight men were acquitted in July 2012 of murdering the three men after jurors at Birmingham Crown Court were told another

senior officer had lied about the disclosure of evidence in the case.

In a letter to Home Secretary Theresa May, Birmingham Ladywood MP Ms Mahmood claimed the IPCC report "served no one" due to its restricted terms of reference. The MP wrote: "Yesterday the Independent Police Complaints Commission published its report into the West Midlands Police investigation.

"It ruled that one officer alone had acted recklessly. This officer has since retired.

"A second officer, who had been previously accused by a judge of having lied on oath, was found to have no case to answer. Eight men were prosecuted, but none convicted in a trial which almost collapsed because of issues with the police investigation. It is clear to me that this report is a failure," wrote Ms Mahmood.

Morning Star

Melbourne

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Crackdown in Ukraine

BRITAIN: Newspeak is clearly the order of the day in Kiev, where Britain's warmongering Foreign Secretary William Hague carped that Russia was striking a "terrible blow to democracy" in Ukraine.

Mr Hague says a referendum in Donetsk on whether to secede from Ukraine is a Kremlin plot to undermine elections. He might pause to reflect that there are few better ways to undermine elections than overthrowing an elected government by armed force, as the current cabal in Kiev he treats as the legitimate Ukrainian authorities have done.

He did not object to the "terrible blow to democracy" when the capital city fell in February to gun-toting thugs, many members of the fascist Svoboda Party or the even more extreme neo-Nazis who make up Right Sector.

Nor did he question the unelected government's right to sign a wide-ranging association agreement with the European Union, with huge consequences for Ukraine's economy, without consulting Ukrainians.

His concern for democracy didn't come to the fore when the new regime fired 18 regional governors and replaced them with hand-picked oligarchs.

Donetsk's new Kiev-appointed overlord was another billionaire – steel tycoon Sergei Taruta.

Fawning interviews in the UK *Guardian* taking at face value his claim that there were only "about 300" eastern Ukrainians who would resist notwithstanding, the subsequent mass uprising which established a "Donetsk People's Republic" suggests locals do not view Mr Taruta as their democratic saviour.

This might have influenced the region's determination to hold a referendum on secession more than any interference from Moscow, which has not voiced support for the proposed vote.

Mr Hague's worry that it could de-legitimise the national elections Kiev wishes to hold on May 25 rings hollow. The elections could hardly be "free and fair" at a time when the Ukrainian army is waging an all-out war on resistance groups across the country's east.

Nor do Kiev's democratic credentials appear in a better light following this week's decision to bar elected Communist MPs from a plenary session in parliament – another blow to democracy that escaped the attention of the myopic Mr Hague.

The expulsion of the Communists came after their leader Petro Symonenko demanded an investigation into the atrocity committed by Kiev-allied fascists in Odessa, who trapped over 40 anti-regime protesters in the trade union headquarters on May 2 and burned them to death.

The authorities take this so seriously that they have appointed a new police chief for the city. Ivan Katerinchuk's first move was to pledge to rearrest 67 anti-fascist protesters who had been released and to call on Right Sector, which is linked to the massacre by video footage, photographs and eyewitness accounts, to "exercise restraint" and liaise better with the police in future actions.

Mr Hague says claims that extremists have taken over Ukraine are "far, far wide of the mark." References to fascists are mere Russian propaganda, he asserts. He should tell that to the relatives of the activists who were incinerated last week, to the friends and loved ones of the scores of others falling victim to Kiev's brutal attempt to impose its authority on anyone who questions the legitimacy of February's coup.

He should tell it to the Jewish community in Odessa, who saw their memorial to 34,000 Jews murdered during the Nazi invasion painted over with swastikas and Right Sector symbols last month.

Spokesmen for the anti-fascist resistance in Ukraine are clear – secession votes are not driven by a desire to be part of Russia. They are driven by fear of what their country is becoming.

Morning Star ✪



Britain's warmongering Foreign Secretary William Hague.

Cuban 5 Standing ovation at human rights awards

SAN FRANCISCO: On the evening of May 8, at The Palace of Fine Arts, the Global Exchange 12th annual Human Rights Award took place. This palatial structure was originally constructed for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition for art exhibits but tonight its purpose was to recognise and pay tribute to fighters for peace, justice and a better world.

In the People's Choice Award category this year the Cuban 5 were the recipients based on the results of online voting in March. The Five were nominated by the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5.

Presenting the award was Ted Lewis, the Human Rights Program director for Global Exchange, who said that more than 29,000 entered the page of the People's Choice Award. Nearly a third of those visited the section for the Five resulting in them receiving the largest number of votes.

Receiving the award for the Cuban 5 was María Eugenia Guerrero, affectionately known by her family and friends as Maruchi, and

the sister of Antonio Guerrero. This event marked the first time a family member of the Cuban 5 has spoken publicly on their behalf in the US.

Before introducing Maruchi, Lewis said that the Five definitely deserved this award and to briefly explain the case he presented the video of Danny Glover on the tenth anniversary of their arrest. In ending his remarks Lewis said that it is up to Obama to free them and added, "He didn't begin this mess but he can end it."

As Maruchi walked onto to the stage to receive the award, the large crowd in attendance gave her a standing ovation in recognition of her being there and to express their solidarity with the Cuban 5. In a movement that is constantly trying to bring this case to the light of day, this moment signified that a wider audience was being reached.

Maruchi in her remarks thanked Global Exchange for having considered the inclusion of the Five in this contest, explaining that while the Five have received awards in many countries around the world that this was the first time that it

has happened in the US and the fact that it was a human rights award made it that much more special. She told the audience that her mother Mirta is 82 years old and time is passing. "She dedicates every minute of her life championing the cause of the Five and her greatest wish is to see her son and the others free."

She ended her talk by making a call for people to join the upcoming 5 Days for the Cuban 5 in Washington DC June 4-10.

During the night's festivities María Estela Barco Huerta, a known anti-GMO activist who has played a leading role in organising Agro-Ecology Learning Exchanges in Chiapas, Mexico received the International Award.

In the Domestic Award category Global Exchange honoured the 50th Anniversary of the Freedom Schools. Charlie Cobb, Freedom Schools visionary; Bernice Johnson Reagon, founder of Freedom Singers and cultural historian; and Philip Agnew, Executive Director of the Dream Defenders accepted the Domestic Award. ✪



Region Briefs

May 4, on China's Youth Day, President Xi called on Chinese college graduates to voluntarily work in China's underdeveloped western region (including Xinjiang Uyghur and Tibetan autonomous regions). In Xi's letter to the graduates, he said "In recent years, many young people with ambitions and responsibilities have chosen to work diligently and devote themselves to the western region, contributing to social development and ethnic unity". Hundreds of thousands of graduates have volunteered to work in the countryside of the western region since the College to Village Campaign started in 2008.

May 5, at a national conference on anti-corruption in Hanoi, Vietnamese Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong said "anti-corruption is an extremely difficult task, because corruption is a congenital defect of power". The Party and state should work harder with long-term and drastic measures plus high determination and practice for anti-corruption". He also warned that "it is necessary to be cautious about the schemes of hostile forces who use the public fight against corruption to sabotage the party and regime". He added, "if we do not rely on the people, the battle against corruption will not be successful".

People protested the new US-Philippine joint military exercise while the live-fire drill's opening ceremony was being held in Manila on May 5. This 10-day live-fire drill started after the two countries signed the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement. The Philippines Senate had voted in 1991 to close US bases there. This agreement allows US fighter jets, ships and troops to be based in the Philippines on a "temporary rotational basis". Two thousand US soldiers and 3,000 Filipino troops joined the drill in Camp Aguinaldo near the capital. Chen Gang, a research fellow at the East Asia Institute of National University of Singapore, said that "without doubt the Philippines has been trying to strengthen its military ties with the US" but that "it will hurt the already strained situation over the South China Sea".

MARCH IN MAY

Protest the Abbott Government's anti-people policies

SYDNEY

1pm Sunday May 18 – Belmore Park (Near Central Station)

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Greed vs environment

Humanity is steadily wiping out the Earth's ecosystems to gain a few more decades of industrial growth. We certainly cannot let those in power go on destroying the earth with accelerating climate change (and their chemicals, mines, wars, arms trade, polluting industries, land clearing, etc) while the people, planet and

animals continue to suffer and die, which will eventually lead to an ecosystem collapse.

Capitalism cannot resolve the climate crisis because the features of capitalism are that it is a social system that is structured around production for profit for a small elite and that doesn't take into account the real ecological costs of doing business. Tackling climate change and creating a sustainable economy is incompatible with a capitalist system that constantly demands more profit. If it is more profitable to use coal and oil, etc the capitalists will continue to resist any real and essential changes that would affect their profitability.

So, the least able to save our environment and solve the climate crisis is the capitalist state, because it is built to look after and foster the very forces that are responsible for causing the destruction caused by climate change. For this reason

capitalism can't be sustainable or offer fundamental solutions to climate change.

Protecting the ecosystem requires a transformed mode of production that replaces capitalist motives with cooperative principles that better reflect the long term needs of humanity. In order to get the genuine ecological transformation we need we must challenge and replace the dominant capitalist system with one that better benefits the people and planet.

Steven Katsineris.
Vic

Don't swallow deficit levy

Before we meekly allow ourselves to cough up the expected Deficit Levy We Had To Have, perhaps, among the many, many reasons why we should be doing no such

thing might be the curious case of the current crop of "Transferees" we're coughing up a weekly \$11 million on average to accommodate on Nauru and Manus Island (I don't know the figures for Christmas Island).

Money spent on such essential items as 50,000 condoms – I kid you not – in one particular order processed a couple of months ago by the company currently servicing that particular contract.

Oh, while we're at it, perhaps we should consider the cost of the lifeboats into which those whose "boats are turned back" are transferred and which end up abandoned on whatever Indonesian beach the tide takes them. For these and more "necessary" federal expenses, we should dismantle our health care and education systems? I don't think so.

Michael George Smith
Katoomba

On May Day

I came across a May Day march recently, which brought to mind something Che Guevara said: "For us there is no valid definition of socialism other than the abolition of the exploitation of one human being by another."

You can find out more about Che by watching *The Motorcycle Diaries* which dramatises a trip he took with a friend while he was a medical student, a two part movie titled *Che* which looks at his involvement in the Cuban Revolution (Part One: *Argentine*) and his death in Bolivia (Part Two: *Guerrilla*), and a documentary titled *CHE: Rise and Fall*.

Richard Lutz
SA

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

To kowtow or fight?



Karen McNamara, Liberal member for Dobell. (Centre)

I received an email recently from GetUp! seeking to introduce me to two GetUp members in our electorate who have just had a meeting with our local member, Karen McNamara, a Lib, "on behalf of the 3,280 GetUp members who live in Dobell".

According to GetUp's email, "The meeting was a chance for Errol and Anne to let Mrs McNamara know how many GetUp members she represents in Parliament and which issues GetUp members in Dobell care about most: action on climate change, a fairer deal for asylum seekers, an equitable taxation system and an independent media."

Not a word about democratic rights or defending the workers' legitimate organisations from Abbott's vicious attacks. As conditions are ruthlessly destroyed and real wages relentlessly driven down, while poverty grows at an alarming rate, working people are going to have much more serious things to worry about than an equitable taxation system.

What is an equitable taxation system anyway? The CPA supports a progressive taxation system, in which those who make more, pay more. "Equitable taxation" means the burden falls equally on all: isn't that the GST, where rich and poor pay the same?

GetUp pursues a non-class line, and as Lenin pointed out, "non-class" politics means ruling class politics.

Workers, small farmers, pensioners and other battlers will receive short shrift from the likes of Karen McNamara, or clearly from

GetUp, with its naïve trust in right wing politicians. GetUp's two representatives in Dobell reported their meeting thus: "Mrs McNamara gave us well over an hour, meaning we were able to raise all of the issues we intended to for our meeting. I believe Mrs McNamara listened to what we had to say and was being honest in her answers – she even admitted to being sceptical about climate change, which shocked us a little." (Only a little!)

"It was good to know that Mrs McNamara does take issues on board and was adamant that she will raise those which she believes are worthwhile [my emphasis – RG] in parliament and the party room." Oh, well, that's all right then. I can hear the peels of scornful laughter from the Party Room already.

GetUp commented on the pair's visit in these words: "It's encouraging that Mrs McNamara took time out of her schedule to meet with GetUp members, especially when she wouldn't have expected to see eye-to-eye on all the issues. (What? You only meet with people you are going to agree with?) It's the first step to opening up the lines of communication and building a relationship we can revisit well into the future."

"Thanking Mrs McNamara for taking the time to meet with GetUp members is a great way to let her know we're serious about building relationships across the political spectrum." Bowing and scraping to right-wing politicians might very well build a relationship "across the political spectrum", but it will be a master and

servant relationship. Even bowing so low that our forehead touched the floor has never yet stopped the bosses and their wealthy hangers-on from exploiting working people. It just makes it easier for the rich to plant their collective foot on the necks of the poor.

GetUp's approach – if we are deferential and polite perhaps our political masters won't be so hard on us – has never worked in the past (and Lord knows, social democrats have tried it often enough). Any gains workers have ever made have been the result of struggle, which is why Tony Abbott is using every piece of repressive legislation he has at his command to attack the organisations of the workers. If he can crush the unions, rendering the workers defenceless, employers will be able to force workers to accept sub-standard wages (or do without a job in a climate where Joe Hockey will make it almost impossible to get unemployment benefits).

This will have two results: one will be substantially higher profits for business. The other will be the impoverishment of the bulk of the people. It is axiomatic that if the people who are expected to buy the goods and services a nation produces do not have the money to do so, that nation is going to suffer a severe economic recession – or worse. But it is also a well-known phenomenon that capitalists are so bedazzled by the lure of immediate profits that they cannot – or will not – see the economic dangers that loom before them.

The Abbott government's single-minded

devotion to servicing the wants of big business, if unchecked, will see large parts of Australian cities and towns reduced to the poverty-stricken level of much of the USA: ghetto-like slums and trailer-parks, where the absence of jobs combined with "benefits" and pensions reduced below the point where they can sustain life means that for the young in particular the only escape from penury is to turn to crime, especially the "victimless" variety: drug trafficking, vice and illicit gambling.

Capitalist society's response to this is always repression: a generation of young men and women will be incarcerated in prisons run for profit, functioning as factories or call centres – a modern form of slave labour. No wonder Amnesty puts the number of people living in slavery today in the tens of millions!

If that is not the future we want for our country, then outfits like GetUp are going to have to get off their knees and take a stand. Asking for favours from the top-people's table is not good enough. People have a right to work, a right to health care, a right to an education. To achieve these things, people are going to have to take to the streets in support of the workers and those unions that are prepared to fight.

And it will be a fight: Victoria already has brought in laws making it illegal to demonstrate. We can expect that sort of legislation to spread.

Soon, all over Australia, our slogan will have to be "All for the defence of democratic rights!" ☺



Sunday May 18–
Saturday May 24

When human society was still in the hunter-gatherer stage of development, people sought a mystical relationship with the animals and plants on which they preyed and with the predatory animals who were their competitors. Drawing images of these beasts, making sacrifices to them, wearing trinkets made from their bones or feathers were thought to confer magical powers. Later, with the transition to settled agriculture, this mystico-magical relationship was transferred to ancestors – presumed to have had wisdom – and to nature: the sun and the moon, storm and tempest, fire and flood.

In *Sacred Wonders Of Britain* screening in the *Lost Worlds* slot (SBS ONE Sundays from May 18 at 7.30pm) Neil Oliver goes on a journey to reveal the ancient landscape of belief and ritual that still lies hidden just below the surface of the modern world. In the first of the three part series, he sets off in search of the very first stirrings of religion in Britain. In the south of England and on the Scottish borders great tombs are evidence of ancestor worship among the first farmers of the Neolithic and an extraordinary discovery in Herefordshire reveals what really lies beneath their burial mounds. He also explores the religious connotations of the flint mines of Grimes Graves in Norfolk, the great stone circle and henge of Avebury and the monuments of Orkney.

In the 1960s, Britain's Ministry of Defence gave LSD to army volunteers in secret experiments

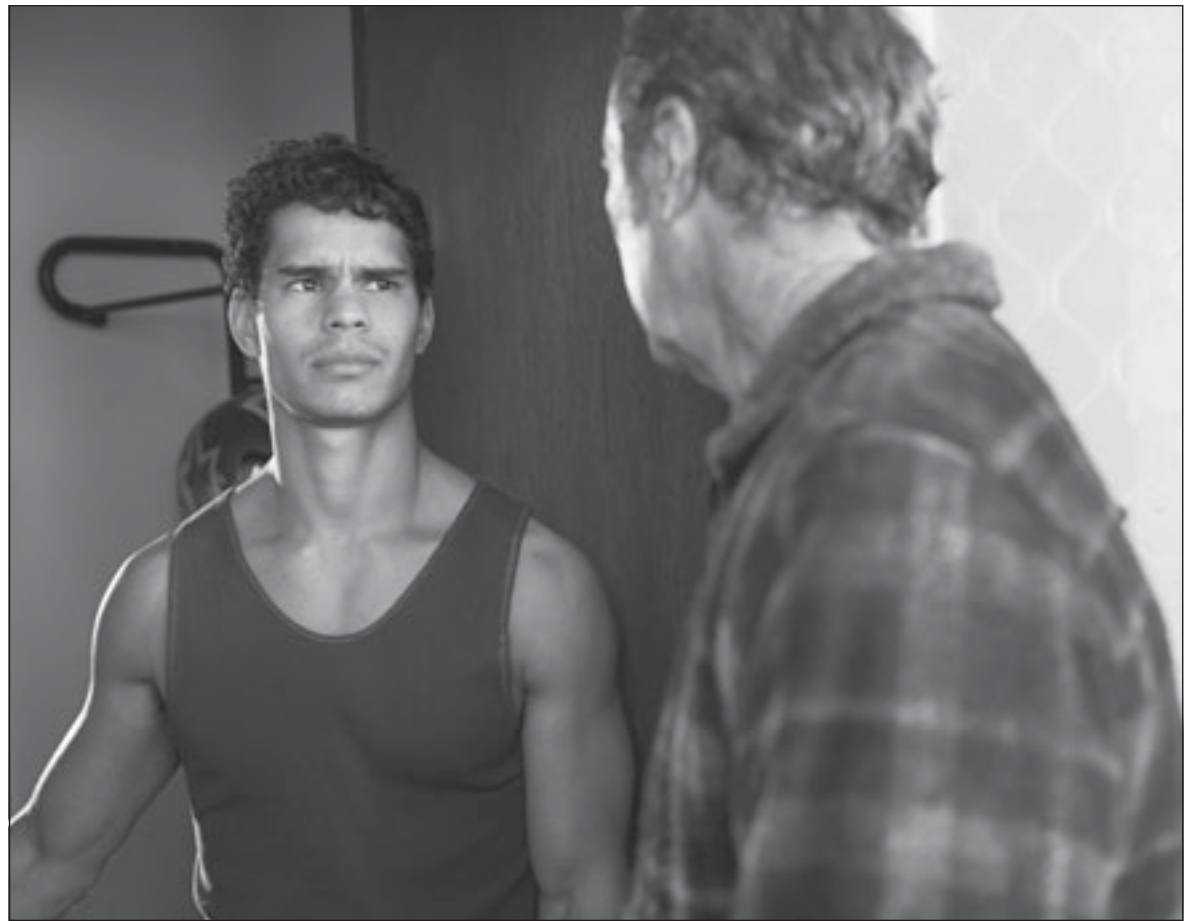
designed to find out whether the drug could be used to turn soldiers into fanatical "crazed" killers, whether it could be used to make prisoners talk and whether – if it could be dropped in innocent-looking packages – it could be used to render enemy soldiers useless in battle. The results were negative in all cases but the incident provides an interesting basis for this week's episode of *Inspector George Gently* (ABC1 Sunday May 18 at 8.30pm), whose own wartime experience also includes a military cover-up.

In the course of the episode, Sergeant Bachus' prejudices against "poofs", smart women police officers and rocking the boat take something of a battering.

Self-absorption is not new, but with the current fad for recording your every change of mood or errant idea on FaceBook or Twitter, it tends to be writ larger than before. When hapless filmmaker Chris Waitt gets dumped by yet another girlfriend he resolves to find out what exactly is wrong with him. Naturally, he films the quest. So, carrying a large microphone and trailed by a largely unseen cameraman, he sets out initially to interview his former girlfriends. Most of them will have none of it, so he resorts to asking strangers in the street if they feel like having sex with him.

By this time the viewer has little doubt as to why Waitt's girlfriends dumped him: he is a self-absorbed twit. By the end of the film he has actually found a new girlfriend but one doubts whether it can last, for Waitt appears to have learnt little from his biographical odyssey. Despite its catchy title – *A Complete History Of My Sexual Failures* (ABC2 Sunday May 18 at 8.30pm) – I found his detailed account of his relationships and his quest for knowledge to be distinctly tedious.

During the Edwardian era a hidden army of up to 300 servants tended to every need of an aristocratic family. In 1901 there were more than 1.5 million servants in Britain and grand estates occupied half the land. The titled owners of these properties never shored a sheep or shod a horse or planted a crop, but they bossed the people who did



Jason (Mark Coles-Smith) confronts Lennie (Bryan Brown) – *Old School* (ABC1 Fridays from May 23 at 8.30pm).

and they happily took all the profits from the sale of "their" produce, even though the planting, growing and sale was all supervised not by them but by their steward.

When capital replaced land as the chief indicator of wealth, many of the landed gentry found it impossible to compete with previously despised people "in trade". Ultimately many of the landed gentry had to marry rich Americans in an exchange of titles for cash. The process is investigated in the new series *Secrets Of The Manor House* (SBS ONE Thursdays from May 22 at 7.30pm).

In the first episode of the significant BBC series *The Men Who Made Us Fat* (ABC1 Thursday, May 22 at 9.30pm), Jacques Peretti travels to America to investigate the story of high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS). The sweetener was championed in the US in the 1970s by

Richard Nixon's agriculture secretary Earl Butz to make use of the excess corn grown by farmers. Cheaper and sweeter than sugar, it soon found its way into almost all processed foods and soft drinks.

Endocrinologist Robert Lustig was one of the first to recognise the dangers of HFCS but his findings were discredited at the time. Meanwhile a US Congress report blamed fat, not sugar, for the disturbing rise in cardio-vascular disease and the food industry responded with ranges of "low fat", "heart healthy" products in which the fat was removed – but the substitute was yet more sugar.

Meanwhile, in 1970s Britain, food manufacturers used advertising campaigns to promote the idea of snacking between meals. Fast food chains proliferated.

If any one still doubts that Australia can make cop shows that

are as good as anything that comes out of America, the new "ill-matched buddies" series *Old School* (ABC1 Fridays from May 23 at 8.30pm) should finally settle the matter.

The series stars Sam Neill as retired cop Ted McCabe and Bryan Brown as ex-crim Lennie Cahill. Lennie, fresh out of jail, wants his share of the loot from a major armoured car heist, loot which has mysteriously disappeared. Ted wants the man who shot him during that same robbery.

Unwillingly at first, they join forces to get what is theirs and to expose the crooked cop who set it all up. The two stars are capable, experienced actors – and it shows. But the supporting cast is excellent and the writing and direction are both competent.

I enjoyed it. ☺

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POLITICS IN THE PUB

May 15

NO MEETING: VENUE UNAVAILABLE

Sydney Comedy Festival, at Harold Park Hotel;

May 22

**ELECTORAL REFORM and
THE FATE OF THE MICRO PARTIES**

Anthony Green, ABC Election Analyst;
Fiona Patten, leader The Australian Sex Party;

May 29

**REPEALING THE CARBON TAX –
WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES?**

John Connor, Director Climate Change Institute;
Ben Pearson, Head of Programs, Greenpeace Australia-Pacific;

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The Black War wins praise

Jillian Mundy

TASMANIA: Historian Henry Reynolds has hailed *The Black War-Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania*, a book by Nicholas Clements launched in Hobart last week, as ending the "history wars".

Clements provides a social history of an often discounted war, fought on Tasmanian soil from 1824 to 1831 between Aborigines and newly-arrived white colonists and convicts, which is said to have claimed the lives of about 200 whites and 1,000 blacks.

"It was more violent than any conflict of comparable scope and duration anywhere in Australia. It was also a clash between the most culturally and technologically dissimilar people to have ever laid eyes on each other, and at stake was nothing less than control of the country and the fate of a people," Clements said at the launch.

He attributes the cause of the war to lack of sex.

"There was a six to one gender imbalance in colonial society. Available women, particularly for male convicts, were non-existent. Not

surprisingly, many frontiersmen resorted to abducting and raping Aboriginal women and children. It's my belief that this was the main proximate cause of war – yet many Australians know little about it," Clements says.

"There's a panoramic ignorance of it, and that's to do with education.

"This history matters because it not only tells us who we were but also hints at who we are. I believe that all Tasmanians can benefit from understanding the war that ushered in the only true change of government that this island has ever seen."

A former tradie and eighth generation Tasmanian, descended from a convict who participated in the war, Clements discovered his passion for research and study while recovering from a spinal injury. In his book, Clements attempts to present a balanced social record of the frontier war, relying on diaries, journals, newspaper articles, official documents and other archival material to recount incidences of terrifying, bloody and violent guerrilla warfare.

Clements has brought into the public light, for the first time, detailed first-hand written accounts from Robert Lawrence, the son of

a wealthy landowner, Edward Dumaresq, the magistrate of New Norfolk at the time, and Henry Emmett, a colonial treasury clerk; all of whom participated in the infamous Black Line.

Each chapter of the book, derived from his doctoral thesis, is divided into two parts – black and white, from the point of view of those on both sides of the conflict, focusing on the experience and attitudes of those involved. "It forces you to empathise with both sides," he said.

Tasmanian Aboriginal artist and writer Julie Gough, who has extensively researched the Black War period, says the book is very accessible and clearly explains what happened.

"There's no excuse to not read about this period now," she said. "There's no reason to avoid the Black War."

Reynolds believes Clements has transcended the "angry contention of the history wars", referring to the debate sparked by controversial writer Keith Windschuttle, who accused Reynolds and other leading historians of fabricating Aboriginal history.

"Instead of using the Tasmanian history as a battle field for contemporary political

contention and moral judgement I think (Nicholas), over the period of time, increasingly came to see the job of historian as one of understanding and empathy," Reynolds said.

"One of the things most striking about Nick's book is the way in which he features the extraordinary military success of the Mairremmener people who, with rudimentary weapons, were able to present a challenge to European colonisation quite unprecedented in Australian history, and in particular the capacity they had to interrupt British colonisation.

"They were far more able to do this than any other Aboriginal nation anywhere in Australia and that in a way makes the leaders, those young men that we know of, Tongerlongerter and Montpelliatta, two of the most extraordinary military figures in Australian history.

"And the sadness is that there is absolutely no recognition of them.

"It is my view that in so many ways they are more appropriate to be recognised for their military prowess than those young Tasmanians who went overseas to fight Britain's wars."

Koori Mail ✪

Aunty's enemies: ABC still under attack after 80 years

June Factor

As the bells in the tower of Sydney's General Post Office chimed eight o'clock on the evening of Friday July 1, 1932, the peals were picked up and carried to every state of the federation. "This is the Australian Broadcasting Commission", said the announcer, Conrad Charlton. Then he introduced the Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, to pronounce the Commission inaugurated.

These are the opening lines of Volume 1 of Ken Inglis' expansive history of the ABC. Eighty-two years ago, a conservative prime minister launched Australia's independent national public broadcaster, committed, in Lyons' words, to "serve all sections and to satisfy the diversified tastes of the public".

Despite the grand opening and the genuine commitment of many conservatives to an Australian model of the much-admired BBC – Robert Menzies, then a Melbourne barrister, had led a delegation to Lyons, lobbying for the ABC's establishment – the public broadcaster had enemies from its inception.

Sir Keith Murdoch, father of Rupert, was a newspaper proprietor with interests in several commercial radio stations. For three years, he and other newspaper owners insisted that the ABC be restricted to no more than 200 words a day of overseas news, and limited its presentation of news bulletins to five minutes in the evening – but

not before 7.50pm, by which time it was thought people would have finished reading their newspapers. When, by 1936, the ABC had begun to develop an independent news service, Murdoch was greatly displeased. His newspapers demanded a reduction in the ABC's income from licence fees so that it would, in Inglis' summary, "stop competing improperly with private enterprise".

In an early show of defiance, the vice-chairman of the ABC, Herbert Brookes – a leading conservative and son-in-law of Alfred Deakin, Australia's second Prime Minister – attacked Murdoch for his self-interest and his attempts to cripple the ABC's news service, as well as his "conspiracy of silence" about the success of the ABC. Knowing Murdoch was unlikely to publish this attack, Brookes arranged for a recording of his speech to be broadcast on the ABC. "ABC takes the gloves off" was a headline in the next issue of *Smith's Weekly*.

Private commercial interests were not the only enemies. At its inception and for many years later, the ABC was the responsibility of the Postmaster-General's Department. The politician to hold the office of Postmaster-General in 1938 was a South Australian Country Party man with a military background, AG Cameron. When the chairman of the Commission and two of its members first met him, Cameron did not mince his words: "I know nothing about broadcasting. I'm not interested in it. If I had my way I would stop all broadcasting. No time for these mechanical things. Don't know anything about

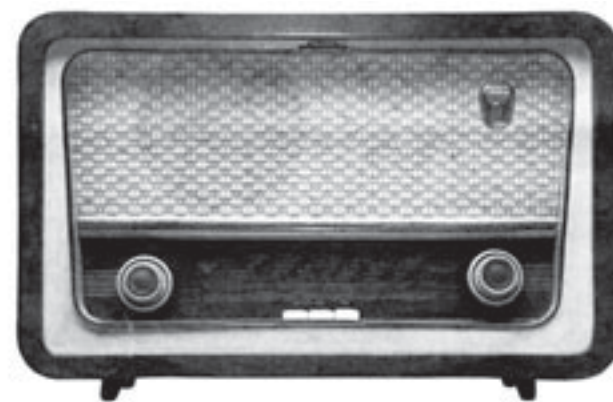
music. As for people who give talks and commentaries over the air, if I had my way I would poison the blank blanks – would bring them under the Vermin Act."

The story of the ABC suggests Marx's famous axiom – that history repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce – should be turned around.

The down-with-the-ABC clowns and incompetents are richly represented in the broadcaster's early years, but the ABC's enemies have grown fiercer and more determined as its capacities, its reach and its public appeal have threatened their private or political interests. Deceit, often built on false promises, is a marker of our own time.

In 1996, the Liberal-National Coalition's Shadow Minister for Communications, Senator Richard Alston, presented the soon-to-be voting public with a manifesto on the ABC, titled "Better Communications". It was glowing, praising every aspect of the ABC, including Radio Australia, and promising that there would be no cuts to the broadcaster's budget during the first term of a Coalition government. This was consistent with his earlier role as chairman of a Senate select committee which reported on ABC management and operations in 1995, and recommended against government interference in the ABC and emphasised the need for government to properly fund existing and expanding ABC activities.

Yet only a few months after the Coalition won the election, cabinet was discussing which of two proposals for severe cuts to the ABC's budget the government should



adopt. In his submission to cabinet, Alston favoured the lesser option – a 12 percent cut – because it would arouse less public opposition than the 20 percent cut favoured by the Finance Department, and it would still "give us the opportunity to influence future ABC functions and activities more directly". And so it came to pass. Among the casualties was Radio Australia, which lost its overseas transmitters, two foreign languages and a significant proportion of its staff and devoted overseas audience.

Ten years after the budget cuts, a KPMG report commissioned by the government declared the ABC was performing financially "as well if not better than" commercial media companies, and recommended an extra \$125 million – 7 percent – in the next three years in order that "the ABC could sustain its present range, quality and mix of outputs". The ABC's own request was for a more modest \$115.2 million. As Inglis comments politely, the government's actual contribution in 2006 "was rather

more modest" even than the ABC's figure.

Now Rupert Murdoch – and some of his journalists – are questioning the very existence of a publicly funded ABC. A new Coalition government, having promised before last year's election that there would be no funding cuts to the national broadcaster, has already instituted two inquiries into its management and financial operations. The large majority of the population which values the ABC may soon grow restless.

Perhaps the government might pause and consider the words of Terry Lane, one of the ABC's most admired interviewers, who retired some years ago. Writing in *The Age* in 2003, Lane remarked: "Taxes are the way we buy civilisation, and public broadcasting is an institution of civilisation."

June Factor is a senior fellow in Melbourne University's school of historical and philosophical studies. She held a leadership role in Friends of the ABC from 1995 to 1999.

The Beacon ✪



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