



## "Stop Power Sell Off"

Anna Pha

"Stop the NSW Power Sell Off", the "Poles & Wires Not 4 Sale"; that's the message from the people of NSW to the state Coalition government. Premier Mike Baird is determined to push ahead despite strong public opposition. Like his federal counterpart Tony Abbott, Baird is determined to privatise the state's assets, especially those that guarantee whopping profits for the private sector.

"In the last couple decades we've seen the privatisation of banks, telecommunications and aviation, and each time regional communities have suffered reductions to services, increased costs, job losses, and an impact on their local economy," Stop the Sell Off campaign director Adam Kerslake said.

People's memories of past privatisations, many of which started with all sorts of guarantees at 49 percent, are not forgotten. Nor are the higher prices and decline in quality and loss of services that followed."

A survey by ReachTEL commissioned by the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) in four National Party-held regional NSW seats – Ballina, Dubbo, Port Macquarie and Tamworth – found that 14 percent of voters in those electorates support the privatisation of the state-owned electricity poles and wires network, while 70.3 percent are opposed. Even if the sell off were limited to 49 percent of the electricity network, support only rose a few percent to 17.1 percent.

To gain support from National Party members of the Coalition, Baird has agreed to leave Essential Energy, which serves rural NSW, in public hands. With state elections due next March, it would have been political suicide to agree to the privatisation of Essential Energy.

### Misleading

Baird says he will limit the sale to 49 percent which gives the impression the government will still hold a majority ownership and control of the companies. But that is not the case. The plan is to sell the equivalent of 49 percent of the combined value of the four companies. As only three companies are being sold, then 49 percent of the total means that the private sector will hold a controlling share of more than 50 percent of at least one and most likely all three companies up for privatisation.

The first thing the new owners will do is set about increasing and maximising profits. This will be done by such means as:

- sacking staff
- attacking wages and working conditions
- higher prices
- short cuts in maintenance and reduction in investment in new infrastructure.

For the public this will mean:

- a higher rate of disconnections with many



"Stop the sell off" protest in Sydney, 2008. (Photo: Anna Pha)

on lower incomes unable to afford heating and hot water

- loss of local jobs
- reduced public safety – bushfires, storms, floods, etc
- no accountability
- loss of income for government – at present \$2.5 billion per annum
- fewer apprentices trained
- less support for local sports teams, community groups and organisations like rescue helicopter services.

The commitment to spend the sales revenue on roads and trains and an infrastructure reward of around \$2 billion from the federal government, even in cold hard economic budgetary terms, does not cover the loss of regular income in the years to come, let alone justify the hardship it will cause.

As for all the promises of passenger train routes – the public are not fooled. They have heard them for decades in the lead-up to every state election. The tollways, however, will go ahead. Public transport is not high on the agenda of a government that promotes the private, for-profit tollways and the use of cars.

Nor were people fooled by the offer of a one percent discount on official prices following privatisation for a couple of years. Rising prices and falling incomes are already taking their toll. According to the CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service of NSW, Alison Peters, there were 25,900 disconnections in the first half of 2013-14.

Public and trade union opposition stopped the former Labor government from privatising the electricity network. Now, it is time to defeat

the Coalition's plans. Residents of NSW are urged to lobby their local MP and Members of the Legislative Council. With elections on the horizon, they are more likely to hear your voice!

"We won't rest until the NSW government backs down from this plan and commits to retaining Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy, Essential Energy and TransGrid – the companies that own and operate every power line in the state – in public ownership," Kerslake said.

Guardian readers in NSW with access to the internet, are encouraged to visit the ETU Stop the Sell Off campaign website, (stoptheselloff.org.au), and email your local MP and local newspaper highlighting the impact privatisation will have on the local community and calling on them not to support it. ✪

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## Guardian

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### Raw, ruling-class rhetoric

The protests and opinion polls may have shaken Abbott government members of parliament but their dream of an end to the public sector is alive and kicking. Speeches to select audiences continue to provide jaw-dropping quotes about their driest of economically dry intentions. Treasurer Joe Hockey kicked off the series with his address to the Institute of Economic Affairs in London in April – the now-infamous “End of the Age of Entitlement” speech. It might have been written off as an overly enthusiastic offering to a gathering of Thatcherite free-marketeters but the raw, ruling-class rhetoric just keeps coming.

The “End of the Age of Entitlement” speech laid out the goal, the path to which is provided by the example of the Asian “miracle”.

“The sense of government entitlement in these countries is low,” the Treasurer said. “You get what you work for ... By western standards this highly constrained public safety net may, at times, seem brutal. But it works and it is financially sustainable.”

Brutal but “fair” and, unlike all other models cited, “sustainable”? That’s Hockey’s assessment. Of course, the plan needs a bit of selling for Australians to sign up for the wholesale slashing of their living standards. Myths, distortions and “statistics” are needed to show that Australia’s current welfare arrangements are “overly generous” and even “unfair”!

Hockey returned to these themes with a speech to the right-wing Sydney Institute last week. Space doesn’t permit review of all of Hockey’s fancy footwork but one of the more widely quoted examples serves to give the flavour:

“Given that only around 45 percent of the population pays income tax, the average taxpayer must pay more than twice this amount in tax to fund welfare expenditure. In other words the average working Australian, be they a cleaner, a plumber or a teacher, is working over one month full time each year just to pay for the welfare of another Australian.”

Regardless of whether this statistic is accurate when all babies, children, students, unemployed, pensioners, part-time workers, etc, are considered, it is the thinking behind the assertion that one person is carrying another person as though they are bludgers that is dangerous. It runs contrary to the claimed concept of the state taking responsibility for the welfare of society and its services and welfare measures being funded by central revenue raised through a progressive taxation system based on ability to pay. Companies and individuals pay taxation to fund health, education, unemployment benefits, age pensions, etc. People receive these services and benefits at various times during their life according to need.

The fact is that many families receive as much back in benefits like the Family Tax Benefit and tax returns as they paid out in income tax. This relief dries up as the children grow older. The temporary boost to families’ disposable income and the economy (praised elsewhere for its resilience and high standards of living) is now clearly seen as indulgent.

Those wealthier Australians not completely protected by deft accounting are still paying slightly higher marginal rates of income tax. This also used to be seen as reasonable by governments because these high income earners were more able to contribute. Now, the wealthy are said to be growing impatient with the poor. The rich are sick of propping up the system and Hockey is going in to struggle for their “rights”.

Similarly, he insists the current rate of 30 percent will have to limbo down further to compete with the 17 percent company tax levied in Singapore or the 16.5 percent in Hong Kong. This is the real agenda. To abandon the government’s social responsibilities to the people so that it can slash and eventually abolish company and personal income tax and rely on the regressive GST to fund the military, justice system, intelligence agencies and whatever else remains of the state apparatus.

The contradictions in Hockey’s tirade are obvious. The fact that one in ten Australian households rely entirely on government benefits (way below the poverty line) is not a failing of the capitalist job markets, it’s due to those people’s own behaviour. And reports that Australia’s nine wealthiest individuals own more than the bottom 60 percent of the population are not worthy of comment at all.

The intentions of this government and its plutocrats’ budget have been made crystal clear.

#### PRESS FUND

Watch the small print! Last week NSW premier Mike Baird tried to persuade voters to back his plan to sell off the state’s crucial electricity distribution infrastructure (the “poles and wires”), by offering to use the proceeds of sale to increase Sydney’s rail capacity by 60 percent. But the proposed new underground “metro” lines would only accommodate single deck carriages and would almost certainly be privately operated, like the proposed new north-west line. In short, by agreeing to sell off the electricity infrastructure the public would also be signing up for privatisation of much of the city’s rail network! But here’s something in large print. WE REALLY NEED PRESS FUND CONTRIBUTIONS, so please send in something for the next edition if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week’s supporters, as follows:

Brian Hawke \$25, Mark Mannion \$5, “Round Figure” \$10

This week’s total: \$40 Progressive total: \$3,785

# Cuban 5 event great success

Vinnie Molina

**Delegates from 31 countries including the Australia and the United States rallied for the Cuban Five in Washington DC from 4-10 June.**

More than 500 people attending a rally in front of the White House demanded the freedom of Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino and Antonio Guerrero, known internationally as the Cuban Five. Rene Gonzalez and Fernando Gonzalez have fulfilled every last minute of their sentences and are now back in Cuba with their families.

The Cuban Five were detained in 1998 facing the longest trial in the history of the US. A farce of a trial delivered a miscarriage of justice with very long prison terms from 15 up to double life + 15 years.

The highly political and biased case was held in Miami where there was no chance of a fair trial. Documents recently released under freedom of information showed that the US government also interfered in the trial, paying local journalists to

publish biased articles against the Cuban Five during their trial to influence the jury.

Despite the 9th Circuit of the Court of Appeals in Atlanta re-ordering there be a new trial outside Miami, political interference appealed the Atlanta’s decision and there was no new trial.

Antonio Guerrero is due for release in 2017 but because he is a US citizen the Court threatens to impose a five year supervised release as was done to Rene Gonzalez on his release and during that time he endured the deaths of his brother and father. Ramon Labanino is due for release in 2024. Gerardo Hernandez faces no legal avenue to fight his double life imprisonment plus 15 years. His access to justice must come from millions of people around the world putting enough political pressure on President Obama to use the power he has to pardon them and send them back home.

The US has imposed a hostile policy on Cuba aiming at regime change for more than 50 years. Many people in the US are calling

for new US-Cuba relations where both countries and their people can mutually benefit and share their potential.

A first step in this process is the release of the Five Cuban anti-terrorists to reunite with their families in Cuba. President Obama has the power under the United States Constitution to use the key at his disposal and do this.

During the Five Days for the Five there were two days lobbying members of the US Congress by Parliamentarians from Latin America and Europe, members of the community from some 31 countries and trade unionists from Australia, in the hope of bringing the case into focus and to encourage them to explore avenues for their freedom of the Five.

We encourage trade unions and their members to stand by the Cuban Five as they are innocent and should be released immediately.

Australian unionists joined the protestors at the White House and the Capitol in the global demand for justice and to remedy the miscarriage of justice. ✪



The closing ceremony of the Washington meeting.

## Whitehaven forced to halt clearing

**Whitehaven Coal last week was forced to halt its winter clearing of the Leard State forest for a new open-cut coal mine, in north-western NSW, following legal action by the Maules Creek Community Council.**

Maules Creek Community Council spokesperson, Phil Laird said, “We are pleased that Whitehaven has been forced to respond to our legitimate challenge in the court undertaking to stop clearing in Leard State Forest”.

The community group, represented by environmental law experts, EDO NSW, sought an interim injunction in the NSW Land and Environment Court, to immediately stop the clearing during winter when animals, including

threatened species, are hibernating in the forest.

“This outcome is a huge relief for the Maules Creek community and everyone that loves the wildlife of Leard State Forest. The slaughter of hibernating bats and other animals over winter was an outrage that has been rightly stopped” Mr Laird said.

A judgment in the case was expected after a hearing. However Whitehaven, instead gave an undertaking to the Court that it will halt the clearing until a full hearing on the matter, which is expected in early September.

The Maules Creek Community Council is arguing that Whitehaven is in breach of its development consent by winter/spring clearing of the forest. A breach of development

consent contravenes the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

“This outcome sends a strong message to coal mining companies across NSW and to the NSW government – if they will not enforce the law, then the community is prepared to step up and do it themselves” Mr Laird said.

“We appreciate the action taken by Whitehaven today and we will be preparing to vigorously pursue the full legal challenge” he concluded.

The new Maules Creek coal mine project involves a total clearing of 1,664 hectares of forest which provide habitat for threatened species including bats, koalas, forest owls, the Swift Parrot and the Regent Honeyeater. ✪

# Australia Post

## Resistance to sackings and privatisation

Peter Mac

Mass meetings were held last week in opposition to the government's plans to sack 900 Australia Post employees, mostly management and administrative staff in the organisation's Melbourne headquarters, and to split the organisation in two. The government is likely to cut another 4,100 positions and these moves are widely seen as a prelude to selling off the organisation in whole or in part.

The government denies it's going to do so. Nevertheless its initiatives are clearly intended to transform the organisation into an attractive commodity for the private sector. Under the government's plans the parcels and logistics services would be separated from letter delivery and retail operations. The parcels business is already highly profitable and expanding, so it's a sitting duck for immediate privatisation.

That leaves the letter delivery service. It's certainly true that the demand for letter delivery has fallen, but it's not true that it will cease altogether. There will always be a need for delivered mail. When the internet appeared many commentators predicted it would lead to the end of the printed media. It hasn't, nor will it kill off the demand for letter delivery.

However, the government will undoubtedly claim that individual letter delivery is now in effect a "boutique" specialty service, for which the public must pay extra fees or accept a slower delivery time. An indication of this trend is the government's offer to private businesses of either a three to four-day mail delivery time for a standard fee, or else a quicker two-day mail delivery for a premium.

That has infuriated owners of many small businesses which depend on the postal service. Undeterred and determined to turn a negative into a positive, Australia Post's current chief executive Ahmed Faour recently declared with cheerful enthusiasm:

"... we created choice for them at different price levels. Now they get to choose the service they want for the price they are prepared to pay!"

### The commercial imperative

Much of the controversy over the government's proposed treatment of Australia Post is Faour's \$4.8 million annual salary, which is a great deal more than the head of the US Postal Service receives.

The idea of cutting back Faour's salary or terminating his contract altogether sounds really worthwhile, especially given his reportedly dismissive treatment of Australia Post's employees.

However, his bloated paycheck is also indicative of his real role within Australia Post. The job for which the Abbott government is paying him is to change Australia Post into a cash cow for the private sector, rather than ensuring that it continues to provide an essential public service for minimum cost.

That commercial imperative underlies Australia Post's controversial sponsorship of the recent Olympic Games in London, a seemingly insane decision for an organisation that the government has described as teetering on the brink of insolvency.

There are precedents for providing largesse to the private sector at public expense. About 30 years ago successive Liberal and Labor governments began selling off many of the nation's post office buildings (particularly those with historic significance), which were often highly coveted by private developers. Australia Post was then forced to pay rent, which made it increasingly difficult for it to cover its operating costs.

During that period the magnificent Sydney General Post Office had a multi-million dollar facelift under the expert and very conscientious supervision of the former Commonwealth Department of Housing and Construction.



Australia Post's Chief Executive Ahmed Faour.

However, the building was then leased for 99 years to Macquarie Bank, and the Department of Housing and Construction was then split up into separate businesses which soon afterwards were sold off.

The government subscribes to the neo-liberal view that almost every function of government should be carried out by the private sector. Accordingly it has been considering whether some activities carried out by a number of government agencies could be transferred to the private sector or discontinued, or a least be transferred to Australia Post, thereby allowing those agencies to be greatly diminished in size and scope.

In consultation with Faour the government has therefore been exploring the possibility of activities which involve interaction with the public being carried out in post offices – that is, assuming that Australia Post's own functions involving public interaction have not already been privatised.

### The way ahead

There's no need for Australia Post to cut staff because it's making a loss in one area of its operations. Although the government complains bitterly about the financial losses incurred by the letter delivery service, Australia Post as a whole made a \$142 million profit last financial year because of the additional demand for its other services.

The logical approach to the loss in demand for letter delivery would be to simply transfer employees from letter delivery to the parcels business, and/or to train employees so they're multi-skilled and can move from one service to another according to fluctuations in demand.

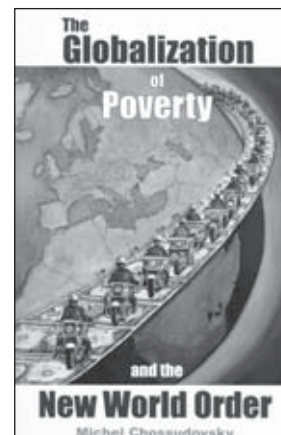
However, that would become difficult if Australia Post was split into two sectors, and impossible if either sector was sold off. In any case the government is not interested in saving jobs; it's interested in serving the corporate world.

As commentator Elizabeth Farrelly noted caustically last week: "... as government ... conceives of itself as business, [then] business inevitably starts to set policy. So we get coal lobbyists writing energy strategy and the Urban Task force dictating planning."

For the Abbott government, serving the corporate world means slashing Australia Post staff numbers prior to selling off the organisation, so that the remaining employees are worked as hard as possible, thereby minimising the organisation's salary bill and offering maximum potential profits for a future purchaser.

The best solution of all for the 32,000 employees, and for ordinary working people and small businesses that depend on Australia Post would be to get rid of the Abbott government as fast as possible, and to ensure that if Labor takes its place it doesn't follow the Coalition's lead with regard to postal services. ★

### Pete's Corner



### The Globalisation of Poverty and the New World Order

by Michel Chossudovsky

Paper back- 377 pages

Publisher: Global Research, 2003

\$36 including p&h

This is a second edition with valuable updates and additional chapters that not only deal with important economic questions but extremely well researched and revealing information on experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Latin America, the former Soviet Union and the Balkans. Michel Chossudovsky spent considerable time researching his topics, including extensive travels in many of the countries reported on. The part on the New World Order includes coverage of the dismantling of the welfare state, narrowing of the tax base, illusory independence of central banks and the crisis of the state.

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# Thousands rally against budget

Ann Pha

**The Bust the Budget Rally in Melbourne on Thursday June 12 sent a loud and clear message to PM Tony Abbott that his anti-people, pro-big business budget is inhumane and must be scrapped.**

Workers and their unions, community groups, health workers and students rallied outside the Victorian Trades Hall Council before heading off in a "Bust the Budget" march through the city to Parliament House.

The march through the city was the biggest this year, with an estimated 40,000 protesters filling Bourke Street between Spring and Swanston Streets.

ACTU secretary Dave Oliver said the budget was cruel and an attack on ordinary people.

"Generations of Australians have fought hard to establish working conditions and dignity at work. They have struggled hard to build a better

life and a decent society, to educate our children and to care for our sick and to look after our elderly," Oliver said.

"Why should the people who can least afford it be forced to take the hit?"

Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union national secretary Michael O'Connor said the federal government was attacking jobs. "We have never before seen a government try to destroy the jobs of Australians like this government has.

"They are trying to change our commitment to a fair go, our commitment to justice, our democratic right to organise. They think they are going to get away with it. We say they aren't," O'Connor said.

If passed the budget would cause pain and suffering, drive millions of Australians into poverty, boost the ranks of the unemployed and homeless and drive the economy into recession. The budget must

be defeated and replaced by a progressive program of spending and revenue raising that protects our planet and improves the life of the people.

The main thrust of the 2014-15 federal budget is the transfer of wealth from working people into the pockets of the rich and big corporations, in particular to the mining and banking/finance sectors.

People are angry and this is a start of a long campaign. Rally organisers pledged to hold further protests.

## Delegates meeting

On the same day as the VTHC rally in Melbourne, job delegates' meetings were held in Sydney and several regional areas of NSW. The Sydney meeting heard reports from Unions NSW secretary Mark Lennon, rank and file unionists and a pensioner (retired union member) who spoke about the impact the budget would have if passed.

The main issues raised were the GP co-payment, \$80 billion cuts to health and education, the cuts to the age pension and unemployment benefits, increased uni fees, and the increase in the petrol tax.

Lennon expanded his coverage to state issues and the need to defeat the conservatives at both state and federal levels. The meeting passed a resolution condemning the federal budget "for specifically targeting those least able to afford cuts



Photo: Victorian Trades Hall Council

including, those accessing the health system, pensioners, young people seeking employment and training opportunities and the most vulnerable in our community."

It also condemned other measures being considered by the government and big business – cutting the minimum wage, weekend pay rates and your rights at work.

The meeting was lively, with feelings strong and delegates determined to defeat the budget. Spirits were lifted by a video produced by the union movement's aid agency APHEDA, bringing solidarity greetings from around the world. "Bust the Budget" messages came from

Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and New Zealand.

Many delegates were looking to Unions NSW for strong leadership in taking whatever action is necessary to defeat the budget. The focus of the meeting was on defeating the conservative agenda.

The meeting decided to continue the campaign against the budget and federal government's agenda, including the lobbying of MPs and Senators. A mass rally will be held on Sunday July 6 with the community. Local Union Community Councils will be used to mobilise community support for the trade union campaign. ☘

## Business agenda to sink Australian shipping

**Big business is intentionally overstating the impact of shipping costs in an attempt to replace Australia's shipping industry with low-cost, low-standard Flag Of Convenience (FOC) options, according to the Maritime Union of Australia and the Australian Workers' Union.**

The Business Council of Australia has linked with other big business lobby groups in an effort to destroy the Australian shipping industry by claiming current shipping costs are making business operations less viable.

A submission by the Australian Aluminium Council to the Abbott government's Options Paper on regulation of coastal shipping claims the "viability of refineries and smelters is impacted by... shipping costs," and that "Australian jobs in the bauxite, alumina and aluminium industry are put at risk by the current regime."

However, shipping costs have never before been nominated as a significant factor by the aluminium industry when explaining the recent closure of major refineries and smelters.

MUA national secretary Paddy Crumlin said big business lobbies, including the aluminium industry, were simply trying to rationalise an irresponsible cash grab.

"It always sounds impressive to say that costs need to be cut or industries will be destroyed, but this is simply untrue," Mr Crumlin said.

"All we have here is big business sensing an opportunity to squeeze a few extra pennies in profit

by destroying an entire Australian industry and replacing it with Flag Of Convenience ships with third-world standards. If we were to follow the BCA's recommendations and open up our coast completely to lowest-common-denominator Flag of Convenience vessels, we would see 10,000 quality Australian jobs lost very rapidly.

"The 2012 changes to the Coastal Trading Act allow ship owners on the Australian coast to effectively compete in the domestic freight market with FOC ships, despite the latter's poor standards and exploited crews. Watering down this Act would have dire consequences for our nation, which always has and always will rely heavily on shipping."

AWU assistant national secretary Scott McDine expressed surprise that the Australian Aluminium Council had cited shipping costs as a significant factor affecting the Australian aluminium industry.

Mr McDine said shipping costs had never been raised as a significant factor during numerous discussions with Rio Tinto or Alcoa regarding the closures of major refineries and smelters.

"During the AWU's in-depth discussions with Rio Tinto and Alcoa regarding the recent closures of major refineries and smelters, the explanation offered was always the historically low global price of aluminium in conjunction with an historically high Australian dollar," Mr McDine said.

"Shipping costs were never nominated as a significant factor." ☘

## Vic rally to bust brutal Budget

**Thousands of Victorian workers rallied in Melbourne on June 12 against the brutal Abbott-Hockey Budget. The Budget will instantly hit workers through higher medical bills and higher petrol prices but the biggest threat comes to their job security from the brutal slashing to industry programs meant to rescue and grow manufacturing.**

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (MWU) fears that the axing of 10 major industry programs could bring forward auto job losses, reduce Australian content on major projects and strangle new technology firms and companies struggling to diversify into new markets.

The cutting of \$846 million in these varied industry programs over five years cannot be replaced by a single Entrepreneurs Infrastructure Program with just over half that funding.

When combined with cutbacks to CSIRO research funds, abandoning the renewable energy industry and nastily stripping apprentices of their tool allowances, adds up to a government with no care for jobs and workers.

"Health and education are clearly the headline issues, but cuts across the board to industry, innovation and job creation will be silent killers for small and medium manufacturers," said AMWU national president Andrew Dettmer.

"Australian industry – especially manufacturing – is already struggling through a lack of government investment and new free-trade deals with Japan and Korea. The car industry's announced closure will soon see tens of thousands out of work.

"But this budget provides no relief, with further cuts to industry, cuts to research and innovation and no future plan for job creation."

Programs on the \$846 million chopping block include the Australian Industry Participation Program, Commercialisation Australia, Enterprise Solutions, the Innovation Investment Fund, the Industry Innovation Council, Enterprise Connect, and Industry Innovation Precincts.

"These programs were supported by industry, employers and unions as being excellent job creators and support for business, particularly for SMEs," said Mr Dettmer.

There has been no consultation over how their replacement, the Entrepreneurs Infrastructure Program can use a paltry \$461 million to make sure that innovation stays in Australia.

The cutting of the Australian Industry Participation Program means there will be no compulsion on developers of major projects over \$500 million to provide a plan for compulsory Australian content, particularly metals firms in the mining states.

Premature job shedding in the auto industry is a risk as the Abbott governments cuts \$837.7 million to the auto industry, including ending the Automotive Transformation Scheme from 2018 and ditching the Supporting Automotive Sector jobs scheme.

Cuts of \$200 million to programs over this and the next financial years could see car makers exit early.

"The ATS money should be redirected immediately to parts manufacturers to allow them to transition, money is needed for training and assistance as the \$100 million Growth Fund is woefully inadequate," Mr Dettmer said.

The AMWU estimates that \$6.4 billion in potential contracts for Australian firms could be sent overseas as a result of cuts to research and innovation bodies working with industry.

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency will be abolished for a saving of \$338 million.

The CSIRO takes a \$111 million hit over four years, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation cut by \$27.6 million – while the PM's science prize gets a grant of \$5.5 million.

"Research and development is being stripped while Mr Abbott awards prizes, it's typical of this government's warped priorities," he said. ☘

# Van offers hope for eye issues

Mahala Strohfeltd

**It's a travelling roadshow with a difference. A 13-metre specialist van landed in Cairns on its long trek to some of Queensland's most rural and remote Indigenous communities to test and treat diabetes-related eye conditions.**

And you certainly couldn't miss it. Covered in eye-catching Aboriginal artwork and filled with state-of-the-art medical equipment, the Indigenous Diabetes Eyes and Screening (IDEAS) van has already made a significant difference in the lives of those treated in it.

Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) regional development coordinator Bevan Ah Kee welcomed the initiative and said the project would enhance the work being done by Aboriginal Medical Services (AMSes), particularly in diabetes.

While the project is aimed at preventing blindness in Indigenous communities, Mr Ah Kee said the long-term scope was far more wide reaching. "Our model is based on comprehensive primary health care and we all know that means prevention of the illnesses that impact on our health and wellbeing," he said.

"What the van is doing is fitting in a piece of that picture. Early detection and early intervention is the key, and so far around 30 people have

been detected with cataracts that previously went undiagnosed and that would have led to long-term blindness. What the van does is negate the wait list."

The two-year pilot project will partner with 27 AMSes around the state, including in Charleville, Cunnamulla and Mount Isa, to provide education, equipment, treatment and specialist support to the tune of \$5 million.

Where specialist services are not available, the project will provide the treatment teams to accompany the community visits.

The van will travel to nine regional hubs such as Cairns every four to five weeks and complete up to 10 visits a year in any given community. The Ideas van is expected to provide about 80 clinics this year.

For a few, the treatment they've received has brought them back from the brink of blindness, something Professor Paul Mitchell says cannot be underestimated.

One of Australia's leading authorities on diabetic retinopathy (retina damage), Professor Mitchell, saw about 30 patients from Yarrabah, Mareeba, Mossman Gorge, Innisfail and Ravenshoe last week. He praised the program, including the state-of-the-art technology.

"The aim is to supplement the existing services, not replace them," he said.

"Diabetes is a common cause of

vision loss in Indigenous communities, which have higher frequency of the illness – 30% as opposed to 10% in non-Indigenous populations. That's a significant difference and one of the areas where we hope to make some changes.

"The program is not just about reducing blindness, it's about looking at diabetes and linking into other programs and projects. There's already a telemedicine project and we're hoping to communicate whatever information comes out of this to practitioners looking after their patients with diabetes."

Professor Mitchell said the project would also fit into a more holistic model of Indigenous health.

"There's links with having the AMSes do the retinopathy screening and tying it into people's annual health checks and perhaps having other tests completed at the same time. We're not trying to do this in isolation," he said.

"The reality in Indigenous communities is that diabetes is so often under-diagnosed that by the time it is picked up it's often been there for five to ten years, and once people lose their vision over a period of time it's very hard to get it back. That's where we can provide the initial checks and treatment, but link people into follow-up care as well."

Koori Mail ☘



Donald Solomon, from Mossman, gets his eyes checked in the Indigenous Diabetes Eyes and Screening van. (Photo: Koori Mail)

***"Diabetes is a common cause of vision loss in Indigenous communities, which have higher frequency of the illness – 30% as opposed to 10% in non-Indigenous populations."***

## From nukes to renewables

Richard Titelius

**Last week the Conservation Council of WA and the activist group 350 Australia organised a forum on renewable energy in Perth.**

The forum was held at the Alexander Library in Perth and was attended by over 100 people who came to see a number of recent short films on the issue and listen to a number of speakers followed by a Q & A.

The first speaker of the forum was Dr Gavin Mudd, a senior researcher in renewable energy (Monash University), who spoke of the coming end of the nuclear power generation era as the price of uranium continued to fall and the price of nuclear power generation continued to increase.

Dr Mudd presented a number of charts and graphs which showed the nuclear industry in decline. One of these was the number of nuclear power station shut downs were increasing as the power stations reached the end of their 30-35 year lives, while the number of nuclear power station start-ups in the last 10 years were just a few.

Dr Mudd pointed to a number of renewable energy plants around the world that are feeding clean energy into the energy grids of those countries, such as the Kramer Junction facility in California (354 Megawatt), the Nellis Solar Power Plant in Nevada (which supplies power to the military community on whose land it sits), the Abengoa Solar Array in Seville Spain (20 MW), the Solana project in Arizona

(260 MW) and a proposal to build a 110 MW facility at Antofagasta in northern Chile.

In Australia there are plans to build a 50 MW plant near Kalgoorlie in the Goldfields of Western Australia.

Dr George Crisp from Doctors for the Environment spoke of the link between environmental health and public health as all levels of non renewable energy produced health issues from the upstream (mining and processing of energy sources such as coal, oil and uranium) to the operation of the power plants (air pollution and greenhouse gases) to the downstream processing or waste.

Jamie Yallup of 350 Australia advised the forum that this northern summer in Europe had just witnessed levels of CO2 exceeding 400ppm (parts per million) for the first time – the significance of which is that the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere needs to be reduced to 350 ppm to avoid runaway global climate change.

However, Yallup was encouraged by a survey in which 72% of respondents were concerned that super funds or finance institutions were financing coal or gas extraction or processing.

Zaheer Allam from Mauritius spoke of the challenges facing his country which relies heavily on five existing coal fired power stations to meet the island nation's power needs. Mauritius obtains the bulk of its remaining energy needs from oil and barge or the fibrous waste which is a by-product of sugar



Left to right – Senator Scott Ludlam, Dr George Crisp, Jamie Yallup, Dr Gavin Mudd, and Cameron Power. (Photo: Desire Mallott)

production (all three produce air pollution).

A grassroots campaign is underway in Mauritius to stop further development of coal mining and coal fired power generation including public demonstrations and a number of hunger strikes. The problem in part is that senior government ministers have vested interests and condemned the protests.

However, French and Japanese interests have begun the installation of wind and solar power generation facilities on the island and it is predicted that by 2015 renewable energy will produce 60 MW of the island's annual 400 MW annual requirement of energy.

The final speaker was Cameron Power, the Chair of Sustainable Energy Now (SEN) who spoke of the attitudinal change in human beings to bring about greater acceptance and use of renewable energy.

This included communities organising the construction and operation of their own renewable energy facilities such as the Mt Barker Community Wind Farm (which is easily visible from Albany Highway when one is driving from Perth to Albany) and solar panels on people's houses. Power said it was a little known fact that the suburb of Coodunup in Mandurah had the highest concentration of solar panels in Australia.

"When renewable energy is off grid in remote communities or mine sites it is a natural choice and the cheapest choice rather than diesel fuel," Power concluded.

The Communist Party of Australia encourages further development of renewable energy and the take up in our communities as a way of ensuring the development of a sustainable future both economically and environmentally. The CPA acknowledges that it will be a difficult process as capital and the governments which support non-renewable energy producers are intimately connected through subsidies and commodity royalties. ☘

# The Normandy landing and WW

Dr Paul Craig Thomas

If there were any doubts that Western “leaders” live in a fantasy make-believe world constructed out of their own lies, the G-7 meeting and 70th anniversary celebration of the Normandy landing dispelled the doubts. The howlers issuing from these occasions are enough to split your sides. Obama and his lap dog Cameron described the Normandy landing on June 6, 1944, as “the greatest liberation force that the world has ever known” and took all the credit for the US and Britain for the defeat of Hitler. No mention was made of the Soviet Union and the Red Army, which for three years prior to the Normandy landing had been fighting and defeating the Wehrmacht.

The Germans lost World War II at the Battle of Stalingrad, which was fought from August 23, 1942 until February 2, 1943, when most of the remnants of the powerful German Sixth Army surrendered, including 22 generals.

Nineteen months previously the largest invasion force ever assembled on planet earth invaded Russia across a one thousand mile front. Three million crack German troops; 7,500 artillery units, 19 panzer divisions with 3,000 tanks, and 2,500 aircraft rolled across Russia for 14 months.

By June 1944, three years later, very little of this force was left. The Red Army had chewed it up. When the so-called “allies” (a term which apparently excludes Russia) landed in France, there was little to resist them. The best forces remaining to Hitler were on the Russian front, which collapsed day by day as the Red Army approached Berlin.

The Red Army won the war with Germany. The Americans and the British showed up after the Wehrmacht was exhausted and in tatters and could offer little resistance. Joseph Stalin believed that Washington and London stayed out of the war until the last minute and left Russia with the burden of defeating Germany.

## Buried facts

Hollywood and popular writers have, of course, buried the facts. Americans have all sorts of movies, such as “A Bridge Too Far”, that portray insignificant events, however heroic, as turning points in the war. Nevertheless, the facts are clear. The war was won on the Eastern front by Russia. Hollywood’s movies are fun, but they are nonsense.

Russia is again on the outs with “the world community”, because Obama’s plan to seize Ukraine and to evict Russia from its Black Sea base in Crimea has come a cropper. Crimea has been a part of Russia for as long as the US has existed. Khrushchev, a Ukrainian, stuck Crimea into the Ukrainian Socialist Republic in 1954 when Russia and Ukraine were part of the same country.

When the Washington-imposed stooge government in Kiev recently declared that it was abolishing the use of the Russian language and arresting Ukrainians who had dual Russian citizenship and began tearing down Russian war memorials consecrated to the liberation of Ukraine from the Nazis, the people in Crimea used the ballot box to disassociate from Washington’s stooge government in Kiev, first voting their independence and then voting for reunification with their mother country.

Washington, and the other G-7 countries following Washington’s orders, described this Crimean act of self-determination, which is exactly comparable to the act of self-determination declared by Britain’s American colonies, to be a case of “Russian invasion and annexation”. Similar efforts to disassociate from Kiev are underway in other former Russian territories that today comprise eastern and southern Ukraine.

Washington has equated self-determination in eastern and southern Ukraine with “terrorism” and has encouraged its stooge in Kiev to use military violence against protesting civilians. The reason for branding separatists “terrorists” is to make it okay to kill them.

It is extraordinary to any learned person that the President of the United States and the titular heads of state of the Western European countries would publicly declare such blatant lies to the world. The world has historians.



The world has peoples whose knowledge vastly exceeds that of the “mainstream media”, aka, the Ministry of Propaganda, or, as Gerald Celente brands them, “the prostitutes”. Whatever name we use, the Western media is a collection of well paid whores. They lie for money, dinner party invitations, and speaking invitations with large honorariums and book contracts with large advances. I know. They tried to recruit me.

## Narrow

Notice how narrowly Washington defines “the world community.” The “world community” consists of the Group of 7. That’s it. Seven countries make up the “world community.” The “world community” consists of six white countries and Washington’s puppet state of Japan. The “world community” is the US, Canada, Britain, Germany, France, Italy, and Japan. The other 190 countries are not part of Washington’s “world community”. In the neocon doctrine, they are not even part of humanity.

The “world community” doesn’t have the population of single excluded countries, such as China or India. I haven’t done the calculation, but probably the land mass of Russia itself exceeds the land mass of the “world community”.

So, what is this “world community?”

The “world community” is the assemblage of US vassal states. Britain, France, and Germany were important on the 20th century scene. Their histories are studied in universities. The populations had a decent standard of living, although not for all citizens. Their past is the reason for their present importance.

In effect, these countries were propelled forward by history, or by the history important to the West. Japan, being an appendage of Washington, has tried to become “western”. It is extraordinary how such a proud, war-like people became nothing.

## Big Happening

As I have finally stopped laughing at the presumed non-role of Russia in the defeat of Hitler, let’s return to the G-7 meeting. The Big Happening of this meeting was Russia’s exclusion and the shrinkage of the G-8 to the G-7.

This was the first time in 17 years that Russia was not allowed to participate in the meeting of which Russia is a member. Why?

Russia is being punished. Russia is being isolated from the seven countries that the White House Fool thinks constitute “the world community”.

Obama is angry that his National Security Council and the morons he appointed to the State Department and UN were so poorly educated that they did not know that much of Ukraine consists of former Russian provinces inhabited by Russians. These ignorant Obama-appointed morons thought that they could grab Crimea, evict Russia, and leave Russia without access to the Mediterranean, thus unable to hold on to its naval base in Tartus, Syria, the easier for Washington to invade Syria.

Crimea has been part of Russia since Russia completed the reconquest from the Tartars. I remember the Tarter, or Tater, ethnics from my visit to Tamerlane the Great’s (Timur as he was also known) tomb in Samarkand 53 years ago. Today Tamerlane’s city is refurbished as a tourist site. Fifty-three years ago it was a desolate place in ruins, overgrown with trees growing out of the tops of the minarets.

As Obama’s plan to seize Ukraine failed, like every one of his other plans has failed, Washington’s spokesmen for the vested private interests have seized on the opportunity to demonize Putin and Russia and to restart the Cold War. Obama and his Group of 7 puppets used the occasion to threaten Russia with real sanctions, in place of the present propaganda sanctions that have no effect. According to Obama and his British lap dog, Putin must somehow prevent the Russian populations of eastern and southern Ukraine from protesting their subservience to a neo-fascist government in Kiev backed by Washington, or else.

Putin is supposed to embrace the Oligarch, a former minister of the government that Washington overthrew, put in office by a fake vote in which turnout was a small percent of the population. Putin is supposed to kiss this corrupt Oligarch on both cheeks, pay Ukraine’s natural gas bills and forgive its debts. In addition, Russia is supposed to repudiate the Crimean people, evict them from their re-unity with Russia and hand them over to the neo-Nazi Right Sector to be eliminated as retribution for the Soviet Union’s victory over Nazi Germany, for whom some Western Ukrainians fought. In exchange, Washington and NATO will put anti-ballistic missile bases on Ukraine’s border with Russia in order to protect Europe from nonexistent Iranian nuclear ICBMs.

This is supposed to be a win-win deal for Russia.

## Overthrow

The Obama regime used its well-paid NGOs in Ukraine to overthrow an elected, democratic government, a government no more

corrupt than those in Western or Eastern Europe or Washington.

The political morons who have England, France, Germany, and Italy in their hands are wagging their fists at Russia, warning of more, this time real, sanctions. Do they really want their energy supplies cut off? There is no prospect, despite the propagandistic claims, of Washington supplying the energy on which Germany industry depends and on which Europeans depend so that they do not freeze in the winter.

Sanctions on Russia will wreck Europe and have little, if any, effect on Russia. Russia is already moving, with China and the BRICS, outside the dollar payments mechanism.

As the demand for dollars drops, the dollar’s exchange value will drop. Initially, Washington will be able to force its vassals to support the dollar, but eventually this will become impossible.

What the neoconised National Security Council, the media, and subservient Congress are doing is to support and uphold the policies based on hubris and arrogance that are leading the US into the abyss.

An abyss is like a black hole. You don’t get out.

Washington’s lies are so blatant and transparent that Washington is destroying its own credibility. Consider the NSA spying. Documents released by Snowden and Greenwald make it completely clear that Washington spies not only on government leaders and ordinary people but also on foreign businesses in order to advance US commercial and financial interests. That the US steals Chinese business secrets is not in doubt. So what does Washington do? Washington not only denies what the documents prove but turns the charge around and indicts five Chinese generals for spying on US corporations.

The only purpose of these indictments hyped by the US attorney general is propaganda.

The indictments are otherwise totally meaningless, not merely false. China is not about to turn over five Chinese generals to the liars in Washington. For the presstituted media the story is a way to move the NSA’s spying out of the spotlight. China is substituted for the NSA as the guilty party.

Why doesn’t China, Brazil, Germany and every other country issue arrest warrants for NSA’s top officials, for Obama, and for the members of the congressional oversight committee? Why do other countries always allow Washington to control the explanation with propaganda first strikes?

V2



Americans are very susceptible to propaganda. Consider the hate whipped up against Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, a US soldier just released by the Taliban in a prisoner exchange with the US.

### Hailey, Idaho

The hatred and bloodlust that the media have whipped up against Bergdahl has caused his hometown to cancel the celebration of his release. The press engineered hatred of Bergdahl has spilled over into threats against Hailey, his town in Idaho.

What is the basis for the attacks on Bergdahl? Apparently, the answer is that Bergdahl, like pro-football star Pat Tillman who turned down a US\$3.6 million contract to join the Army Rangers and go to defend freedom in Afghanistan, came down with a case of doubts about the war. Originally Pat Tillman's death was attributed to his heroic action and enemy fire. Then it emerged that Tillman was a victim of "friendly fire." Many concluded that he was murdered, because the government did not want a sports hero speaking out about the war. As Bergdahl is off the battlefield, he has to be murdered in the press – like Russia, China, Iran, Putin, Assad, Crimeans, and the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine.  
globalresearch.ca

# Fracking – things UN climate negotiators need to know

Jamie Gorman

**Governments cannot frack with one hand and sign this agreement to tackle climate change with the other. Truthout.org under a Creative Commons Licence**

UN climate negotiations began on June 4 and will continue until June 15. The talks in Bonn, Germany prepare the ground for discussions by heads-of-state in Lima at the end of this year. They will focus on contributions to the Kyoto agreement and also a new agreement for post-2020 climate action, expected to be agreed in Paris in 2015.

"Fracking" is a process of extracting shale gas or coal-bed methane through a dangerous and highly polluting mining process. Communities around the world are resisting fracking and calling for just and sustainable alternatives such as community-owned renewable power.

Here are the things that UN climate negotiators need to know:

Fracking and climate change solutions are not compatible.

If governments are to take seriously the urgent challenge of climate change and to reduce emissions in line with science and equity, then fracking is not an option.

Burning more gas, from increasingly extreme sources like shale or coal bed methane, will prevent governments from meeting targets on emissions reduction. Shale gas and coal bed methane are not "bridging fuels" that gas industry marketing departments are trying to convince us they are. Liquid "natural" gas from fracking needs to

be supercooled and liquefied for shipping and the energy needed for that, as well as all the potential leaks from fracking wells, makes the carbon footprint of fracking worse than coal.

As 350.org founder Bill McKibben says: "This is not a bridge; it's just a rickety pier stretching further out into the fossil fuel lake".

Strong commitments to action on climate change could prevent fracking.

Governments are meeting at the UN climate talks because they urgently need to agree equitable and just action to tackle climate change. The negotiators have set the target of November 2015 to make a legally binding agreement on climate change, including emissions reduction targets.

But fracking is a dirty fuel with a high carbon footprint so states cannot frack with one hand and sign this agreement to tackle climate change with the other. Many groups and individuals are willing to fight decisions that not only contribute to climate change but also infringe individual rights, such as the British government's proposed bill to change trespass laws to allow fracking firms to drill under private land without the owner's permission.

Fracking distracts us from real solutions to climate change.

Fracking is a dirty distraction from what our governments should really be supporting: local communities finding sustainable solutions to their energy needs.

When politicians support fracking they are supporting "business as usual" for the big oil and gas companies. Instead governments

should fund energy projects that can be locally owned and maintained.

The disastrous economics of fracking are heightened by climate change.

The emissions reductions from all dirty fossil fuels that governments are urgently required to make in order to prevent runaway climate change means that 80 percent of estimated fracking reserves will need to remain in the ground. This is known as the "unburnable carbon".

As well as keeping coal in the ground, global temperatures will need to stay below a 1.5 degree rise. The International Energy Agency predicts that the exploitation of unburnable carbon from shale would put CO2 emissions on a "trajectory consistent with a temperature rise of more than 3.5 degrees in the long term".

The legally binding climate agreement to replace Kyoto, expected in 2015, could block governments from being able to exploit shale gas and coal bed methane. Emissions from such extreme fossil fuels could be prevented under the emissions reduction targets of the agreement.

With so much to lose in this speculation game, it's evident that gas companies will not easily give up on state contracts. But every dollar that countries invest in fracking is a dollar not invested in renewable energy solutions. It is money wasted on infrastructure that, if governments are serious about a low carbon future, will soon be surplus to requirements.

*New Internationalist* ✪

## Overthrowing other people's governments: The Master List

**Instances of the United States overthrowing, or attempting to overthrow, a foreign government since the Second World War (\*indicates successful ousting of a government) by William Blum.**

China 1949 to early 1960s; Albania 1949-53; East Germany 1950s; Iran 1953\*; Guatemala\*; Costa Rica mid-1950s, 1970-71; Syria 1956-57 current; Egypt 1957; Indonesia 1957-58; British Guiana 1953-64; Cuba 1961 ongoing; Iraq 1963\*, 1991, 2003\*; North Vietnam 1945-73; Cambodia 1955-70\*; Laos 1958\*, 1959, 1960\*; Ecuador 1960-63\*; 2000\*; Congo 1855-70\*; France 1965; Brazil 1962-64\*; Dominican Republic 1963\*; Bolivia 1964\*; Indonesia 1965\*; Ghana 1966\*; Chile 1864-73\*; Greece 1967\*; Bolivia 1971\*; Australia 1973-75\*; Angola 1975, 1980s; Zaire 1975; Portugal 1974-76\*; Jamaica 1976-80\*; Seychelles 1979-81; Chad 1981-82\*; Grenada 1983\*; South Yemen 1982-84; Suriname 1982-84; Fiji 1987\*; Libya 1980s, 2011\*; Nicaragua 1981-90\*; Panama 1989\*; Bulgaria 1990\*; Albania 1991\*; Afghanistan 1980s\*, 2001; Somalia 1993, 2007 to present; Yugoslavia 1999-2000; Venezuela 2002\*; Haiti 2004\*. ✪

Fremantle

*Celebrate with us ...*

## Vic Williams' 100th anniversary

Born 28th June 1914

*Join us in celebrating a life well lived.*

Vic was a man true to his working class beliefs; a fighter for a better world, a thinker and a writer. Among his literary works are *Harvest Time*; *Hammer and Seagulls*; *The Years of Big Jim*; *Along the Waterfront*; *Three Golden Giants*; and *Volcano on our Doorstep*.

3 pm Saturday June 28

Maritime Union of Australia  
2-4 Kwong Alley North Fremantle

Guest Speaker :

Jo Vallentine: Former Greens WA Senator  
Dr Hannah Middleton: Long time campaigner for peace and former CPA General Secretary  
More info 0421 113 343 or cpaperth@gmail.com  
Organised by the CPA, WA Branch



# Meet the real people's army

Jamie Insole

**BRITAIN: Power is sometimes encountered in unexpected places. In addition to countless community meetings, Kaye Harris has played host to MPs, local councillors and might very soon be entertaining at least one Welsh minister.**

Alliances have been struck over ham sandwiches, mugs of tea and fig rolls.

Kaye's living room has also doubled up as a field press office, the scene for some of the most successful attacks yet launched against the Bedroom Tax and the wider "welfare reform agenda." (Under the Spare Room Subsidy, anyone receiving housing benefit payments will have to move home or pay a subsidy for each room they have vacant.)

Confident and redoubtable, Kaye landed punches in the national media and forced at least one major landlord to the table. Sharing an experience similar to that of tenants across Wales, Kaye explains: "When the Bedroom Tax was launched, I was like other people. I was angry, but wouldn't say anything." However, since April 2013, she has successfully organised her community and has established points of resistance throughout Bridgend and its surrounding villages. In that respect, she represents a new type of activist.

With little previous knowledge of campaigning, she has grown to occupy what was a void. The historical structures of tenant participation and mass politics have withered across the estates. However, the struggles of the '80s have left a sediment that lies close to the surface.

From nothing, Bridgend has witnessed two marches and one direct action. Activity has served to relocate communities in their own fighting traditions.

There are now at least 40 people

like Kaye throughout south and west Wales – activists that have emerged in response to a policy that has become a byword for callous incompetence.

Slammed in the media, attracting censure from the United Nations and unravelling in the courts, the tax has no fiercer enemy than Cardiff & South Wales Against the Bedroom Tax, which has consistently demonstrated how this measure punishes the most financially vulnerable members of our community.

Far from tackling "under occupancy," the majority of Wales's 33,000 tenants caught in its grasp are confronted with the choice of paying money that they do not have or "downsizing" to properties that do not exist.

In Cardiff, Caerphilly and a number of other Welsh towns, people are being forced to subsist beneath the United Nations absolute poverty threshold.

Our federation was formed to root opposition throughout Welsh communities and turn the "welfare reform" narrative on its head. Too often, depictions polarise between "passive victims" and "canny scroungers" – both casting the subject as a silent actor.

Seeking to bring the maximum number of tenants into activity, we have sought to avoid mass meetings in the Welsh capital – after all, a £3.50 bus fare is a family meal for many.

Instead, we have invested our limited resources into building local groups throughout nine local authorities. Additionally, the campaign has succeeded in bringing together a broad constituency of support including such organisations as Unite Community, Unison, the Church in Wales, Shelter Cymru and countless others.

Sue Leader, of Ely Against the Bedroom Tax and a recently elected Unite union community officer, explains why increasing numbers

of tenants are moving to reject and appeal against the hated measure: "Every day we see so many emptied three bedroom houses. There is real anger that friends, family and neighbours have been forced to ship out."

Indeed the anger, often visceral, is evidenced not only by posters but by the reception that we have received on the doorstep. The level of politics is high. "While the Tories talk about their recovery, people have not forgotten that money is being taken from them to pay back the cash used to bail out the banks. Everybody is being made to work more for less. Those who cannot work are being hung out to dry to encourage the others," says Leader.

All recognise that this policy has its origins in London. Indeed, one of its most pernicious effects has been the manner in which it has forced local authorities and social landlords into conflict with entire communities.

Many agree that the early policy consensus came together with the objective of containing tenant poverty, thus preventing welfare reform from forcing a wider crisis of Welsh social housing.

Perhaps understandable from the perspective of keeping housing associations afloat, it has acted to render social landlords mistrustful of any strategy that does not depend upon the tenant developing sufficient "financial muscle" to meet the burden. This in turn has often acted to poison what has traditionally been a warm and solid relationship.

Paul Callaghan, affected tenant and case worker explains: "Through applying pressure, those who had initially claimed that there was nothing that they could do are now moving in the right direction.

"We have made social landlords, councils and politicians listen to us. Beginning with mass tenant lobbies, our campaign has gone on to lodge over 350 cases with the tribunal



**Confident and redoubtable, Kaye landed punches in the national media and forced at least one major landlord to the table.**

service. Amongst our major successes, all housing associations in Wales are now preparing a major information campaign to let tenants know that they have a right to appeal."

Indeed, in addition to the £1.3 million boost to the emergency relief fund won from the Welsh government in May, there is now a very real prospect that the Bedroom Tax will choke on anything between 3,000 to 6,000 Welsh appeals.

As judges continue to award exemptions it is not difficult to see how the resulting political train wreck will drag the coalition into deeper, even more toxic territory.

Either way, in Wales, a new and powerful coalition is forming. A

new tranche of tenant activists have already worked to embolden the best among our elected representatives and are taking the fight forward in ways hitherto unimagined.

The Tory discourse that has come to surround tenants and social landlords shares several telling similarities – both are considered feckless, both fail to plan ahead, both are cast as complacent – ruined by an unfortunate addiction to public subsidy.

This indicates how we can begin to move beyond the dented shield but also suggests the beginning of a new alliance between tenants, local authorities and social landlords.

*Morning Star* ☼

## An EU-wide struggle

Moz Greenshields

**The capitalist austerity and privatisation drive to reduce pay, pensions, conditions, benefits and services in the pursuit of renewed profit is felt at both local and national levels. It finds its nightmare logic internationally as the US vice-president Joe Biden and European Union president Herman Van Rompuy congratulate Ukrainian fascists on delivering their people up to the EU austerity agenda as Kiev attacks those who oppose it.**

As our trades union councils meet in conference today, austerity continues to create the obscenity of a growing wealth gap with escalating poverty for us and extreme wealth for them being the order of the day. Internationally austerity again threatens Europe with war.

Our trades union councils have an essential and unique role to play in building a deeply rooted anti-austerity movement across the nation of Britain. Its roots must reach down into every community and into all union memberships, involving thousands, tens of thousands and eventually hundreds of thousands of "ordinary people" – putting our trade unions at the heart and head of the People's Assembly operating in all those communities,

drawing strength and new vitality from each other, from solidarity and unity of purpose.

Such a movement would certainly go a long way toward resolving the long-running question of proper political representation growing directly out of the organised working class. As the Labour Party turns its back on us, the issue needs to be resolved and soon.

As our conference agenda suggests, we need to tie everything together – the struggles for local services with those for decent working conditions, to link the defence of the NHS to the fight against zero-hours contracts, to show how action against climate change is related to the demand for public ownership, to develop strong opposition to the EU bosses' club and at the same time fight xenophobia and racism, to show how the fight for benefits and services demands that we stop the demonisation of the most vulnerable, to show how austerity and war go hand in bloody hand.

What links all these things is that they are all separate battles in the class war being waged against us – recognised as such in those very words by TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady speaking at the People's Assembly.

**What will mobilise and strengthen our class, and what will divide and weaken the capitalist class to the point we can inflict a decisive defeat on them, as they seek to do on us.**

But battles cannot be fought with good intentions and wishful thinking. They cannot be fought successfully without an overall strategy that identifies our own strengths and weaknesses and those of our enemy, a strategy that strengthens us and weakens them.

That strategy needs to broaden the battle lines in recognition of the fact that individual struggles will only rarely be won in isolation.

Only by bringing them all together politically and organisationally can we maximise our chances of success – and defeat the millionaires' project of austerity and war.

That's the importance of the arguments about co-ordinated strike action, generalised strike action and a one-day general strike. It's

also about community direct action, what to do in parliamentary elections and how to respond to the EU "race to the bottom."

The question is not what might make us activists feel better, but what will mobilise and strengthen our class, and what will divide and weaken the capitalist class to the point we can inflict a decisive defeat on them, as they seek to do on us. And this strategy needs to work at local, national and international levels.

No-one will deliver security, progress, peace and prosperity for the working class except the working class itself – and the billionaire capitalist ruling class is determined to prevent that, and for good measure, destroy everything that we have gained so far.



Our trades union councils conference is another milestone in the developing struggle of our unions and communities. The next such milestone will be next weekend's People's Assembly demonstration in London. Another will be the co-ordinated strike action this summer.

But as well as milestones, we need to be sure that every step of the way the trades union councils and People's Assembly at national and local levels are working together to reach deep into our communities and union memberships to develop an unstoppable grassroots force.

Moz Greenshields is secretary of Derby area trades union council. *Morning Star* ☼



# America's covert re-invasion of Iraq

Tony Cartalucci

**Heavily armed, well funded, and organised as a professional, standing army, the forces of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) swept southward into Iraq from Turkey and northeastern Syria, taking the cities of Mosul and Tikrit, and now threaten the Iraqi capital city of Baghdad itself. The United States was sure to prop up two unfounded narratives – the first being that US intelligence agencies, despite assets in Iraq and above it in the form of surveillance drones, failed to give warning of the invasion, and that ISIS is some sort of self-sustaining terror organisation carving out a “state” by “robbing banks” and collecting “donations” on Twitter**

The *Wall Street Journal* (*WSJ*) in its report, “Iraqi Drama Catches US Off Guard,” stated: “The quickly unfolding drama prompted a White House meeting Wednesday of top policy makers and military leaders who were caught off guard by the swift collapse of Iraqi security forces, officials acknowledged.”

In another *WSJ* post, “US Secretly Flying Drones Over Iraq,” it claimed:

“A senior US official said the intelligence collected under the small [secret US drone] program was shared with Iraqi forces, but added: ‘It’s not like it did any good.’ The rapid territorial gains by the Islamist forces loyal to Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS, an Al-Qaeda offshoot, caught the US by surprise, the officials said.”

Despite drone flights collecting intelligence, and a three-year ongoing CIA program all along the Turkish-Syrian border to “monitor” and “arm” “moderate” militants fighting the Syrian government, the US claims it was caught “by surprise.” If drones and CIA operatives operating in ISIS territory weren’t enough to detect the impending invasion, perhaps the CIA should have just picked up a newspaper.

## ***The question remains, if a Lebanese newspaper knew ISIS was on the move eastward, why didn’t the CIA?***

Indeed, the Lebanon *Daily Start* in March 2014 reported that ISIS openly withdrew its forces from Latakia and Idlib provinces in western Syria, and redeployed them in Syria’s east – along the Syrian-Iraqi border. The article titled, “Al-Qaeda splinter group in Syria leaves two provinces: activists,” stated explicitly that: “On Friday, ISIS – which alienated many rebels by seizing territory and killing rival commanders – finished withdrawing from the Idlib and Latakia provinces and moved its forces toward the eastern Raqqa province and the eastern outskirts of the northern city of Aleppo, activists said.”

The question remains, if a Lebanese newspaper knew ISIS was on the move eastward, why didn’t the CIA? The obvious answer is the CIA did know, and is simply feigning ignorance at the expense of their reputation to bait its enemies into suspecting the agency of incompetence rather than complicity in the horrific terroristic swath ISIS is now carving through northern Iraq.

Described extensively in the full *New Eastern Outlook Journal* (*NEO*) report, “NATO’s Terror Hordes in Iraq a Pretext for Syria Invasion,” the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, have funded and armed terrorists operating in Syria for the past three years to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars – coincidentally the same amount that ISIS would require to gain primacy among militant groups fighting in Syria and to mobilise forces capable of crossing into Iraq and overwhelming Baghdad’s national defences.

The *NEO* report includes links to the US Army’s West Point Countering Terrorism Centre reports, “Bombers, Bank Accounts and Bleedout: al-Qaeda’s Road In and Out of Iraq,” and “Al-Qaeda’s Foreign Fighters in Iraq,” which detail extensively the terror network used to flood Iraq with foreign terrorists, weapons, and cash to fuel an artificial “sectarian war” during the US occupation, and then turned over to flood Syria with terrorists in the West’s bid to overthrow the government in Damascus.

### **What’s ISIS doing in Iraq?**

The *NEO* report would also post Seymour Hersh’s 2007 article, “The Redirection,” documenting over the course of nine pages US, Saudi, and Israeli intentions to create and deploy sectarian extremists region-wide to confront Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Hersh would note that these “sectarian extremists” were either tied to Al-Qaeda, or Al-Qaeda itself. The ISIS army moving toward

Baghdad is the final manifestation of this conspiracy, a standing army operating with impunity, threatening to topple the Syrian government, purge pro-Iranian forces in Iraq, and even threatening Iran itself by building a bridge from Al-Qaeda’s NATO safe havens in Turkey, across northern Iraq, and up to Iran’s borders directly.

Labelled “terrorists” by the West, grants the West plausible deniability in its creation, deployment, and across the broad spectrum of atrocities it is now carrying out.

It is a de-facto re-invasion of Iraq by Western interests – but this time without Western forces directly



Fighters of the ISIS celebrate on vehicles taken from Iraqi security forces in Mosul, Iraq.

participating – rather a proxy force the West is desperately attempting to disavow any knowledge of or any connection to.

However, no other explanation can account for the size and prowess of ISIS beyond state sponsorship. And since ISIS is the clear benefactor of state sponsorship, the question is: which states are sponsoring it? With Iraq, Syria, and Iran along with Lebanese-based Hezbollah locked in armed struggle with ISIS and other Al-Qaeda franchises across the region, the only blocs left are NATO and the GCC (Council for the Arab States of the Gulf), Saudi Arabia and Qatar in particular.

With the West declaring ISIS fully villainous in an attempt to intervene more directly in northern Iraq and eastern Syria, creating a long desired “buffer zone” within which to harbour, arm, and fund an even larger terrorist expeditionary force, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and others are offered an opportunity to pre-empt Western involvement and to crush the ISIS – cornering and eliminating NATO-GCC’s expeditionary force while scoring geopolitical points of vanquishing

Washington’s latest “villain.” Joint Iraq-Iranian operations in the north and south of ISIS’s locations, and just along Turkey’s borders could envelop and trap ISIS to then be whittled down and destroyed – just as Syria has been doing to NATO’s proxy terrorist forces within its own borders.

Whatever the regional outcome may be, the fact is the West has re-invaded Iraq, with a force as brutal, if not worse than the “shock and awe” doctrine of 2003. Iraq faces another difficult occupation if it cannot summon a response from within, and among its allies abroad, to counter and crush this threat with utmost expediency.

*Information Clearing House* ✪



## ***Region Briefs***

On June 12, women across India took part in protests against politicians’ comments on recent rapes in the country’s north. Babulal Gaur is one of them; he is state home minister in the newly elected Indian Prime Minister Modi’s government. Babulal claimed that “rape is a social crime, sometimes it is right, and sometimes it is wrong”. He accused the media of exaggerating this crime, saying rape is only to be considered a crime if it is reported to the police.

On June 10, at the 13th National Assembly of Vietnam’s (NAV) 7th session, Nguyen Duc Hien, the head of the NAV’s Ombudsman Committee gave a report in response to the public’s feedback on socio-economic development. The report acknowledged the government’s efforts of managing and implementing socio-economic development in responding to the people’s suggestions and concerns, particularly in the areas of fishermen’s livelihood, food safety, rice consumption and school fees. Hien also praised the ministries of transport and agriculture and rural development and the State Bank of Vietnam for their outstanding contribution to socio-economic development. He stressed that ministries and governmental agencies should listen to the people and respond more quickly in order to increase the quality of work.

UNESCO has accepted an application from China to register records of the 1937 Nanjing Massacre and Japan’s wartime sex slavery on the Memory of the World Register. It rejected Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga’s call for China to withdraw its application. China’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying stated that “China will not accept the unreasonable request from Japan and China will not withdraw the application”. She added, “The purposes of this application are to remember history, protect human dignity and prevent these crimes and activities that violate humanity and human rights again”. Earlier this year, Suga urged Japanese Prime Minister Abe to reconsider and restudy Japan’s state apology to the “comfort women”. Abe has on several occasions denied the facts relating to the “comfort women” saying that there is no substantial evidence to prove that women being forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army was Japan’s wartime government policy. It is widely accepted that 400,000 women from Korea, China, the Philippines, Indonesia and Australia were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army in World War II.

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



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## The arrogance of politicians

I am one of the 750,000 solar owners that have taken responsibility for their energy use. I take offence at Queensland's Treasurer Tim Nicholls' comments that I am part of the "champagne sippers and the latté set".

In fact, I am an every-day retired citizen who has worked hard all my life, and saved for my retirement. I

have invested in solar to take back control of spiralling energy bills to reduce my energy expenditure. Electricity prices are increasing because of overspending on poles and wires, not because of solar owners.

I resent the arrogance of the LNP politicians, and suggest they start to listen to the people of Australia, or face the consequences at the ballot.

Pat Saunders

## Qld govt insult

I feel insulted by the recent comments made by the Queensland premier and treasurer about solar owners, saying we were "champagne sippers and the latté set".

My wife and I took the step in 2010 to install solar on our roof as we were worried about being able

to meet the continually rising cost of electricity. We weren't earning a large wage at the time and funded the \$10,000 installation cost by borrowing half and drawing back the other half from our house mortgage.

Therefore, the entire \$10,000 had to be paid back over the next few years. We certainly wouldn't classify ourselves as being part of the "champagne sippers and the latté set", in fact, for a few years we had to be quite careful with our money and we only occasionally buy a coffee at a cafe and never drink champagne!

I feel that the Queensland government is trying to place all of the blame for electricity price rises on solar owners who did nothing wrong – we were only taking advantage of a government offered incentive; many other solar owners are just like us – hard working average Aussie families. The real truth behind the

large electricity price rises is being hidden by the government; the additional amount added to an electricity bill per customer due to solar is smaller than they would have us believe.

Eduard Vanderzee

## Don't swallow the spin

The government is still trying to "sell" the budget but we, the customers are not buying. The super cynical shift of the budget burden onto the sick, the poor and the elderly is not finding many supporters. I do not remember the time when the budget was still actively discussed (and condemned as unfair) as the present one for such a long time.

Everybody is worried about extra money to be paid for medical services, education, services in general, food. Pensioners are very worried about their concessions taken away as the majority cannot supplement their pensions. In NSW the premier has announced that what the federal government takes, the NSW government would give to pensioners to cover concessions.

So – no reason to worry? Not exactly – the NSW government has a time limit for this, a year. Just in case anybody wonders – NSW elections will take place next year. For some reason governments think that senior citizens have senior moments all the time.

T Southern  
Brisbane

# Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

## The sacrifice of 27 million

I was informed the other day – from a source I regard as reliable – that a program of job-training here on the NSW Central Coast had had its funding cut and been forced to close. Nothing newsworthy in that, I hear you say, it's happening everywhere. And, yes, it is. But this program was both practical and successful.

It was training young people to be mechanics, and was conducted in conjunction with a number of local garages. Most importantly, the majority of kids who went through the course actually got jobs as a result. That makes it almost unique.

So many of the "training" courses operated by these government-funded private "job providers" are basically bogus, forcing the unfortunate unemployed to endlessly "train" so that they are "job ready", but with no prospect of actually being offered a job because the "job provider" has no jobs to provide. This mechanics course was apparently real – real training in a real workplace with the prospect of a real job at the end of it.

My informant was almost distraught: "Most of the young people who did the course got actual jobs at the end of it. It was so successful that when they cancelled it on the Central Coast, but continued it in Sydney, some of the young people from up here have started commuting to Blacktown in Sydney to continue the course."

It is not the fault of the staff in these usually church-based "employment" organisations that capitalism does not have jobs for a large percentage of today's youth. The fault is in the system itself, a fact which is becoming clearer to more and more people. As is the solution: change the system itself, replace it with a better one: socialism.

D-Day has been much in the news lately, because of the anniversary, of course. Significantly, the coverage ignored the military/historical picture of the time and chose instead to concentrate on D-Day as if it was the "turning point of the war". It was not. The turning point of WW2 occurred a year earlier on the Eastern front when the Red Army – in Churchill's words – "tore the guts out" of Hitler's forces, on a massive scale that makes D-Day look relatively small.

During the War and immediately afterwards – before the Western Allies launched the Cold War – public and politicians alike recognised the magnitude of the Russian effort in the War. From 1941 until 1944, the brunt of the war against Nazi Germany was borne by Russia: most of the German forces were on Russian soil, most of the German planes, tanks and guns were in action against Russia.

## Without the help of the USSR, Britain had Buckley's chance of defeating Germany.

The death toll tells the story: the USA lost about 420,000 killed in WW2. The USSR lost around 26 to 27 million. The Red Army went on a liberating mission: first clear the Fascist scum from Soviet soil and then chase them all the way back to Berlin – and beyond, if necessary. Had the British government been obliged to flee Britain for Canada, as was planned, the War would have still proceeded to its inevitable end

with the destruction of Hitler's gang of mass murderers.

Churchill's main enemy was German imperialism, and he recognised early in the War that without the help of the USSR, Britain had Buckley's chance of defeating Germany. With the USSR, on the other hand, it was Nazi Germany that had no chance. It has been one of the key pursuits of Western propaganda since the end of the War to minimise and then ignore the overwhelming Soviet contribution to the Allied victory.

I recently picked up a second-hand copy of *The 20th Century In Pictures*, published in 1999 by *The Australian Women's Weekly*. There are lots of photos of significant or at least "newsworthy" moments in the 20th century in this publication, as you would expect. World War One and the Russian Revolution are both

there, as is the Wall Street crash and the Nazi invasion of Poland, and of course D-Day and Hiroshima.

But this is a ruling class perspective on history: one looks in vain for the momentous achievements of the working class in this period. There are lots of shots of sporting and movie stars, but the tragic US anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, whose frame-up moved millions

of people around the world into action on their behalf, are ignored. As are the similarly framed US labour organiser Joe Hill and the "Atom spies", Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

Similarly omitted is the entire US Civil Rights struggle and incredibly the whole of the greatest struggle of the 20th century – the gigantic combat between the Socialist USSR and Fascist Germany for victory in the war that cost over 61 million lives. How a pictorial history of the 20th century could choose to ignore the biggest battles of WW2, the events that determined the future of the world, is hard to fathom, until one realises that the publishers' class position has intervened.

Churchill had delayed the opening of a Second Front that would have diverted some of the German forces from Russia, for two years, during which time millions of Russians died and thousands of towns and villages were completely destroyed. When D-Day finally came, the Soviet High Command congratulated Ike and his generals on their success on the beaches of Normandy. The famed British cartoonist David Low did a cartoon showing a symbolic battle-hardened Soviet soldier greeting from afar the Anglo-US soldiers coming ashore at Normandy with the words "Congratulations from one who knows!"

In Garson Kanin's American documentary feature *The True Glory*, which follows the Allied advance from Normandy to the Elbe, the Russians greet them with a huge banner reading "Glory to the Hero Army of the USA". As an overawed US soldier says, "Gee. We did pretty well, but I'd hate to think where we'd have been without them!"

Burying all memory of the Soviet contribution is a main theme of Western propaganda and the basis of much of its rewriting of history. The sacrifice of 27 million people requires that we never forget. ☼



Victory Parade, Red Square, Moscow, May 1945.



**Rob Gowland**  
**previews**  
**ABC & SBS**  
Public Television

Sunday June 22 –  
Saturday June 28

I was a little hard on *Australia's Secret Heroes* (SBS ONE Sundays at 8.30pm) last week. In retelling the story of Z Special unit, the secret commando unit formed during the WW2 to undertake raids in the Japanese-occupied East Indies, the producers took six descendants of the men who did it for real and put them through the same training.

It sounded bogus but in fact it wasn't. The group of descendants actually achieved considerable empathy with their relatives. They were particularly moved by the fate of the men who undertook the second raid on Singapore, helped by first-hand accounts of torture at the hands of the vicious Japanese secret police, the KemPeTai.

Of particular interest are the ingenious attempts of captured Australian commandoes to alert their HQ in Melbourne to the fact that their messages were now being controlled by the enemy. Despite their best efforts, Melbourne remained in blissful ignorance.

The first hominid to leave Africa and migrate to Europe and Asia was not modern man but his ancestor, *homo erectus*. It was long believed that the latter died out or was certainly replaced by the subsequent migration of modern man out of Africa too, although we also knew that two species of modern human (Neanderthals and Cro-Magnon man) co-existed for a very long time. Now it appears that some other descendants of *homo erectus* did too, such as

the primitive pygmy Hobbits from Indonesia.

*Enigma Man: A Stone Age Mystery* (ABC1 Tuesday June 24 at 8.30pm) tells of the discovery in March 2012 by Australian paleo-anthropologist, Darren Curnoe and Chinese paleontologist, Ji Xueping of the prehistoric remains of humans in the Red Deer Cave in China. They were unlike any human remains previously known to science. Not only were they a unique mix of primitive and modern features, they were also young – between 11,500 and 14,500 years old.

That makes these fossils the youngest ever found in the world which possess physical features different to our own. Our own species may have co-existed with the "Red Deer Cave people" until very recently, for tens of thousands of years.

Written and directed by Daniella Ortega, this is a highly interesting account of an emerging new, more complex view of human evolution.

David Beckham has been fêted as a great football player for 22 years. Now retired, he wants to go on an adventure. With three friends he's off to the Amazon to "find himself". He (understandably) wants to go somewhere where he will not be recognised and mobbed in the street. But very quickly in *David Beckham: Into The Unknown* (ABC1 Wednesday June 25 at 8.30pm) he emerges as shallow and tediously self-obsessed.

Frankly, every little detail of their trip is not of riveting interest, nor are Beckham's direct-to-camera musings very enlightening (unless, like him, you think he's the greatest thing since sliced bread).

I turned it off. Mental disorders can make for fascinating television. That may sound callous but is a fact, nevertheless. *Extreme OCD Camp* (ABC2 Wednesdays from June 25 at 8.30pm) is a case in point.

The two-part series follows six British teens and young adults living with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) as they embark on a unique, life-changing treatment course in the United States.

OCD is an acute anxiety condition that ruins the lives of thousands



Darren Curnoe, Palaeo-anthropologist with actor in Red Deer Cave Man make up – *Enigma Man: A Stone Age Mystery* (ABC1 Tuesday June 24 at 8.30pm)

of people. Twenty-two-year-old Jack sees germs everywhere, Josh has symmetry OCD, 17-year-old Imogen constantly taps her surroundings, Olivia has contamination OCD and fears smelling bad, 18-year-old Megan has constant thoughts of her family and friends being harmed while Andrew avoids the number 13 so continually repeats his actions.

Sleeping in hammocks, cooking on open fires and taking part in extreme therapies send some of the participants obsessed with cleanliness and orderliness into a tailspin – but the regimen also dramatically speeds up their recovery process. During the 10-day intensive camp, the group undergoes exposure therapy, where they are challenged to confront their greatest fears.

I found the program engrossing: real people with simple but severe problems, observed with sympathy while at their most vulnerable. Many of their problems look as though they stem originally from over-protective

parents: "Don't touch that, it's dirty. You'll get germs!"

Joseph Gordon-Levitt has made a career for himself by harnessing the combined amateur talents of his global open-source online community – hitRECORD. They create short films, live performances, music, animation, and more, and he introduces them. Each episode focuses on a different theme as Joe invites and encourages anybody with an Internet connection to join him and contribute.

*HITRECORD On TV* (ABC2 Thursdays from June 26 at 8.30pm) has moved the program from the Internet to TV. It's very hit and miss, as you would expect.

Last week on *The Men Who Made Us Thin* (ABC1 Thursdays at 9.30pm), investigative journalist Jacques Peretti turned his attention to the diet industry where business is booming as obesity escalates. He discovers that a major US study showed years ago that all diets

failed: they worked initially, but then the body adjusts and the weight goes back on. That's good news for the diet industry, because they can now sell you a different diet. And another after that. And so on.

In this week's episode, Peretti looks beyond diets, into new ways of selling people the dream of losing weight. He charts the story of the fitness industry, and how the flawed science of one man in the 1960s, Jean Meyer, helped push the idea that exercise was an effective way to lose weight. The problem is – you would have to do an enormous amount of it for it to be truly effective.

But digging deeper, Peretti discovers some of the organisations that are pushing the exercise-as-weight-loss message today harder than ever – the food companies! He confronts the former global head of health at PepsiCo about why the industry puts so much money into promoting exercise. ☘



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## POLITICS IN THE PUB

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### ASIO – DIRTY SECRETS: OUR ASIO FILES

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### POSSIBILITIES FOR A PROGRESSIVE ECONOMIC STRATEGY IN AUSTRALIA

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### THE BAIRD GOVERNMENT – ITS PRIVATISATION AGENDA NOW REVEALED

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### DRUG AND ALCOHOL LAW REFORM: ABOUT TIME?

Nick Cowdery, Former DPP NSW and Professorial Fellow, UNSW;  
Alex Wodak, Dr, President, Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation;

July 17

### COAL SEAM GAS (FRACKING) EXPANDING THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA – WHAT MUST BE DONE TO STOP THIS?

Jeremy Buckingham, NSW Greens MLC;  
Paddy Manning, Journalist and author *What the Frack?*;

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# Hazelwood fire

## Profits before workers and their families' health

Len Lean

**Governments and companies consider coal-fired power stations a cheap form of electricity; they do not consider the cost of local health or environmental impact on the community. Evidence given at the Hazelwood coal mine fire inquiry shows how reprehensible capitalism is towards coal mining and electrical generation communities.**

The Technical Review Board (TRB) annual report, delivered to the Victorian government in September 2012, found Latrobe Valley mine rehabilitation measures fell well short of what could reasonably be considered as adequate for achieving long term safety and stability. The TRB also identified three trouble spots in the Victorian state's brown coal network that were still at risk of failure, nearly two years after recommendations by the inquiry into Greenfields Mineral Exploration and Project Development in Victoria.

The slow pace of rehabilitation of the Valley's spent mine areas has been a point of fierce criticism since the Hazelwood mine fire. The Napthine government must be condemned for its inaction. State government departments did not do enough to ensure the coal company had proper fire prevention plans and equipment in place.

### Little concern shown

The state's Chief Health Officer, Dr Rosemary Lester, publicly was saying after two weeks of toxic smoke had been blowing across Morwell that "people may experience coughing, wheezing and irritation". Not a word about the horrendous long term consequences after exposure to the toxic smoke that contains particulate matter, which can penetrate deep into the lungs, fumes that contain heavy metals and gases including radon that can cause a whole range of health outcomes that no one would ever want.

Reported in *The Age* newspaper on February 26, 2014, Dr Lester said "pregnant women in the community are not at risk. Carbon monoxide is being constantly monitored across the town and there haven't been any levels of concern." Dr Lester's message did change on February 28 – the advice for vulnerable residents was to temporarily relocate. She told the inquiry "the decision was based on an increase in the fine particle levels and the length of time communities had been exposed. I was not willing to let this go on further and we really needed to issue that advice."

When Ms Richards, assisting the inquiry, questioned why Dr Lester

did not give that advice in the first week of the fire, Dr Lester said evacuation presents its own risks. "I think the advice we provided was proportional to the level of risk and escalated according to the time people were exposed in the smoke," Dr Lester replied.

Scientific information clearly shows that all residents should have been evacuated soon after the fire started.

### Vital information withheld

Firefighters were monitoring the exposure levels in the community. The readings of carbon monoxide (CO) were constantly above the 30 parts per million (ppm). Peter Marshall, the national secretary of the United Fire Fighters Union, raised concern about community safety and discussed evacuating the town of Morwell, only to see the CO standard increased from 30 to 70 ppm at a subsequent meeting of fire personnel and Health Department officials. Mr Marshall said CO levels were not made available to the community during the fire and demanded that the inquiry into the fire investigate the decision to change the air safety standard.

### Other deadly toxic gases

While the emphasis has been on the level of CO, completely ignored were two other toxic gases released from the combustion of coal. Sulphur dioxide causes acute symptoms, is a lung irritant, triggers asthma and low birth weight in infants. Chronic symptoms include reduced lung function, associated with premature death. Nitrogen oxide causes acute symptoms, changed lung function and increased respiratory illness in children. Chronic symptoms include increase in susceptibility to respiratory illness and permanent alteration of lung function.

### Toxic coal dust

Trace and other elements formed in coal combustion including a large group of diverse pollutants with a number of health and environmental effects. They are a public health concern because, at sufficient levels, they adversely affect human health. Some are known carcinogens, others impair reproduction and the normal development of children and still others damage the nervous and immune systems. Many are also respiratory irritants that can worsen respiratory conditions such as asthma. They are of environmental concern because they damage ecosystems; they blow



Scientific information clearly shows that all residents should have been evacuated soon after the fire started.

dust containing heavy metals and disperse toxic gases.

Exposure to pollution from coal power stations may occur from direct inhalation or indirect exposure, i.e. subsequent ingestion of water, soil, vegetation, or meat, eggs, dairy products and fish contaminated through accumulation in the food chain (US EPA, 1998).

Pollutants for which indirect exposure is especially important include mercury, arsenic, dioxins, cadmium, and lead. Pollutants are absorbed and distributed in the body and may produce systemic effects distant from the entry point of the lungs. As a result, organs other than the lungs, e.g. the central nervous system, brain, blood, liver and kidneys can be affected by air pollutants.

Adults in coal mining communities have been found to have:

- Higher rates of mortality from lung cancer, chronic heart, respiratory and kidney diseases.
- Higher rates of cardiopulmonary disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and other lung diseases, hypertension, kidney disease, heart attack and stroke, and asthma.
- Increased probability of hospitalisation for COPD (by 1 percent for each 1,462 tons of coal mined) and for hypertension (1 percent for each 1,873 tons of coal mined).
- Poorer self-rated health status and reduced quality of life.

Children and infants in coal mining communities have been found to have:

- Increased respiratory symptoms including wheezing, cough and absence from school with respiratory symptoms, although not all studies reported this effect.
- High blood levels of heavy metals such as lead and cadmium.

- Higher incidence of neural tube defects, a higher prevalence of any birth defects, and a greater chance of being of low birth weight (a risk factor for future obesity, diabetes and heart disease).

Adults (and the whole population) in communities near coal-fired power stations and coal combustion facilities have been found to 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.
  - Higher rates of pre-term birth, low birth weight, miscarriages and stillbirths.
  - Impaired foetal and child growth and neurological development.
  - Increased asthma rates and respiratory symptoms.

Above data from study Sydney University (Colagiuri R Cochrane J Girgis S Health and Social Harms of Coal. Mining in Local Communities, Spotlight on the Hunter Region, Beyond Emissions, Melbourne, October 2012).

### Cancer statistics a terrible legacy

Cancer statistics from the Cancer Council Victoria show that for the Latrobe Valley 884 people were diagnosed with cancer, 498 were men and 386 were women, and 360 died from 2008 to 2010. In future years, we may well see a spike in this number as full effects from inhalation of toxic

dust from the fire take a number of years to develop.

### Slow response

The inquiry heard from a former chief executive, John Merritt, who said the organisation's role had never been to quickly mobilise air-monitoring equipment. The first dust sampling readings began in the town's south three to four days after the fire began when a dust track was installed at the Morwell Bowling Club. A mobile lab was not brought online at the club until a week later, the inquiry heard.

The Environmental Justice report released in May 2014 details the steps governments should take to reduce the effects of air pollution. The author, Nicola Rivers, said there had been concerns about air pollution laws for a while, but the mine fire highlighted the implications of ongoing delays from state and federal governments for many years and the lack of national leadership.

Mr Merritt said the dust exposure standard was only advisory, not a compliance standard. The standard had not been affirmed nationally because of disagreement within the scientific community, with some taking the view there may be "no safe level of exposure".

Every day in Morwell levels of particulate matter of 2.5 microns are high even without the fire. The Council of Australian Governments has been promising a National Plan for Clear Air since 2011. The Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt recently announced development of the plan would be delayed until at least 2016.

Political and industrial action is required from workers and unions, with public support, to force the federal government into action for improved air quality. ✪



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**Guardian**

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