



Welfare attacks

Vicious, unfounded and disastrous

Bob Briton

This week's sitting of the Senate – the last with its current line-up – will be marked by the failure of the Abbott government to get the budget's raft of welfare cuts passed into legislation. The federal government has not "sold" the program of "reform" to an Australian public that is quite aware what an attack on its way of life it really is. The strength of the reaction has caused incoming Senators to appear progressive on the issues.

The July 1 commencement date for the bulk of the government's reactionary measures will not be met and a new round of parliamentary horse-trading is set to begin. One thing is certain, workers and other less privileged members of the community will need to lift resistance to the budget measures to another level to turn the current agenda around.

Appeals from Coalition heavyweights for "adult government" to "fix" the so-called debt "crisis" have fallen flat. Former Liberal luminaries, like one-time Opposition leader John Hewson, have spoken out against the inhumane thrust of the budget. "The budget proposed in simple terms a cut of some 12 percent to 15 percent in the disposable income of the lower-income groups, single-income families, families with children, but only less than one percent cut in disposable incomes for those on higher incomes," he said. He could have added that those on higher incomes are only being asked to chip in for three years and that many of those would get their accountants to work to sidestep the levy.

Devil in the detail

Revelations about what's in store for the unemployed have just kept on coming. Job seekers under 30 years of age will have to provide proof that they are applying for at least 40 jobs a week even while they are not receiving benefits. Failure to comply will see the six-month qualifying period to receive the Newstart allowance extended. Welfare advocates, including the president of the Welfare Rights Network, Maree O'Halloran, have slammed the government over the worsening of the predicament the unemployed already find themselves in. "They will have no money for bus fares, newspapers, phone calls or an internet connection, yet if they don't look for work they risk having their payments suspended for another four weeks," she said.

Deputy secretary of the Department of Social Services, Serena Wilson, lifted the lid on government contingency plans to deal with the wave of misery the government would unleash.



It has set aside \$230 million over four years to deal with an expected 550,000 applications for assistance for food, clothing, medications, transport, rent and utility bills. The aid will be distributed via charities already struggling to cope.

"When we factor in people having no income for half the year and the idea of a safety net is to put more money into emergency relief ... it's just so extraordinarily removed from reality, it defies comprehension," Emma King, chief executive of the Victorian Council of Social Service said. She noted that people in Melbourne's growth corridors are already camping near welfare agencies to access basic aid.

The devil truly is in the detail of the budget and the longer it takes to get passed, the more obvious its agenda will become. The \$7 co-payment for GP visits is obviously a foot in the door for the killing off of Medicare. Less well publicised was the fact that patients will have to pay up to \$1,000 upfront for medical imaging such as CAT scans, MRIs and X-rays. Self-funded retirees who currently qualify for the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card will lose the \$876 Seniors Supplement. Soothing letters from the Prime Minister to

older Australians have not calmed anger about the shifting of age pensions' indexation from movements in average weekly earnings to the Consumer Price Index.

Attacks not finished yet

The same will happen to those receiving the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and Carer Payment. Both these vulnerable groups are seen with suspicion by the government. Former Mission Australia CEO and Howard government adviser, Patrick McLure, has handed his interim report on welfare "reform" to the current government and it proposes getting tougher with recipients of these payments and would-be applicants. The government refers sneeringly to the DSP and Carer Payment as "set and forget" benefits, which shows just how out of touch or uncaring it is about the bureaucratic load it puts on people to survive with some dignity. The full McLure report is due for completion in September or October. It is expected to "simplify" the system and reduce the number of payments to four or five. The budget is not the end of the government's ambitions to smash social security as we know it in Australia.

People understand their own straightened

circumstances and are starting to hear the different messages about who are the country's "lifters" and "leaners", to borrow federal treasurer Joe Hockey's terms. Deputy Greens leader Adam Bandt has used Hockey's self-serving methodology to show that Australian taxpayers have to work a week and a half every year to pay for the subsidies and tax concessions going to the fossil fuel, superannuation and private health insurance industries. At the same time, latest Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) figures show Australians are less reliant on social security payments than at any time since the 1980s.

An Oxfam report on income disparities confirms what we all knew – the gap between Australia's rich and poor has blown out. "The Australia figures are quite staggering if you think that nine individuals have a net worth that is equivalent to the total 4.5 million, or the bottom 20 percent of income earners – that's pretty stark," Oxfam Australia chief executive Helen Szoke said.

The government's determination to serve the few to the huge cost of the many must be defeated. The community's willingness to fight has been impressive but needs to be lifted to ensure the budget is blocked. ✪

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"Creative chaos" in the Middle East

Guardian

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Polluters' open slather

The major parties need to state clearly their position on bringing to an end the use of dirty brown coal for power generation, and a permanent ban on Coal Seam Gas (fracking). They must do this prior to their next state elections due shortly along the eastern states. The Victorian government has banned fracking until 2015, after the state elections to be held later this year. Not surprisingly, the public is concerned about major political parties changing their policy after the elections. LNP members in the NSW state government are rightfully concerned about the outstanding campaign conducted by Lock the Gate organisation. LNP members are keeping a very low profile on fracking; after the elections is another matter.

The NSW government was exposed for their failure to uphold the law against Whitehaven Coal in relation to the Maules Creek coal mine. The Lock the Gate organisation had to take legal action in the Land and Environment Court seeking an urgent stay of execution for Leard State Forest. The company had tried to change the rules to allow clearing in winter and spring – a time when hibernating animals were likely to be slaughtered by the bulldozers. Faced with an almost certain defeat, Whitehaven Coal made an undertaking to the court to cease all clearing until a full hearing on the case in early September.

Uncontrolled mining will change our rural communities forever and threaten their future viability. It will put our water resources at risk and damage our food security. Coal and unconventional gas licences and applications now cover more than 50 percent of Australia. The richest farmlands from the Darling Downs to the Kimberley are up for grabs by the mining companies.

Science shows that brown coal and fracking are hazardous to human health.

Major political parties know or should know that when burning brown coal in power stations, the toxic dust and fumes cause cancer. They should also know that fracking is not only hazardous to health but also to the environment.

The Hazelwood Power Station in the Latrobe Valley gives off five percent of Australia's greenhouse gas and successive state and federal governments have allowed this to continue. GDF SUEZ could continue producing power at a reduced capacity until 2042, if a current application to extend its works is granted by the state government.

Yallourn power station's upgrade, while increasing efficiency by four percent but not increasing emissions, is still a high polluter and contributes to the reduced health of workers and their families who live nearby.

In Victoria some 65 million tonnes of brown coal are burned annually for electricity production. This contains, according to the World Nuclear Association (2014), about 1.6 parts per million (ppm) uranium and 3.0 - 3.5 ppm thorium, hence about 100 tonnes of uranium and 200 tonnes of thorium is buried in land fill each year in the Latrobe Valley. Coal ash from power generation is highly radioactive and also contains toxic metals such as mercury, which poses serious health concerns for humans and animals.

Successive state governments have failed local communities. In South Australia, the Port Augusta Power Station has continued to pollute. Port Augusta is close to the Playford power station and the community has double the state average number of cancers.

The campaign for renewable energy by local residents for concentrated solar energy has been outstanding and gained a lot of traction. They had done their homework i.e. demonstrating that solar energy creates permanent jobs. Workers and farmers have a common cause and must unite in campaigning to prevent environmental vandalism by mining companies' toxic pollution.

PRESS FUND

PM Tony Abbott claims Australia is doing more to combat climate change than the US, as shown by our higher rate of per capita spending in this area. But we're actually achieving less, because the government is funding ineffective "dead duck" climate change initiatives, and is attempting to suppress renewable energy development. And of course, Abbott quotes Australia's per capita spending rate, but always ignores the per capita carbon emissions rate, which by 2012 had become the world's worst! We want to keep you up to date on this vital issue, but we really need your 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:

A Broken Hill reader \$50, R Girvan \$10, S Bond \$50, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$10, Eddie Seymour \$50

This week's total: \$175 Progressive total: \$3,960

CSIRO budget cuts hit climate and marine research

Government budget cuts to the Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) are set to deal a massive blow to Australia's reputation as a world leader in climate, marine and atmospheric research.

As part of the overall response to federal budget cuts of \$115 million which are expected to cost 500 jobs across the entire organisation, CSIRO management has revealed a plan to scale back research and cut science jobs in the Marine and Atmospheric Research (CMAR) division.

In a letter to the CSIRO Staff Association, management states that 31 full-time equivalent positions would be cut from CMAR over the coming weeks, the vast majority of them research scientists.

Climate science in the firing line

Staff Association acting secretary – and CMAR air quality scientist – Dr Michael Borgas said that in addition to CSIRO's big budget cuts, the organisation had taken an extra funding hit by a budget measure that specifically targeted the science of climate change.

"The government also cut more than \$20 million from a separate

climate change program of which CSIRO was a major beneficiary. So since the budget there's been real fear for the future of our world-class climate, marine and atmospheric research.

"Unfortunately those fears appear to be justified. The only 'direct action' the government appears to be taking on climate change is sacking the scientists performing the research or abolishing the departments who deliver the advice," he said.

Big cuts to marine research

Citing the need for "focused reductions or reshaping of research delivered by CMAR," in response to budget cuts and declining external earnings, CSIRO management have declared the need to "reduce research capability" in a number of areas.

These include cuts to Coastal modelling, Ocean Climate processes, Biochemical processes, Coasts and Oceans Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics, Pelagic Spatial Dynamics and Population Dynamics, Marine Risk Assessment, Atmospheric Chemistry and Climate, Climate Modelling, Climate Variability, Climate projections and Science Engineering.

CSIRO management has also stated that climate and atmospheric projects and research that delivers "maximum impact" and earns "external revenue" will be spared but that research capability would be cut in other areas. Marine biodiversity – a mainstay of Tasmanian research – will feel most of the pain.

Tasmania and Victoria will be hardest hit

The overwhelming majority of these latest cuts will come from the ranks of researchers, with 28 of the 31 full time positions to be cut being made up of scientists.

Of those, 18 marine and atmospheric research positions will be lost from Hobart. These cuts follow an earlier announcement that 31 Tasmanian jobs, mainly support roles, are scheduled to go as part of a CSIRO internal restructure.

Victoria will lose eight positions from the Aspendale Laboratory, located in the outer south western suburbs of Melbourne. A centre for climate and atmospheric research, last month CSIRO identified Aspendale as one of eight worksites management plan to close as part of their strategy to reduce building maintenance costs. ☼

Rally for waterfront safety

Management at Toll did not know what hit them when 150 emotional MUA (Maritime Union of Australia) members occupied their offices at Homebush, Sydney.

Led by assistant national secretary Warren Smith, slogans such as – "No more death Toll," "No more deaths on the waterfront," "Safety must be law, you're killing us no more" and "Safety before profit" – were relayed over loudspeaker throughout the company's building.

Members made the trip to Toll's offices to protest the company's role in trying to block the National Stevedoring Code of Practice just one week after a member, Anthony Attard, on the Toll site at Melbourne was tragically killed at work.

None of the staff at Toll seemed to know about Anthony's death, they acted put-out at being mildly inconvenienced at their workplace. Somewhat ironically a lot of the company propaganda scattered around the offices showed the company spruiking their safety policy.

"Toll can make as many glossy brochures as they want but we will continue campaigning, continue fighting, even if it means occupying every Toll office in the country, until we get a result.

"Toll, as a board member on the Australian Logistics Council, have explicitly backed the ALC's position on waterfront safety, a position that essentially says safety shouldn't get in the way of profit.

"Toll is not our only target, we will go after all of the stevedores that stand in the way of safety becoming law," said Smith. "Unfortunately for Toll they have set their target in our sights after a comrade died on their site."

As expected, management would not face the protesters and hid in their offices, escaping confrontation through the back door and calling the police to disperse the crowd.

"But beware Toll, beware Qube, beware Patrick, this is only the beginning of a campaign that will not be exhausted until our demand for a safe workplace is met," he said. ☼



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Cracks appearing in coalition ranks

Peter Mac

The federal conservative coalition is bedeviled by serious divisions, initially spurred by public unrest over foreign investment, the impact of the government's proposed new trade deals and the government's failure to protect Australian industry.

Unconcerned, in March PM Tony Abbott unilaterally reintroduced the titles of knights and dames as national honours. Former Howard cabinet ministers Peter Reith and Amanda Vanstone ridiculed the initiative, accusing Abbott of ignoring his colleagues and riding roughshod over objections.

Vanstone commented: "Among my Liberal mates I can find none who think it other than weird." Liberal Senator Sue Bryce declared "... titles such as these smack of a colonial lack of confidence. I don't believe they ever had a place in our culture and certainly not in 21st century Australia."

By April one opinion poll had Labor earning more primary votes than the coalition. The Greens' primary votes rose 5 points to 17 percent nationally, with a 15 point rise to 27 percent in Western Australia.

Nevertheless, Abbott's supporters bitterly oppose any change in the coalition leadership. Recently the Minister for Communications, Malcolm Turnbull, who is not a member of Abbott's ultra-reactionary faction, was castigated for having dined with independent MP, mining billionaire Clive Palmer, who nurses a deep antipathy for Abbott.

Sydney's two most vitriolic "shock jocks", Andrew Bolt and Allan Jones, then accused Turnbull of plotting to overthrow Abbott.

Bolt was recently convicted under the Racial Discrimination Act. The federal Attorney-General George Brandis is now attempting to modify the legislation so radio or TV personalities can use the language of bigotry without fear of prosecution.

However, Brandis encountered widespread public opposition. There is probably also opposition within conservative ranks to this move, and to the increase in university tuition

fees, the reduced age pension indexation and other matters.

A house divided

Serious divisions within the government surfaced after the May federal budget.

The ANZUS alliance has been fiercely attacked by former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser in his recent book *Dangerous Ally*. During a recent interview Defence Minister David Johnston admitted that the Alliance didn't commit either nation to support the other in the event of armed conflict.

MP Michael Danby, former chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, demanded his resignation. But as Danby conceded grudgingly, Johnson's statement was "technically" correct.

Danby implied that Johnson should have kept quiet because of possible US intervention against China in the South China Sea disputes. The possibility of the Abbott government committing Australia to an armed conflict with China should ring alarm bells across the nation, and is no doubt worrying coalition members.

The West Bank and Gaza, which Israel invaded during the 1967 six-day war, have been described by Attorney-General George Brandis as "disputed" territories, rather than occupied.

The new wording, which Abbott says is just a "terminological clarification", effectively reduces the issue to a mere difference of opinion and has enraged the Palestinians, as well as Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran and the Arab countries, some of which have threatened to reject Australian wheat and livestock.

National Party members are very concerned. Brandis is now refusing to say whether the territories are either occupied or disputed!

The climate change policy revealed significant differences between US President Obama and Abbott, a tenacious supporter of fossil fuel industries. Former Liberal leader John Hewson condemned Abbott's attempts to eliminate the publicly-owned and highly profitable Clean Energy Finance Corporation,



Amanda Vanstone ridiculed Abbott's reintroduction of knights and dames saying, "Among my Liberal mates I can find none who think it other than weird."

which provides financial support for the potentially enormous renewable energy industry.

The high income deficit levy is opposed by Liberal/National Party Senator Ian Macdonald, who says it should apply to corporations as well as individuals. Macdonald has threatened to vote against it in parliament.

In an extraordinary Senate speech he contradicted Finance Minister Matthias Cormann, saying: "...the arguments you raise really do not make sense. ... You could easily divert the \$5 billion that will be raised from the top 3,000 companies to pay off Labor's debt. That way we perhaps may not need a three-year temporary levy on other Australians."

The paid parental leave scheme has been criticised by former Immigration Minister Peter Reith. One coalition MP described it as "overly generous", "hard to justify in the current times" and "currently friendless".

The scheme would deny benefits to women farmers and other stay-at-home mothers. The government has met the National Farmers Federation and the Country Women's Association in an attempt to allay their concerns.

Abbott has reduced the benefit limit from \$150,000 to \$50,000. However, the scheme is still opposed by National Senators Ron Boswell and John Williams, Liberal Senator Cori Bernardi, and Senator Macdonald, who may cross the floor at voting time.

The scheme may be amended during cabinet discussions, but Abbott wants it to remain intact. The GP co-payment scheme is described by the Australian Medical Association, usually a staunch ally of the conservatives, as "unfair, unnecessary" and "poor health policy".

The rise in fuel excise is causing deep resentment among farmers. Hockey has struggled unsuccessfully to reassure them they will benefit because the revenue will fund country road construction.

Queensland sugar sales will now be largely conducted by Singapore-based firm Wilmar, despite previous assurances they would be handled by collective marketing organisation QSL. According to National Senator Barry O'Sullivan the new arrangement will "damage or destroy" QSL, probably ruining hundreds of small-margin canegrowers.

The Abbott government could introduce a compulsory central selling system, but Nationals Deputy leader Barnaby Joyce, who opposes the company's decision, admits it won't. If the farmers go under, the Abbott gang won't bat an eyelid.

Signs of the times

Many conservative MPs are questioning the government's policies, which are threatening national institutions, basic human rights and future economic development.

And so is the public. Abbott could now announce a double dissolution because the bill to dump the Clean Energy Finance Corporation was twice rejected in the Senate. However, he knows that a federal election now would eliminate his regime.

Coalition MPs are desperately attempting to repair the collapse in their electoral support. Victorian government MPs asked Abbott to stay away during their November state elections, describing his presence as "toxic".

A house divided against itself must fall. And in this case the sooner the better. ✪

Pete's Corner



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Health care for the privileged

Anna Pha

There is almost universal opposition to the Coalition government's proposed \$7 co-payment for GP visits and related measures. Health professionals have come out strongly against these measures. The public are stunned by the biting inequalities and unfairness of the changes. Bit by bit the full consequences of the co-payment package are being understood. And it is not just low income patients who will be hit, but bulkbilling doctors, pathologists and radiologists. Patients could face hundreds of dollars in out-of-pocket costs.

It is widely recognised that many patients would put off seeking a diagnosis or treatment because of the \$7 co-payment for GP visits or tests. In particular, low income patients with chronic conditions that require frequent visits to a doctor or weekly blood tests simply would not be able to afford to see their GP or have their blood tested.

Concession card-holders and children under 16 are hit with the \$7 charge for the first 10 services in a year and then no fee. But they have to reach that \$70 first, which might for Health Minister Peter Dutton be a lunch in a restaurant, but is impossible for many on low incomes. This situation is set to worsen if unemployment benefits and other payments are reduced.

Delays in diagnosis or treatment are likely to result in more serious conditions, even death, as well as the need for far more expensive treatment at a later date.

Punishing the disadvantaged

Doctors who wish to continue bulkbilling their patients will be penalised by a \$5 cut in their Medicare rebate and the loss of an extra \$2 they would receive when charging a \$7 co-payment. If the patient who is bulk billed is a concession-card holder, the doctor also loses the present \$6.80 incentive payment. The original aim of this incentive payment was to encourage doctors to bulkbill the most disadvantaged patients.

The present incentive to bulkbill the disadvantaged is being turned on its head; doctors will lose \$11.80 (\$6.80 + \$5) if they don't charge the \$7. They also miss out on the extra \$2.

The \$11.80 is a huge chunk out of the present \$36 paid to bulkbilling doctors. No wonder there are reports of bulkbilling doctors in the poorer suburbs considering retirement if this gets through Parliament.

"Pensioners, the elderly the sick and the poor have all been targeted – but also a clear signal is being given to GPs to stop bulkbilling or they will be bankrupted," Dr Con Costa,



(Photo: Anna Pha)

president of the Doctor's Reform Society said.

"If GPs stop bulkbilling, the cost to see a GP will be around \$72 (the Australian Medical Association rate) and thus the co-payment will then be \$36 for the GP and \$36+ for the blood test and \$36+ for the X-ray. Health costs will quickly become out of the reach of many Australians."

Radiologists and pathologists are also anxious about their futures and the consequences for patients who delay diagnosis of conditions. Delaying tests for a small lump on the breast or few drops of blood from the bowels, could be fatal.

The present 10 percent bulkbilling incentive payment for imaging will be axed from July 2015 if the budget measures are passed. It will

be replaced by a low gap incentive when pensioners and children under 16 are charged \$7. The new incentive is to stop bulkbilling the most needy.

At the same time the Medicare rebate will be slashed from 95 to 85 percent of the scheduled fee and then by another \$5 which can be recouped from the \$7 co-payment. Radiologists say that charging a \$7 fee will not make up for the loss of 10 percent in their Medicare rebate, that they will have to charge a much higher fee or go out of business.

Diagnostic Imaging Association CEO Pattie Beerens warned that patients face the prospect of paying \$90 upfront for an X-ray, \$380 for a CAT scan or \$1,000 for a PET scan. And when they have received their refund from Medicare, they would be out of pocket by much more than \$7 – possibly as much as \$160.

Associate Professor Roger Davies from Adelaide Imaging, which is one of the few radiology services that still bulkbills in South Australia, said the changes would make that unviable.

"In the last nine years, there has been no increase in real dollar terms in the medical imaging schedule while at the same time rent,

electricity, wages etc have increased substantially – it would render most if not all bulkbilling practices unviable," Dr Davies said.

The proposed co-payment and changes to Medicare rebates spell the end of bulkbilling. They undermine preventative health care and continuity of care in particular.

Their aim is to reduce the number of visits and tests, not on any medical basis, not because of overuse, but purely in readiness for the privatisation of Medicare. Consistent with this government's anti-working class outlook, those being discouraged or prevented from accessing care are the most disadvantaged. The rich will not be affected.

There is scope for substantial reform to improve and extend Medicare. This includes the direct employment of doctors on salaries and universal bulkbilling. Then doctors would not have to churn patients through their practice to make ends meet. There would be no financial gain in over-testing or servicing. The patient's welfare would take primary place and patients, with no fee at point of delivery, could seek out the care they required. ✪

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Mining writ lodged

Rudi Maxwell

The Quandamooka people, the traditional owners of North Stradbroke Island, have launched High Court action challenging the Newman government's legislation that extends sand mining on their country. And, the *Koori Mail* understands, the Quandamooka people are calling on Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney to refer the matter to the Crime and Misconduct Commission.

The Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) claims in a High Court writ that the 2013 North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability

Amendment Act contravenes the Commonwealth Native Title Act, 1993.

Where a state law is in conflict with a Commonwealth law, the Commonwealth law prevails.

The case will have implications for all native title holders across the country.

When the Bligh government passed the *North Stradbroke Island Protection and Sustainability Act* in 2011, the Quandamooka people were overjoyed that sand mining would be phased out by 2019, ending nearly six decades of community division for which the traditional owners had received no compensation.

That same year Quandamooka Elders signed an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) with the Queensland government that included compensation and the transition to joint management of Naree Budjong Djara National Park.

Soon after, the Quandamooka people had their native title rights to North Stradbroke Island recognised by the Federal Court and then the ILUA registered with the National Native Title Tribunal.

However, Sibelco, the privately owned Belgian mining company that owned sand mining licences on North Stradbroke Island, began lobbying aggressively for the extension of sand mining, hiring PR company Rowland to run an expensive campaign. In the 2012 election Sibelco spent close to \$100,000 in Campbell Newman's electorate of Ashgrove.

While Premier Newman denied in an email to the *Koori Mail* that Sibelco had received special treatment, a hand-signed document to Mines Minister Andrew Cripps appears to contradict that statement.

In October last year Mr Cripps wrote a briefing note to Mr

Newman outlining why Sibelco needed the legislation passed quickly and asking that the Premier relax the requirement to wait 20 days between preparing and introducing the Bill. Hand-written notes on the letter say "Premier approved" and "Yes!"

QYAC chief executive Cameron Costello and Quandamooka Elders have repeatedly invited Mr Newman to come to the island and walk with them on their country – but he has refused. "It was unfortunate that the Quandamooka people had to deliver the writ. We have extended the hand of friendship to the Queensland government, but we have been forced into having to defend our rights," Mr Costello said.

"It was a powerful moment when we lodged the writ, after an Elders' blessing and traditional ceremony, quite powerful and dignified, but it was a course of action that we did not undertake lightly. We felt we had to do it not only for the benefit of the Quandamooka people but also for all native title holders across Australia."

Mr Costello said it was "totally

unacceptable" for the Queensland government to go back on a deal with Aboriginal people. "It's been gut-wrenching for our Elders. It's extremely disappointing and draining," he said.

"Instead of enjoying the fruits of the ILUA – which really is compensation for what has happened to our people – instead of setting up the foundations for a non-mining economy, all this time and energy is being used dealing with the state trying to get them to honour a deal that was already done.

"We've won awards for tourism, accommodation, land care, caring for country, and we've won an award from the Australian Institute of Planners for our land use. The Quandamooka people are forging ahead, and the State government needs to support us, not keep trying to bring us down.

"At this stage the government needs to repeal the legislation that they put in place and come over to the island, apologise to our Elders and work towards implementing our ILUA in good faith."

Koori Mail ✪



Cockatoo Island strike and occupation - 25 years on

Maxim Makovich

In a recent announcement the federal government let it be known that tenders for the construction of two navy supply vessels would be offered to Spain or Korea. The last major vessel built in the port of Sydney was *HMAS Success*. This naval supply ship was built at the now closed Cockatoo Island Dockyard.

In the late 1980s there were a number of magazine and newspaper articles questioning the continued viability of this maritime installation. The Island Dockyard had a history of ship building and ship repair going back over a century and through two world wars.

After the Labour government's official confirmation that the yard would close a mass meeting on May 10, 1989 resolved to strike and occupy the Dockyard until the federal government reversed its decision. The 14-week campaign involved both white and blue collar workers. For the 1,400 men and women who took part the experience elicited a roller coaster of emotions as well as being physically and financially challenging.

To their credit, they fought those long weeks determined to save their jobs and their workplace.

This highly organised group first seized the administration block and fanned out across the island to take control of the entire installation. By the end of the process the workers not only held sway over the workshops and dry docks but were in control of two submarines and a navy supply vessel *Jervus Bay*. For the first time in Australian history 300 armed forces personnel were forced to evacuate a defence installation on Australian soil.

The strikers formed what was effectively a workers' soviet!

Initially, the occupation was a real novelty with lots of media coverage. The Labor Council of NSW and the ACTU passed resolutions of support and Cockatoo Workers were invited to address mass meetings on worksites and in every industry and regional gatherings.

When it became apparent that the workers were preparing for a protracted struggle many union officials started to waver, torn between their loyalty to the workers and their loyalty to the Labor Party not to mention their own career ambitions! Due in part to the Accord [between the ACTU and the government] a huge number of union functionaries had become corporatist and not only did no know how to organise or lead a dispute but did not know what the class struggle was all about.

Both union delegates and mass meetings were subjected to lectures from Labor Council and ACTU representatives, all determined to halt the strike. This culminated in a diabolical and treacherous resolution from the NSW Labor Council withdrawing its support and calling upon the Cockatoo workers to end the dispute. Throughout the industrial campaign the Painters and Dockers led by Bob Gallagher remained solidly behind the strikers.

The unions (Seamen's Union and Waterside Workers Federation), which later formed the Maritime Union of Australia, also maintained their unflinching support. This was despite the threat by the Hawke federal Labor government to impose Liberal era fines and de-registration proceedings.

From across Australia and from around the world encouragement

and financial support flowed in and helped to sustain the workers in the dispute. Community support grew as time went on. Individual support from people like Harry Black and Lindy Nolan was greatly appreciated.

John Tognolini and Francis Kelly produced a short video of the strike and this was copied and widely distributed around Australia and to other parts of the world.

Ultimately the issue was not only the survival of a workplace which employed a large, highly skilled workforce but the wider manufacturing sector in Australia. The very union officials who were prepared to sabotage the Cockatoo dispute were happy to follow a political party whose loyalty lay with the big end of town. What they did during that dispute was repeated as workplace committees and delegates structures were allowed to collapse or be sidelined. Union membership declined as industries shed workers or officials failed to organise struggles.

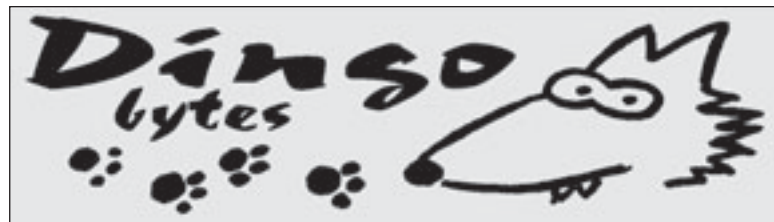
It eventually emerged Kerry Packer wanted to turn the island into an upmarket resort and casino. The wide news exposure brought on by the dispute was not what the investors wanted. Then when it was discovered soil on the island was full of industrial contaminants leading to litigation over remedial work, the federal government handed it over to the NSW government as a state park.

At least it is still publicly owned.

Those who took part in the dispute walked away with some redundancy money in their pockets and a sense of dignity, proud of their actions. The workers at Cockatoo Island seized the initiative and fought a valiant campaign which will be remembered by generations of workers to come. ✪



The floating crane *Titan* being towed under the Sydney Harbour Bridge (northern shore in background). The crane is supporting the foremast of the light cruiser *HMAS Sydney*, which is to be installed at Bradleys Head as a memorial. In late December 1992, the old floating crane was towed from Cockatoo Island where it was operating, out through Sydney Heads, allegedly on its way to Singapore. Several kilometres off the NSW coast the tow rope detached from the pontoon and it sank in several hundreds metres of water.



Winter is here and the homeless are preparing for another battle for survival. This time it will be even harsher in Sydney than in previous years – a \$5 million cut to inner-city homelessness services cannot but aggravate the situation. Hospitals and police will be the ones bearing the brunt of the merciless decisions by politicians. The safety and health of the most vulnerable people in our society will be at risk. The new government policy has shifted resources from the city to the suburbs – the move strongly criticised by those who work with homeless people and victims of domestic violence. St Vincent's Hospital treats hundreds of homeless people every year in the hospital and its outreach services and provides services for complicated medical health issues – something that will not be available in the suburbs as it requires a specialist team. Fifty percent of the patients in St Vincent's non-medicated withdrawal unit are homeless.

The Abbott government will cut \$1 million in funding to Ethical Clothing Australia, which inspects working conditions in the fashion supply industry that relies heavily on migrant workers who are often exploited in sweatshop conditions. The joint industry-union group has conducted more than 3,500 audits of Australian clothing factories in the past five years and met with more than 2,500 home-based outworkers. The head of the defunded organisation said the cuts would lead to more workers being underpaid and overworked. "This is an industry with a reputation for doing some pretty dodgy things... the whole industry has been built on the back of sweatshops," said national manager Simon McRae. So there will be no more independent verification of the standards applying to workers making garments.

They say ignorance is bliss – looks like some Australian politicians are very blessed in this regard. Attorney-General George Brandis caused an international outcry when he read a statement from Foreign Minister Julia Bishop saying that Australia no longer would refer to East Jerusalem as "occupied". The response from Arab countries was strong and immediate. The two largest political blocs in the Middle East – the Arab League (22 members), and the organisation of the Islamic Conference (56 members) will hold an emergency meeting to decide their response to Australia's statement. It is rumoured that the meeting would be asked to consider a ban on Australian meat imports – last year Australia's meat and agricultural imports were valued at \$2 billion. Israel took East Jerusalem during the Six-Day War in 1967 and later annexed it. The international community has not recognised the annexation and all 193 countries in the UN, including the USA, refuse to have their embassies in Jerusalem because it could jeopardise the peace process. It is not surprising that the far right of Israeli politics has been overjoyed with "the bravery" of Australia. Ms Bishop has got some very strange bed fellows indeed.

Decision to extinguish landholders' rights

The Lock the Gate Alliance has slammed a Queensland government decision that will allow land to be compulsorily acquired to facilitate rail lines from the Galilee Basin to Abbot Point in Central Queensland.

The State government has again announced a controversial and damaging decision last thing – this time the declaration of a huge new State Development Area (SDA).

Lock the Gate's Central Queensland coordinator, Ellie Smith said landholders were "gutted by this terrible news".

"The government has put hundreds of Central Queensland

farming families into turmoil this weekend as they now wait to find out exactly how they'll be affected," Ms Smith said.

The government's Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning published new maps that show the affected area on their website and called landholders but could not say exactly how each landholder would be impacted.

"The SDA means the state government will now be able to compulsorily acquire land to facilitate ill-advised rail lines for unprofitable mines in the Galilee Basin," Ms Smith said.

Ms Smith said the SDA would:

- Decrease property values – essentially only one buyer – the state government
 - Not require companies to negotiate reasonable access agreements, or coexistence strategies
 - Increase red tape for making improvements to properties
 - Disallow property improvements that are incompatible with potential rail infrastructure.
- "Construction of any rail line from the Galilee Basin is, at best, years away but landholders will be dealing with the effects of this SDA from today," she said. ✪

School choice – a free market theology

Robert Ely

I am a teacher and educational researcher. I have taught and consulted in over 80 public, Catholic and independent schools in Victoria, NSW and the UK over a period of 18 years. I am also a graduate of the Melbourne Business School, having studied management, economics and marketing. I am here as a public education advocate and have been a member of and broadcaster for the Defence of Government Schools organisation (DOGS) since 2006. I introduce myself and describe my background in this way to let you know that the ideas put forward in this talk are derived from an arguably informed perspective.

Education Minister Christopher Pyne announced the federal government would spend \$70 million to help up to 1,500 public schools become independent by 2017. This amounts to about \$40,000 per school, in other words, small change. Pyne, and the government he represents, are doing this because:

One day [he says] I'd like to see every public school having a level of autonomy and independence that means that student outcomes are student-first priority.

Nested in this seemingly nonsensical statement is a belief in free market fundamentalism or, as I term it, free market theology.

What is free market theology?

I am not describing the term as a positive economic theory of the behaviour of supernatural beings or deities but as an unquestionable belief that free markets provide the greatest possible equity and prosperity, and that any interference with the market process decreases social wellbeing. In Australia, this can be summed up in a simple belief:

Private is good, public is bad.

This translates into the practical world of education funding as "Private schools are good, public schools are bad – so let's make public schools act like private schools."

John F Kennedy once said that "The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie ... but the myth" because belief in myths allows "the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought" [Kennedy 1962]. Both the Coalition government and the Labor opposition are enjoying the comfort of the myth that school autonomy in budgeting and staffing leads to better student outcomes while ignoring the discomfort of mounting evidence against that. There is evidence that school autonomy has no relationship with student outcomes, while leading to both increasing corruption and higher levels of social, cultural and racial segregation. Mr Pyne's ideas are an example of pure free market theology overlaid on an education system.

For an education system to be effective it must be accountable, effective and efficient – in that order.

Three systems

In Australia, we don't have an education system – we have three school systems. I wish to look at each of these three to determine if they are accountable, effective and efficient. Efficiency is a first-order value in the world of free market theology and believers state that efficiency leads to effectiveness. Accountability is more often expressed as "more red tape" and dismissed as an irrelevant irritant that wastes resources and time ...

1. The state school system. Takes all comers. Free (sort of), secular (sort of), and compulsory. It is taxpayer-funded and encourages/demands small parental contributions. The state system educates the vast majority of kids, including the vast majority of disadvantaged, disabled, the brightest and the Indigenous. This system still educates a bit over 60 percent of the population. On the whole, accountable, effective and efficient. Government schools have a weakened central bureaucracy in many states, but remain accountable at all levels and efficient due to low levels of government support. Pyne's reforms will weaken state-based educational institutions and create an even weaker school

political voice in Canberra, and state ministers (especially in Victoria) do not actively advocate for their state education systems. That is left to parent groups, the teacher unions and activist groups like the DOGS.

2. The Catholic system. Taxpayer funded. Parental contributions. Exempt from all anti-discrimination laws, enrol whom they choose, sometimes the poor and needy, but as a matter of "charity" rather than from inclusive values. The Gonski review highlighted this as a statistical reality. The Catholic system unaccountable to taxpayers (average time between audits for Catholic schools approximately 50 years). A large, effective, centralised Catholic bureaucracy opaquely transfers government funding from school to school. Historically ineffective at educating all, and not interested anyway. Sectarian. Inefficient (and as their "existence" is a result of religious belief, they are by and large tax exempt, and lower levels of direct government funding are supplemented by tax exemptions). Also, there is a duplication of school places leading to system-wide waste. There is NO suggestion by Mr Pyne that any Catholic school should be "autonomous" or "independent" and it is noted that Catholic education representatives only signed up to the Gonski reforms under the condition that both their administrative processes and funding levels remained untouched! They are politically very powerful and their lobby groups are well resourced – in part with taxpayer's money.

3. The (in)dependent system. Taxpayer funded. Parental contributions. Functionally unaccountable, the wealthiest of these schools often possess vast undeclared capital assets procured over time. No financial data has been available since 2011 on the Myschool website. The least wealthy of these schools are funded at the same level as the state schools down the road, are dependent on government funding and would cease to exist without it. Many low fee (in)dependent schools are religious in nature (Exclusive Brethren, Scientology, Shia, Sunni, Jewish and various forms of proselytising Christian) and are deeply resistant to curriculum that questions their belief systems. They are ineffective and inefficient (see Catholic schools above). Added to this, they are not only exempt from anti-discrimination legislation but the wealthy (in)dependent schools are attractive to the aspirational middle class and also actively discriminate by parental income and are in what has been described as an "arms race" of facilities building, which generates further inefficiencies. They are politically very powerful and their lobby groups are well resourced – in part with taxpayers' money.

So, if we go back to the free market idea that "Private is good and public is bad", we can see Mr Pyne's path to improvement of the public education system is making public schools like the (in)dependent schools by breaking them up, cutting them loose from support and making them compete with each other for pupils to "better serve the needs of their communities". He believes that competition between state schools will raise the tide of achievement and all schools will do better.

The trouble is that his free market ideas are false: demonstrably and dangerously false.

Free market theology has already been applied to education systems in various countries around the world and it has not demonstrated any benefit. To quote from Trevor Cobold, a former member of the productivity committee and member of the Save Our Schools organisation:

Pyne has made grandiose claims about the research evidence on school autonomy. For example, he has said that "all the studies indicate that the more autonomous a school, the better the outcomes for students".

At the launch of the Coalition's plan, he released a document containing a series of quotes from several studies which he said supported school autonomy. It cites a range of sources, including the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, the



Productivity Commission, the Grattan Institute, the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, and the Gonski report. The Federal Department of Education has also cited World Bank research.

Misleading

BUT, the evidence presented by the Minister is highly selective and misleading.

The evidence from the 2012 PISA study contradicts Mr Pyne and is unequivocal and compelling:

PISA shows that school systems that grant more autonomy to schools to define and elaborate their curricula and assessments tend to perform better than systems that don't grant such autonomy ... In contrast, greater responsibility in managing resources appears to be unrelated to a school system's overall performance.

The report found no statistically significant effect of greater principal autonomy over budgeting and staffing.

Pyne also selectively and misleadingly cites several Australian reports. He cites a finding of an evaluation of IPS in Western Australia by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education [2013] that while some principals support the program, and believe it will lead to increased student outcomes, there has, in fact, been NO improvement in student outcomes.

Mr Pyne also deliberately misquotes the Gonski review and recent World Bank research to support his arguments. Each of these studies found that school autonomy had no significant effect on student outcomes. There is not one example cited by Minister Pyne that supports his argument. Mr Pyne is demonstrably wrong.

While federal ministers misquoting research to further political and ideological agendas is nothing new, there is a more dangerous aspect to Christopher Pyne's school autonomy agenda.

In the UK there is mounting evidence of "independent" government schools being hijacked by religious and cultural groups to further their own ends.

In the UK, "independent" government schools are called "charter" schools, being self-governing and locally autonomous. Unlike Australia, the UK still has centralised accountability mechanisms and schools are regularly inspected by an organisation called OFSTED to determine school effectiveness. Recently, 25 schools in Birmingham were inspected by OFSTED and six of these schools were "failed" and put in special measures as evidence was discovered that particular religious teachings were pervading the curriculum and there was gender segregation in classes. It was found that a religious group had populated these six charter school boards and

administrations with its adherents. Following the "failing" of these six schools, there is now much debate about religious intolerance and racism, but the problem would not have arisen in the first place if these schools had been as directly accountable as their non-charter school neighbours.

Similarly, in the US, there is a re-segregation of races in many US states. The rise of the charter school movement in New York State as a leader in creating "independent" state schools has led to "apartheid schooling".

UCLA's Civil Rights Project has been tracking national trends. Surprisingly, it found that "New York has the most segregated schools in the country ... Heavily impacting these state rankings is New York City, home to the largest and one of the most segregated public school systems in the nation." The UCLA report repeatedly uses a term that is now common in academic circles studying resegregation: "apartheid schools"... those schools with less than one percent white student enrolment. The report continues, "Across New York City, 73 percent of charters were considered apartheid schools and 90 percent were intensely segregated (less than 10 percent white enrolment) schools in 2010".

"Apartheid"

While Australia is not either the UK or the USA, and our government-funded (in) dependent system already caters for and funds religious and cultural groups to set up segregated and "apartheid" schooling, the trend to extend this process to "independent" state schools has implications for Australia's religious and cultural tolerance into the future.

The most effective way to foster and promote social, religious and cultural tolerance is to educate children from diverse religious, SES and cultural backgrounds together, not to separate them out at a young age based upon their parents' religion, income or background. Children separated out in this way are less likely to gain an understanding of "other" children whom they never come into contact with in the course of their educational lives. Creating "independent" state schools accelerates the progression of educational apartheid in the only school sector that, up to now, has the mandate to educate all children in a free, secular environment.

Finally, autonomous state schools will be forced to compete and not cooperate with each other in the marketplace for "good quality" students, or the market place jargon "input quality management". In the educational free market that Mr Pyne envisages, enrolling and teaching academically poor students in autonomous state schools will become

Has US-UK war for oil detonated the "new Iraq"?

Felicity Arbuthnot

What a tragic irony. Just two months ago, on the 11th anniversary of the (illegal) invasion of Iraq, the UK *Guardian* reminded that the mass slaughter, the incineration of swathes of towns, cities and the use of US-UK weapons of mass destruction were not about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, but about oil (a fact long established for any one with even minimal gray matter.)

Today flames are rising from Iraq's largest oil refinery at Baiji, 130 miles north of Baghdad, the result of mortar attacks by the varying forces sweeping towards the capital city.

The *Guardian* outlined, the invasion's "real goal – as Greg Muttitt documented in his book *Fuel on the Fire*, citing declassified Foreign Office files ... was stabilising global energy supplies (especially) ensuring the free flow of Iraqi oil to world markets" with advantage to US and UK companies.

"The most important strategic interest lay in expanding global energy supplies, through foreign investment, in some of the world's largest oil reserves – in particular Iraq."

The documents showed that the US and UK sought to privatise Iraq's oil production and carve it up amongst favored investors. Further, according to the *Independent*: In March 2003, just before Britain went to war, Shell denounced reports that it had held talks with Downing Street about Iraqi oil as "highly inaccurate". BP denied that it had any "strategic interest" in Iraq, while Tony Blair described "the oil conspiracy theory" as "the most absurd."

As ever, it seems Tony Blair had tossed truth under a bus. In October and November 2002, documents came to light showing that then, just months before the invasion: "Baroness Symons, then the Trade Minister, told BP that the government believed British energy firms should be given a share of Iraq's enormous oil and gas reserves as a reward for Tony Blair's military commitment to US plans for regime change."

Further: "Lady Symons agreed to lobby the Bush administration on BP's behalf because the oil giant feared it was being 'locked out' of deals that Washington was quietly striking with US, French and Russian governments and their energy firms."

"Minutes of a meeting with BP, Shell and BG (formerly British Gas) on October 31, 2002 read: 'Baroness Symons agreed that it would be difficult to justify British companies losing out in Iraq in that way if the UK had itself been a conspicuous supporter of the US government throughout the crisis.'"

On November 6, 2002, the Foreign and



Commonwealth Office invited BP for a chat to discuss opportunities in Iraq "post regime change". Minutes of the meeting record: "Iraq is the big oil prospect. BP is desperate to get in there and anxious that political deals should not deny them the opportunity."

The previous month the Foreign Office's then Middle East Director, Edward Chaplin, noted: "Shell and BP could not afford not to have a stake in (Iraq) ... We were determined to get a fair slice of the action for UK companies in a post-Saddam Iraq." BP representatives told the Foreign Office that Iraq was: "more important than anything we've seen for a long time".

Moreover, Greg Muttitt's book revealed: "The 20-year contracts signed in the wake of the invasion were the largest in the history of the oil industry. They covered half of Iraq's reserves – 60 billion barrels of oil, bought up by companies such as BP and CNPC (China National Petroleum Company), whose joint consortium alone stands to make US\$658 million profit per year..."

On February 6, 2003 Tony Blair stated: "Let me just deal with the oil thing because... the oil conspiracy theory is honestly one of the most absurd when you analyse it. The fact is that, if the oil that Iraq has were our concern, I mean we could probably cut a deal with Saddam tomorrow in relation to the oil. It's not the oil that is the issue, it is the weapons..."

However, overnight and this morning (Wednesday June 18) it looks as if the plotting, illegal carve up and grand theft of Iraq's major resource might have come back to haunt them as the rebels sweeping the country are widely reported to control much of Iraq's largest refinery. BP has evacuated 20 percent of staff so far from the southern oilfields although far from Baiji and Exxon Mobile has conducted a "major evacuation."

One thousand Chinese oil workers are reported trapped further north, with 49 Turkish Embassy staff and other Turkish citizens held hostage. Foreign workers are reported to have

been helicoptered out of Baiji, now seemingly near entirely under control of the opposition, who: "are in control of the production units, administration building and four watch towers. This is 75 percent of the refinery." The flames however, still rise over parts of this vast, volatile complex. As I write a report has just come in on a live feed to the *Guardian* from a government employee, Salah Majed, at Baiji who says the plant is on the verge of falling entirely to the rebels.

Meanwhile, as the Iraqi "government" (most of them fled for the airport and anywhere not in Iraq over the weekend) so comprising near singularly of "Prime Minister" Nouri Al Maliki – who has not yet formed a parliament after the crooked elections of April 30, from which Anbar, the largest governorate in Iraq was excluded – has asked for US air intervention against the "rebels." So again, Iraq is to be potentially bombed into "peace" for oil, illegal, genocidal, insanity.

Iraq has been designated a UN level three humanitarian disaster.

Ironically, Baiji was 80 percent destroyed in the first Gulf war in 1991. In spite of the crippling US-UK driven UN embargo where no spare parts for anything were allowed, it was rebuilt in about two months.

Further ironically, Baiji was where British hostages captured in Kuwait were held during the first Gulf War. It may yet hold Iraq's US imposed puppet and the remnants of his regime hostage.

The complex sits in what the US occupiers simplistically called "the Sunni Triangle", largely supporters of the former secular Iraq, rather than the sectarian tragedy, the feckless open bordered disaster that the invasion sponsored.

Will it yet, between oil and nationalism, hold the key to Iraq's future and escape from those who came in and imposed murderous dictats and their despot on a "far away place of which (they) knew nothing"?

Pravda ❖



an exercise in "risk management and/or harm minimisation". The pattern of schools supporting and encouraging the diagnosis of behavioural disorders in academically poor students to attract the funding that such disorders bring will necessarily accelerate.

Over the last ten years, Australia has progressively "marketised" and privatised school education and, at the same time, our education system is falling behind the rest of the world. While correlation is not causation, in the end, education is a cooperative, not competitive activity, and the free market principles should have no part in the education of children.

In education, public is good and private is bad.

The fight that public education advocates are involved in now is not just a fight for resources but a war of ideas. It is a battle between enlightened self-interest and financial self-interest. Well-resourced public schooling that is free, secular and open to all is enlightened self-interest in action. Free market theologians and believers see no role for enlightened self-interest, only the financial self-interest of parents forced to compete with each other to "do the best thing for their child" in a totally unaccountable, deregulated education market that has both winners and losers. While free market advocates now have the ascendancy, there are indications that the parents of Australia are starting to wake up to problems inherent in Mr Pyne's radical free market theology.

The Beacon ❖

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Presbyterian divestment

Mark Braveman

Meeting in Detroit, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) appears close to finally voting to divest their pension funds from companies providing the hardware for the ongoing dispossession and apartheid-style control and warehousing of the Palestinian people.

This has panicked the leadership of major Israel advocacy organisations and religious denominations, as well as some prominent Protestant leaders who fear that passage of this resolution – an earlier version of which failed by a hair two years ago – will unleash the flood of similar actions contemplated by other mainline Protestant denominations.

Predictably, the institutional Jewish community as well as voices within the church have hauled out time-tested arguments: that the intention of boycott, divestment and sanctions is to destroy Israel, or that Presbyterians are well-meaning but are being drawn into an anti-Semitic project and, of course, that the church should just keep talking about it, substituting action with a continuation of Christian-Jewish “dialogue” that tiptoes around discussion of Israel’s human rights violations.

Playing the same card

In an op-ed recently published by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, a rabbi from the American Jewish Committee warns that “while the BDS [boycott, divestment and sanctions] minions are harming the Presbyterian-Jewish relationship, it is not yet beyond repair.

“Jews and Presbyterians,” he advises, “can still prevent a minority of Presbyterians from using the ignominious demonisation and delegitimisation of Israel from driving an irreparable wedge between the



two religious communities.”

This is the same card that organisations like the American Jewish Committee, Jewish Federations of North America, and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs have been playing since 2004, when the Presbyterians began to consider divesting from corporations that facilitate the theft of Palestine. The message to Christians is clear: your commitment to the unwritten rules of the Christian-Jewish relationship trumps following your consciences, and in this case your own denominational principles.

Leaders of these organisations, who claim to speak for all Jews, have also made it clear that any Jew supporting the 2005 call from Palestinian civil society for boycott, divestment and sanctions has committed a betrayal of Jewish allegiance to the State of Israel.

But there are signs that the old rules are breaking down. Witness the revolt of Jewish students on campuses and a growing number of rabbis,

Jewish scholars and Israeli journalists and academics who support boycott, divestment and sanctions.

Along with a strong contingent of Presbyterians working to get the resolution passed this year, these Jews are hoping that the voters at the General Assembly will do the right thing this year. But all agree it’s too close to call, and the pressure on the Presbyterian voting delegates has been unrelenting.

“Don’t rock the boat”

The influential and otherwise progressive Christian Century has weighed in, in a piece by a prominent Presbyterian pastor that urges Presbyterians to reject divestment. Once again, Christians are being told that all Jews identify with the State of Israel and that Zionism is synonymous with Judaism.

An open letter from a group of prominent Presbyterian pastors followed, beseeching Presbyterians to reject divestment as having as its intention the destruction of Israel. Like the Christian Century article, the letter seizes on the recent publication of the Presbyterian’s Israel Palestine Mission Network, “Zionism Unsettled,” as proof positive

that support for BDS is motivated by anti-Semitism and the wish to “delegitimise” and to ultimately bring down the State of Israel. That “Zionism Unsettled” is not anti-Semitic, but a bold but nuanced discussion of Zionism, is not important to the authors – what is important is defeating BDS.

Some US rabbis have also entered the conversation in a letter published unofficially under the aegis of mainstream Jewish denominations and advocacy groups such as the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. Adopting a gentler approach, the rabbis do not raise the spectre of anti-Semitism. Instead, they invoke the hard-won ties of friendship between Christians and Jews, singing the same song as the Presbyterian pastors: don’t rock the boat of Jewish-Christian harmony.

“Oversimplifying a complex conflict and placing all the blame on one party, when both bear responsibility, increases conflict and division instead of promoting peace, reconciliation and mutual understanding,” the letter states. “The role of peacemaker is irreconcilable with positions that promote economic coercion through boycott, divestment and sanctions,

and consequently discourage, rather than encourage, constructive engagement.”

Failure of logic

Arguing against BDS because it places blame on one side is a failure of both fact as well as logic. This is not a question of blame. It is simply based on the fact that one side has all the power and is responsible for the acts and the policies that are the obstacle to peace. What place does reconciliation have in a scenario in which annexation, land theft and illegal detention are actively ongoing?

As was the case for Jim Crow in America and apartheid in South Africa, the goal and rationale for divestment is simple – and that’s why the Jewish establishment in the US, working with the State of Israel, has chosen to make a stand about BDS with such determination and ferocity. To accept divestment is to accept that if Israel is to survive, Israel must change.

Divestment is not anti-Semitism, it is an act of love. As I sit with the Presbyterians in their deliberations in Detroit, I pray that they will realise that – at least 51 percent of them.

The Electronic Intifada ☪

Teachers lead mass London march

Joana Ramiro

Teachers led the People’s Assembly march against austerity through London on June 21. Britain’s teachers are fighting back against government plans to “destroy the education system” and marching en masse.

“This demonstration is about fighting against a government which is attacking public-sector workers, it’s about protecting our public services,” National Union of Teachers executive member Gawain Little told the *Morning Star*.

Con-Dem cuts have devastated Britain’s education system, with the teachers’ union having to fend off a wave of privatisation and attacks on teachers’ pensions.

“This government is waging a war on teachers and the education system, trying to return us to Victorian values and nationalist ideals,” said south London teacher Simon Hardy.

Newly qualified Mr Hardy said he knew how precarious conditions were not just for young teachers but also for poorer students, who find

themselves marginalised by Education Secretary Michael Gove’s curriculum changes.

Mr Little echoed this sentiment, saying he was marching because the government will “ruin the life chances of generations, of our children, and that cannot be allowed to go unchallenged.”

Brighton teacher and NUT member Seema McArdle condemned ministers’ proposals to have unqualified staff teaching in classrooms.

Ms McArdle said that “government has to take responsibility for someone doing the job being paid correctly for it.”

For those who want to teach, more access to training is needed and the Department for Education should play a role in it, she said.

But instead Mr Gove was “pitting people against each other. We need to stand in unity against this.”

Mr Hardy added: “As teachers it is important that we fight back and take on Gove and the whole rotten coalition.”

Morning Star ☪

Spooks monitor your every message

Joana Ramiro

Every Facebook message, tweet and email sent in Britain is monitored by spooks, Britain’s spy chief Charles Farr was forced to admit yesterday. Mass surveillance by Britain’s intelligence agency GCHQ was exposed in a 48-page document published last week by campaign groups challenging the practices in court.

It was obtained by Privacy International, Liberty, Amnesty International and other groups in their legal bid to reveal the extent of GCHQ’s spying on their online activity. Liberty legal director James Welch said: “If there was any remaining doubt that UK snooping laws need a radical overhaul, there should be no longer.”

As director of the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) – part of the Home Office – Mr Farr is the government’s key witness in the case to be heard by the Investigatory Powers Tribunal next month. The groups published his written statement to the court as

part of their campaign to reveal the actions of Britain’s spooks following the revelations of US whistleblower Edward Snowden.

Mr Farr admits that the security services have been accessing information from people’s private communications on US-based websites such as Google, Facebook and Twitter.

Under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act the OSCT can access messages sent or received abroad without a warrant. As most social networks are hosted in the US it counts them as foreign – putting all of their data up for grabs.

“One of the main problems with the police and the security services is that they will inevitably stretch definitions and overstep the powers that Parliament gave them,” said Green Party peer Jenny Jones.

Ms Jones revealed how her online activity was recorded on a database of domestic extremists by the Metropolitan Police. She told the *Morning Star* that only “strict accountability to elected representatives will provide the brakes on this

intrusion into ordinary people’s lives.”

Mr Farr claimed that spying becomes of “less importance” if agents do not read the intercepted messages.

“The suggestion that violations of the right to privacy are meaningless if the violator subsequently forgets about it not only offends the fundamental, inalienable nature of human rights, but patronises the British people,” said Privacy International deputy director Eric King.

Mr Farr’s document was released on the same day as GCHQ announced it will soon begin to share gathered intelligence with some of Britain’s largest companies in an attempt to prevent “threats” of cyber-espionage.

Communist Party general secretary Robert Griffiths said: “These revelations only confirm that all so-called ‘safeguards’ to protect civil liberties are a sham and that GCHQ is a wholly owned subsidiary of the US security state.”

Morning Star ☪

A true police state

Jayant Bhandari

On March 5, 2014, I was detained at Detroit airport, just before I was to board the plane. "I will decide if you will go on this plane or not," shouted a US custom official with a stress on "I", while keeping an eye on a young female official, perhaps in his continual attempt to impress her. In an instance I was reminded that I was in a warped space in "the land of the free" where the rule of law or even the rules of nature did not operate. Four "invincible and immortal" custom officials of the States [often spoken with stress and extreme tribal-pride] were to decide what was right and what was wrong.

Three men and one woman – men with bulging bodies, a likely result of too much steroid abuse, shaved heads, and heavily-scarred faces, perhaps a result to having abused many in foreign countries or in Detroit ghettos – kept an eye on me. Thinking that I would not hear his murmuring, one male-officer asked another, "Would you stir him or shake him?"

"Keep your hands outside your pocket," he shouted again, when my hands were nowhere close to my pocket and I had just been through TSA's security.

I was not visiting the US. I was merely transiting on my way to Nagoya (Japan) from Toronto (Canada). Elsewhere in the world, I would have taken the transfer

un-accosted, without any security check, and without a need to talk with anyone. In such a situation, even in the most corrupt country, I would not have been mistreated, for they gain nothing by treating a guest-in-transit badly.

I was among the last people to go to line up to board. Unless I have too much cabin luggage, I see no reason why I should crowd-around impatiently to enter the plane.

My heart aches to see how quickly, since 9/11, Americans have given up their freedoms. If Bin Laden really hated the freedoms of Americans – which I seriously doubt was the case – he has won an unambiguous victory.

I approach customs stoically. My tone and conduct tells them that I am not going to either engage or escalate the situation. I keep myself brief and mostly very cold. Those officers who are on an ego trip very quickly recognise that I am not of much use to them. The good ones – if there are any – know they have nothing to engage with me about. In general, my approach works the best. I mostly avoid hassles with them.

So, why was I detained?

They asked me how much cash I had. I told them it was around US\$2,000, without any expression on my face, indeed without flattery and grovelling conduct they had got from virtually everyone before me. They kept on asking me personal questions, hoping to scare me. Then they asked me to sign a document on which they asked me to write exactly



how much cash I had. Perhaps this was their spineless way to entrap me hoping to find a cent extra. I told them that I had about 20 different currencies and they would need to provide exchange rates to come up with an exact figure. The guy who had been shouting like a moron found my response to go against the impression he was trying to give his subordinates.

One of them picked up one of my bags and another one the other – as thieves do – and took them to a far

corner without asking my permission and started ripping them apart. They now wanted any reason, however vague, to stop me from taking my plane.

They finally stumbled on my blank personal checks, which now according to them accounted towards the \$10,000 upper limit of cash that I could carry with me. I was asked to explain how much cash I had in my bank accounts. The consequence of this is far reaching if taken to its logical conclusion: You should be able to

show your net worth when passing through an American airport. This is a true police state.

For 30 minutes, the Delta's Boeing 747 bound for Nagoya waited for me, with the air hostesses lined up at the gate, frustratingly waiting for me. I had checked-in luggage, which meant that the flight could not go without me.

So, how should one conduct oneself when passing through an American airport?

Information Clearing House ☛

To prison for poverty

Sarah Solom

Welcome to Alabama, the state of the never-ending seat belt ticket.

Hali Wood is 17. She's applied to work at several grocery stores in her home town of Columbiana, but none are hiring. A few months back, cops ticketed Hali for not wearing a seat belt. The fine: \$41. A private probation company charged her a monthly fee of \$35. That's 85 percent interest! Hali has paid \$41 and then some, but she's still hundreds of dollars in debt. Why? Because the court contracts with JCS, a for-profit probation company that forces Hali to choose between paying their exorbitant fees and going to jail.

Here's how the scheme works.

Borrowing from the payday lender playbook, companies like JCS often sign contracts in cities and counties strapped for cash. For the county, the deal seems like a sweet one: The company will collect outstanding court debts

for free and make all their profits from charging probationers fees. But the problem is that many of these people were put on probation because they were too poor to pay their fine in the first place and for them, the additional fees are huge. People find themselves scrambling for money they don't have and forgoing basic necessities to avoid being thrown behind bars for missing a payment. The impact on communities, especially low-income communities of colour, is devastating.

Sadly, the for-profit probation business is booming. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people are sentenced to probation, often for misdemeanours including unpaid parking tickets. Instead of being able to just pay those fines and move on with their lives, many get sucked into spiralling debt traps they cannot escape. There are hundreds of thousands of people like Hali out there, for whom small

court fines have ballooned into hundreds of dollars of debt.

The for-profit probation racket isn't benefiting society; it's only benefiting these companies' bottom line. We need to remember two things: 1) If probationers miss a payment and end up behind bars, taxpayers foot the bill for this imprisonment; and 2) Our communities are not better off when we force people in poverty to choose between their liberty and putting food on their table – and needlessly lining the pockets of for-profit probation companies in the process.

Counties and courts do not need to contract with these debt collectors on steroids. Publicly run probation exists, and it works while doing much less damage to communities. It's time to urge courts to cut their ties with the for-profit probation industry.

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Region Briefs

On June 11, hundreds of workers held a demonstration at the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle in Jakarta demanding Adidas' Indonesian contractor PT Panarub Dwikarya pay their severance entitlements owed since 2012. In 2012, 1,300 workers from the factory protested for five days asking for a better working conditions and salary in accordance with the regional minimum wage. Three hundred workers were dismissed after the protest without receiving entitlements. One of the sacked workers said that she had been afraid of going to the bathroom or eating lunch at the factory as she would be verbally abused by supervisors for not being productive enough.

On June 11, the General Office of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) Central Committee published a new recruitment policy to replace the old version which had been in operation for over 24 years. In the new policy, the quality of the membership is more important than the number. All Party localities and organisations are required to enlist new members in a balanced and prudent manner in order to keep the overall size of the Party in check and to prevent unqualified members undermining the Party's strength. There are 80 million CPC members in China.

On June 13, China's top economic planning body claimed that it would make more supportive policies in education, poverty and employment for Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, as China's President Xi stressed that a priority of good governance is to improve living standards, so that people from all ethnic groups could receive more support from the Party and the state. According to the deputy governor of China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Shi Dagang, Xinjiang, government expenditure on improving living standards totalled US\$78.5 billion in the past three years.

On June 17, Vietnam and Laos agreed to further their cooperation in education, trade, human resources and the military at a meeting of the Vietnam-Laos cooperation subcommittee in Hanoi. The two sides will promote exchanges of delegations, fight together against drug trafficking and other transnational crimes. Vietnam will increase its investment in Laos, such as in the areas of agriculture and rural development.

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

The gap is widening

The Brisbane Aboriginal Sovereign Embassy is calling on federal, state and territory governments to put money for Aboriginal people back into community run organisations rather than into corporate mega-charities. The practice over the last 20 years of giving "Aboriginal" money to non-Aboriginal organisations is killing our people on a genocidal scale.

Organisations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul are all the organisations that John Howard gave money to. Money he took from Aboriginal community-controlled organisations operating at the coal face such as child care, against youth suicide, preventing the removal of our children, keeping people out of prison and tackling glue and substance abuse.

Today Aboriginal people are three times more likely to commit suicide than non-Aboriginal people. Across the Australian continent the rate of Aboriginal suicide has doubled over the past 20 years – now the highest suicide rate in the world. In the last 20 years the rate of Aboriginal children being removed from their families and placed with non-Aboriginal people has increased five times, greater than the Stolen Generation. Aboriginal people are being

imprisoned at a rate five times that of Blacks in Apartheid South Africa. The "Gap" in life expectancy, about 20 years less for Aboriginal people, is widening not closing.

All this has occurred as Aboriginal people and their community-controlled organisations have had less and less funding to tackle the many issues caused by colonisation. Issues that they were successfully tackling in the past.

These mainstream organisations don't listen to the few Aboriginal people they employ. Many of their "Aboriginal specific" programs are being designed, staffed and run by non-Aboriginal people. Their ignorant "solutions" are killing our communities and our future; they are not accountable to us or anybody but they have blood, lots of blood and misery on their hands.

Wayne Wharton
Brisbane

Women hurt by cuts

In NSW, women escaping domestic violence, often with their children, used to be able to access services specifically tailored to their needs. Proposed changes to homelessness services will mean that there won't be any specialist women's refuges in six out of the 15 family and community districts. It means a loss of 40 shelters.

It is well-known and proved by research that women fleeing violent relationships are extremely unlikely to seek help from a generic service. Some women and their children are so badly traumatised that they can't handle a male presence in a shelter.

These women and their children are leaving their homes because of direct threats to their lives. How many tragedies should there be for the government to understand the plight of these women? Putting them

together with homeless men in the same shelter is cruel.

I personally will regard this practice as utterly unacceptable. Sexual abuse survivors, women with mental illness or drug and alcohol problems also need women-only homelessness services. To defund these services, to close down the only places where women and children can find a safe shelter – how much lower can you go? Members of parliament should be told that this is not on.

Mati English
Sydney

Write a letter
to the Editor

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Guns, guns, guns



In a recent discussion in my Party Branch on the class nature of the spate of school shootings in the USA over the last few years, it was pointed out that a prevalence of guns in a community does not necessarily mean a prevalence of shootings. (Shootings of people, that is. It generally means the wildlife will be pretty well massacred.)

There are 270 million guns in the USA – 90 guns for every 100 people. Nevertheless, Switzerland has the highest number of guns per head of population, but the USA has far and away the highest number of gun fatalities both in absolute and per capita terms. So it is more than just the number of guns in a country. There must be other factors at play as well.

Michael Moore in his film *Bowling For Columbine* thought the cause of the many shootings in the USA was the pervading paranoia that blights every aspect of US life, often (bizarrely) without Americans themselves seemingly being aware of it. But paranoia alone does not explain close to 40,000 gun deaths in one year (of which about 12,000 were homicides involving a gun).

Back in 1963, when the Civil Rights movement in the US was in its infancy, two Black youngsters were attacked by a racist mob. They sought refuge in a church, but the mob burned the church with the unfortunate children in it. Martin Luther King commenting on the killing of the children made the point: "We must be concerned not merely about who murdered them, but about the system, the way of life, the philosophy which produced the murderers."

That philosophy very often looks to violence to solve its problems, whether local or global, social or economic, with the simple motto "Blow the bad guys away!" as the solution to everything. But it's not just ordinary people who are being encouraged to take up guns to "protect themselves". Just about every US government agency or department is doing so as well.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is buying .40 Caliber semiautomatic submachine guns. The US Postal Service has solicited proposals for assorted small arms ammunition. And the Social Security Administration has put in a request for 174,000 rounds of hollow-point bullets (they're the ones that make a really big hole in the person who gets shot) but for me, the one that takes the cake is the USA's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration which oversees the National Weather Service. That's right, the Weather Service. Incredibly, it wants to buy 46,000 rounds of ammo.

Government departments are not just buying ammo or guns, however. They are forming and equipping SWAT teams, in anticipation of – what? Civil war? Unprecedented terrorist assaults on the weather service? The Department of Agriculture, the Railroad Retirement Board, the Office of Personnel Management, the Labour Department, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Food and Drug Administration, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service are just

some of the US Federal agencies that have their own SWAT units.

When Nikita Krushchev made his state visit to the USA in 1959, he commented that the USA did not need an army, its police were so heavily armed that they could do the job instead. Since then "law enforcement" agencies in the US have expanded their arsenals and the number of special operations units they deploy have grown exponentially. Is it any wonder we now see images of "ordinary" Americans walking down the street or going shopping with a sub-machine gun strapped to their back?

That all sorts of Americans, from President Obama down, are alarmed at the country's absurd (and near genocidal) infatuation with guns and gun culture is hardly surprising. Blind Freddie can see that a country with thirty to forty thousand gun deaths a year is spiralling down into terminal chaos. The problem confronting the ruling class of the world's leading capitalist power is what to do about it?

However, not all sections of the ruling class even recognise that there is a problem. After all, keeping the populace fearful and at risk from gun-toting criminals and loonies makes it easier to take away their rights and freedoms "in the interests of public safety". And there is big money to be made from the domestic arms trade just like there is from the military.

Symptomatic of the growing militarisation of policing in the US (and, by imitation, in other developed capitalist countries) is the trend for local police departments to acquire military-grade weaponry and armour, often to

enforce regulatory law that was once punishable by civil fines.

"In 2003, federal law enforcement officers from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, clad in protective Kevlar and bearing semiautomatic weapons, raided the home of George Norris, forcing him to remain in his kitchen as the agents searched his belongings. Norris was indicted for 'smuggling' [what were in fact] legally imported orchids. In reality, though, his only crime was a paperwork violation; agents found that a small percentage of his documentation for the orchids was inaccurate." – *Truthout*.

An over-reaction? Of course. A dangerous over-reaction? Also of course. Hyped up on adrenalin and trained to anticipate the "perp" being armed (as so many in the US are), all it would take is an unexpected sudden movement on the part of the suspect and he would be shot by a law enforcement officer terrified of being shot himself.

I do not know how it is today, but a few years ago armoured cars carrying cash for banks etc in Britain did not have armed guards. They were made virtually bomb-proof, but the crew carried only batons, because if they were armed the criminals would also start to carry guns, and that way people would inevitably have been killed.

Guns don't make people safer. Quite the reverse in fact. That hasn't stopped Tony Abbott from using armed police to "protect" Julie Bishop from those dangerous students. Changing her policies would be an even better option, of course. ☹



Rob Gowland
previews
ABC & SBS
Public Television

Sunday June 29 –
Saturday July 5

Make Me Young: Youth Knows No Pain (ABC2 Sunday June 29 at 8.30pm) is a feature-length mish-mash of a documentary that looks and sounds like a bad home movie. What it is doing screening under the banner "Sunday Best" is anybody's guess.

America's "anti-aging" industry is worth US\$60 billion a year. That makes wrinkle cream and cosmetic surgery well worth a documentary. But this amateurish mess is not it.

The filmmaker, Mitch McCabe, is the daughter of a plastic surgeon who used to take her – as a child – into the hospital to watch him work. Despite such tid-bits, I found her film tiresome in the extreme.

The second (and final) episode of **Extreme OCD Camp** (ABC2 Wednesday July 2 at 8.30pm) is just as interesting as the first was. The six young British sufferers from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) are taken on a trek deep into the American forest, where they have to camp, coping without any of the amenities they usually shelter behind.

Olivia who suffers from a fear of smells has been given the task of cooking dinner for the group, but she can't run off and take a shower after it. Later in the trip, she has a huge victory when she uses a "disgusting" outback pit toilet. Trekking along the edge of a cliff causes some of the group to harbour thoughts (but only thoughts) of violent acts

against others in the group. Andrew who fears the number 13 also suffers from depression, and he takes a real turn when his mood takes a dive. And yet he acknowledges that the camp has been the high point of his life. He has made friends, virtually for the first time.

I found the program enthralling, instructive, educational in the broadest sense, and definitely worth watching.

If entertainment programs on TV would cease to exist without crime shows, factual programs would apparently do so without mental health issues to film. **Fear Of Flying: Caught On Camera** (ABC2 Wednesday July 2 at 9.30pm) follows half a dozen Brits as they go on holiday by air, having agreed to record themselves on their smartphones as they sob, sweat, shiver and cower in very real fear that the plane will fall from the sky at any moment (and if they watch *Air Crash Investigations* they will know that in fact it can, but fortunately not very often.)

For most people, catching a plane is like catching a bus – another way of getting from A to B. But for an astonishing *one-in-five of us* flying is a living hell – the most dangerous way to travel. Statistics show that in fact it is more dangerous by far to take a car or catch a bus, but like assurances from the helpful cabin crew, aviophobes are not convinced.

The program is interesting although the assurances of hypnotist and motivational coach Lawrence Leyton that everyone is capable of erasing negative thoughts and replacing their terror with positive feelings, whatever the source of their fears, don't seem to help much.

One of the saddest sights on television in recent years was cycling commentator Phil Liggett with tears on his face and in his voice as he realised that his idol, world champion cyclist and seven-time winner of the *Tour de France*, Lance Armstrong, was a hardened, long-time drug cheat.

Armstrong was the champion who had battled cancer, overcome it and returned to the sport to once again become a champion. His prize money, bonuses and sponsorship



Stop At Nothing: The Lance Armstrong Story (ABC1 Wednesday July 2 at 8.30pm).

deals were worth about US\$100 million. With that sort of money at stake it is hardly surprising that he would do whatever it took to keep his crown.

Long distance road racing is a curious sport. The job of most team members is to get "their man" into a position from which he can win the race. For almost a decade, Lance Armstrong was that man for the main US team. What emerges very strongly from **Stop At Nothing: The Lance Armstrong Story** (ABC1 Wednesday July 2 at 8.30pm) is the ruthless way the man protected his position and trashed his detractors. And the earnestness with which he lied, and lied and lied.

His willingness to destroy the lives and careers of friends and colleagues while using his cancer foundation as a talisman to stave off any criticism (especially suggestions

of taking performance-enhancing drugs) would not disgrace any high-powered corporate executive.

When his fed-up colleagues eventually blew the whistle on the numerous drugs that were being routinely used by the top athletes in the sport, Armstrong at first tried to destroy their reputations and credibility. When that failed he came clean, but not at a press conference or to the anti-doping authority. He chose to do it on *Oprah*, for maximum sympathetic exposure, and no hard probing questions. Even here he covered up certain unflattering facts.

The film also tells the story of how Lance Armstrong – as a young up and coming cyclist – cheated US promoters out of a million dollar bonus. And the film includes the explosive revelation that the head of one of Armstrong's major US sponsors knew all about his doping – but

continued to sponsor him, despite this knowledge. This is an absorbing, powerful documentary that brings the viewer face to face with the corrupting power of money in sport, and the ugly face of ruthless greed that it engenders.

In the final instalment of **The Men Who Made Us Thin** (ABC1 Thursday, July 3 at 9.30pm), Jacques Peretti speaks with experts who argue that the food industry has been doing their best to frustrate attempts to reform the food we eat. What, corporate types putting their profits before the health of the nation? Surely not.

Season two of **Father Brown** commences this week (ABC1 Saturdays from July 5 at 7.30pm) with Father Brown played rather low key by Mark Williams (Ron's father in the *Harry Potter* films). ☛

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IN THE PUB

June 26
POSSIBILITIES FOR A PROGRESSIVE ECONOMIC STRATEGY IN AUSTRALIA
Tom Skladzien, Dr, AMWU;
Jo-Anne Schofield, Executive Director, Catalyst Australia Inc.;

July 3
THE BAIRD GOVERNMENT – ITS PRIVATISATION AGENDA NOW REVEALED
John Kaye, MLC, NSW Greens;
Rose Jackson, Secretary, NSW Left, ALP;

July 10
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?*;

July 24
ASIO – DIRTY SECRETS: OUR ASIO FILES
Meredith Burgmann, Dr, former President, NSW Legislative Council;
David McKnight, Dr, Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW;

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"Creative chaos" in the Middle East

Julie Levesque

Iraq is once again front page news. And once again the picture that is presented to us in the Western mainstream media is a mixture of half truths, falsehoods, disinformation and propaganda. The mainstream media will not tell you that the US is supporting both sides in the Iraqi conflict. Washington is overtly supporting the Iraqi Shiite government, while covertly training, arming and funding the Sunni Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Supporting the influx of the terrorist brigades in Iraq is an act of foreign aggression. But the mainstream media will tell you that the Obama administration is "concerned" by the actions committed by the terrorists.

The preferred narrative in the US and most Western mainstream media is that the current situation is due to the US "withdrawal" which ended in December 2011 (more than 200 US troops and military advisors remained in Iraq). This portrait of events in which the US withdrawal is to blame for the insurgency does not draw any connection between the US invasion of 2003 and the occupation that ensued. It also ignores the death squads trained by US advisors in Iraq in the wake of the invasion and which are at the heart of the current turmoil.

As usual, the mainstream media does not want us to understand what's going on. Its goal is to shape perceptions and opinions by crafting a view of the world which serves powerful interests. For that matter, they will tell you it's a civil war.

What is unfolding is a process of "constructive chaos", engineered by the West. The destabilisation of Iraq and its fragmentation has been planned long ago and is part of the "Anglo-American-Israeli 'military road map' in the Middle East".

This project, which has been in the planning stages for several years, consists in creating an arc of instability, chaos, and violence extending from Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria to Iraq, the Persian Gulf, Iran, and the borders of NATO-garrisoned Afghanistan.

The "New Middle East" project was introduced publicly by Washington and Tel Aviv with the expectation that Lebanon would be the pressure point for realigning the whole Middle East and thereby unleashing the

forces of "constructive chaos". This "constructive chaos" – which generates conditions of violence and warfare throughout the region – would in turn be used so that the United States, Britain, and Israel could redraw the map of the Middle East in accordance with their geo-strategic needs and objectives as in the excerpt from an article (Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, "Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The Project for a 'New Middle East'", November 2006).

"Mediterranean shores of Lebanon and Syria to Anatolia (Asia Minor), Arabia, the Persian Gulf, and the Iranian Plateau responds to broad economic, strategic and military objectives, which are part of a long-standing Anglo-American and Israeli agenda in the region.

"A wider war in the Middle East could result in redrawn borders that are strategically advantageous to Anglo-American interests and Israel.

"Attempts at intentionally creating animosity between the different ethno-cultural and religious groups of the Middle East have been systematic. In fact, they are part of a carefully designed covert intelligence agenda.

"Even more ominous, many Middle Eastern governments, such as that of Saudi Arabia, are assisting Washington in fomenting divisions between Middle Eastern populations. The ultimate objective is to weaken the resistance movement against foreign occupation through a 'divide and conquer strategy' which serves Anglo-American and Israeli interests in the broader region."

Although the divide and conquer strategy is not new, it still works thanks to the media smoke screens and mirrors.

Engineering a civil war is the best way to divide a country into several territories. It worked in the Balkans and it is well documented that ethnic tensions were used and abused in order to destroy Yugoslavia and divide it into seven separate entities.

Today we are clearly witnessing the balkanisation of Iraq with the help of the favourite imperial tool, namely armed militias, referred to as pro-democracy opposition or terrorists depending on the context and the role they have to play in the collective psyche.

Western media and government officials define them not by who they are, but by who they fight against. In



Iraq: What is unfolding is a process of "constructive chaos", engineered by the West.

Syria they constitute a "legitimate opposition, freedom fighters fighting for democracy against a brutal dictatorship", whereas in Iraq, they are "terrorists fighting a democratically elected US-supported government".

"Known and documented, Al-Qaeda affiliated entities have been used by US-NATO in numerous conflicts as 'intelligence assets' since the heyday of the Soviet-Afghan war. In Syria, the Al Nusra and ISIS rebels are the foot-soldiers of the Western military alliance, which oversees and controls the recruitment and training of paramilitary forces.

"The decision was taken by Washington to channel its support (covertly) in favour of a terrorist entity which operates in both Syria and Iraq and which has logistical bases in both countries. The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham's Sunni caliphate project coincides with a long-standing US agenda to carve up both Iraq and Syria into three separate territories: A Sunni Islamist Caliphate, an Arab Shia Republic, and a Republic of Kurdistan.

"Whereas the (US proxy) government in Baghdad purchases advanced weapons systems from the US including F16 fighter jets from Lockheed Martin, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham – which is fighting Iraqi government forces – is supported covertly by Western intelligence. The objective is to engineer a civil war in Iraq, in which both sides are controlled indirectly by US-NATO.

"The scenario is to arm and equip them, on both sides, finance them

with advanced weapons systems and then 'let them fight'...

"Under the banner of a civil war, an undercover war of aggression is being fought which essentially contributes to further destroying an entire country, its institutions, its economy. The undercover operation is part of an intelligence agenda, an engineered process which consists in transforming Iraq into an open territory.

"Meanwhile, public opinion is led to believe that what is at stake is confrontation between Shia and Sunni." (Michel Chossudovsky, "The Engineered Destruction and Political Fragmentation of Iraq. Towards the Creation of a US Sponsored Islamist Caliphate", June 14, 2014)

We knew well before the beginning of the war on terror that Saudi Arabia was a major supporter of Islamic terrorism. But being a staunch US ally Saudi Arabia is the exception to the rule proclaimed by George W Bush after the 9/11 terrorist attacks: "We will make no distinction between those who committed these acts and those who harbour them."

The fact of the matter is they always do make a distinction, especially when it comes to Saudi Arabia. But while its support for terrorism is acknowledged by the mainstream media, the latter ignores that the fact that the US is (indirectly) supporting terrorist entities. In addition, mainstream journalists never address the reason why the US is not reacting to Saudi support for terrorists. The facts are clear: the US is supporting terrorism through allies like Saudi Arabia and Qatar. If those who shape the discourse in the mainstream media fail to connect the dots, it is only because they don't want to.

In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has been serving US interests as well as its own. The US alliance with Saudi Arabia shows the contempt the US actually has for democracy. This alliance alone clearly indicates that the goal of the US invasion of Iraq was not to bring democracy and

freedom to Iraqis. For Saudi Arabia, a democratic Iraq would be a nightmare and a threat to its repressive monarchic rule:

"Ever since the overthrow of Saddam's regime in 2003, the Saudi regime has been emphatically hostile towards Iraq. This has been largely due to its deeply entrenched fear that the success of democracy in Iraq would undoubtedly inspire its own people. Another reason is the deeply rooted hatred – by Saudi Arabia's extremist Wahhabi Salafi religious establishment – towards the Shia.

"The Saudi regime also accuses Maliki, of giving Iran a freehand to dramatically intensify its influence in Iraq. The Saudi regime has made no secret that its overriding priority is to severely undermine what it perceives as highly perilous and yet growing Iranian influence.

"Even though the Saudi regime vehemently opposed US pull out from Iraq, nevertheless in December 2011, Syria rather than Iraq became Saudi Arabia's principal target for regime change. The Saudi regime has consistently considered the Syrian regime of Bashar Al Assad, an irreplaceable strategic ally to its primary foe Iran. The Saudis moved swiftly to shore up the armed insurgents by deploying its intelligence services, whose instrumental role in establishing Jabhat Al Nusra JN was highlighted in an intelligence review released in Paris in January 2013.

"The Saudi regime also used its huge influence and leverage on not only Sunni tribal leaders in western Iraq, but also on Saudi members of AQI, convincing it that its principal battlefield must be Syria and that its ultimate goal should be deposing Bashar Al Assad's Alawite regime, since its overthrow would break the back-bone of the Iraqi Shia-led government and inevitably loosen Iran's grip on Iraq." (Zayd Alisa, "Resurgence of Al Qaeda in Iraq, Fuelled by Saudi Arabia", March 3, 2014)

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In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has been serving US interests as well as its own. The US alliance with Saudi Arabia shows the contempt the US actually has for democracy.



Communist Party of Australia

Guardian

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

Central Committee:

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

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

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

Newcastle Branch:
newcastle@cpa.org.au

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

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

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

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

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

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