



Abbott's days numbered

Anna Pha

PM Tony Abbott has little credibility left with the public and within Liberal and National Party ranks as Coalition MPs and Senators fear the electoral backlash to his broken promises and regressive policies. Divisions within Coalition ranks are deepening. Business leaders are expressing disappointment with the government's lack of consultation and failure to move faster with their agenda. Abbott's lack of consultation is so bad that Liberal MPs now jokingly ask the media what the government's co-payment policy is. The budget is in tatters, but still the PM remains intransigent. Labor's victory and the success of the Greens in the Victorian state elections on November 29 and Senator Jacqui Lambie's defection from the Palmer United Party have added to Abbott's woes.

Broken promises

Remember all those promises on the eve of the federal elections in September 2013 countering concerns in people's minds:

** No cuts to education*

In the May budget the Abbott government announced cuts of \$80 billion to health and education over next decade, including \$5 billion (20%) cut to university funding and deregulation of uni fees and schools funding. Courses could cost \$100,000 or more. Higher interest rates on the student loan system and a lower threshold before repayments begin are before the Senate this week.

** No cuts to health*

Budget measures to introduce a Medicare co-payment of \$7 and a reduction in the GP rebate if doctors do not accept \$7 co-payment. Abbott shelved this legislation until 2015, following the threat of Liberal-National Party Senator Ian Macdonald to cross the floor and vote against it. Every vote in the Senate is critical. Confusion reigns over whether the bill will be watered down, with contradictory statements from the PM's office and the PM, Treasurer and Health Minister.

** No public servants will be forced into redundancy*

Thousands of public servants are being sacked, most involuntarily.

** No cuts to the ABC or SBS*

Almost \$500 million is being cut, programs



taken off air, regional studios closed and hundreds of staff sacked (see page 3).

** No changes to pensions*

Budget measures to link pension increases to CPI instead of wages growth, meaning they will fall further behind community standards. Increase of the pension age to 70 from 2035.

** No adverse changes to superannuation*

Delaying incremental increases in superannuation guarantee levy (to 12%), which will resume in 2021, costing workers thousands of dollars on retirement.

** The Coalition will continue the current level of funding expended on Closing the Gap activities*

May 2014 budget cuts \$500 million in Indigenous affairs through the consolidation of 150 programs.

The above are just a few of the lies. In addition there have been numerous other cuts, repressive legislation removing democratic

rights, the Royal Commission witch hunt into trade unions and the brutal treatment of asylum seekers adding to the government's unpopularity. The government *did* keep its promises in relation to dismantling measures to address climate change!

"Verbal gymnastics"

The litany of broken promises was bad enough. Treating the public as complete idiots by claiming a "no cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, ... and no cuts to the ABC or SBS" promise on the eve of the federal elections was outright insulting. Whatever remaining credibility Abbott had within Coalition ranks and amongst the public took a hammering.

One disgusted backbencher described his refusal to acknowledge the broken promises as "verbal gymnastics".

Government ministers are having trouble

trying to sell the policies. A number of National Party MPs and Senators, in particular, are very concerned about some of the cuts which will hit rural areas hard. The recently signed free trade agreements with Japan, Korea and China are not at all to their liking. For example, the FTA with Japan offered no benefits for Australian dairy, rice, sugar and pork producers.


Senate woes

The Coalition have 33 Senators and 39 votes are required to pass legislation. If they have the support of Labor's 25 or Greens 10 Senators, the legislation goes through. Otherwise they need six of the eight smaller party/Independent Senators. They have been able to get a number of bills through the Senate, including the draconian terror laws with Labor's support. Labor also supported the Coalition's \$400 million cuts to student welfare.

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Guardian

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Australia's sinking manufacturing future

Defence Minister David Johnston's comment last week that he wouldn't trust the Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC) "to build a canoe" certainly lit a fire under a number of debates going on as Australia continues to de-industrialise. He later made a carefully crafted apology for the "rhetorical flourish" but pleaded provocation. The ASC's Air Warfare Destroyer project is reported to be \$350 million over budget and two years behind schedule.

The "apology" did not dampen disquiet about the objectivity of the tendering process for a new generation of submarines to replace the ageing Collins Class fleet. Early favourite for the replacement, the Japanese-built Soryu class sub, is claimed to cost half the amount of an Australian designed and built project. In this era of austerity and the end of the "age of entitlement", the figures are scandalous. The Japanese submarine could cost slightly less than \$20 billion; the Australian one around \$36 billion. Other competitors are entering the bidding.

Government and opposition spokespersons have rushed to insist a fleet of new, long-range submarines is essential for Australia's defence, given that our neighbours are getting richer and likely to spend their new-found wealth on high-tech military equipment. Every part of this argument is bogus. The truth is that the Commonwealth's high level of military spending – roughly \$85 million a day – is due to successive governments' commitment to the US to relieve it of some of the economic burden of maintaining its grip on the region. The "Pivot" or "Rebalancing" of the US to the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions is being carried out to contain the growing influence of the People's Republic of China, which doesn't have a single foreign military base.

The defence minister's behaviour over the submarine contract reveals a lot about the federal government's vision for the future of the country. The Liberal Party used to champion the sorts of manufacturing capital attracted to Australia by high tariff walls and import quotas. Those mechanisms protected transnationals' profits. This was feasible given the relatively undeveloped nature of infrastructure in low-wage centres at the time. Plant can now move more easily to follow low costs and even higher profits so political players like the Liberals have turned sour on local industries. Make no mistake, they are loyal to the international capitalist class, not Australian jobs.

Holden, Ford and Toyota will all cease production in Australia by 2017. The knock-on effect in manufacturing will be massive. Skills needed to maintain a manufacturing base and underpin our sovereignty will no longer be needed and will disappear. Once they go, the process of re-establishing them is hard to imagine. Job prospects for whole regions will suffer a hefty blow.

Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane once told the Sydney Institute that Australia is embarking on a "third wave" of economic development. The first was based on farming and agriculture, the second on heavy manufacturing and consumer goods and the third will be ushered in with the decline of the car industry. It is claimed the new wave will feature industries based on innovation, research and a high-skilled workforce. "Australia must move decisively to focus on the industries of the future," Mr Macfarlane said.

Until recently, this was presumed to include military industries – industries where issues of national security would override the otherwise dominant neo-liberal "logic" of manufacturing in the lowest cost environment possible. That notion seems to have been thrown overboard, too. It appears that 2,000 jobs are at risk on the new Air Warfare Destroyer project. The South Australian government has proposed privatising the ASC in a submission to the Commonwealth's Defence White Paper in a desperate but misguided move to keep much-needed, decently paid jobs in the state. UK weapons giant BAE might be interested, it is said.

Unfortunately for Australian workers dependent on this chaotic economic system for jobs, the Coalition doesn't have a plan "B" for the Australian economy. It and its predecessors have avoided investment in industries of the future, such as in renewable energy and public transport infrastructure as much as possible and relied heavily on the mining sector. Extractive industries are capital but not labour intensive. Governments of the sort that have overseen the decline of Australian manufacturing need to be shown the door and replaced by one loyal to the interests of the Australian people. That would be the beginning of a genuine "new wave" for the economy.

PRESS FUND

In view of the government's savage funding cuts to ABC and SBS, tweeters have been thinking up new names for ABC TV programs, including "Three Corners", "Spick and Speck" and "Soup Kitchen Cabinet"! But the funding cuts are no laughing matter, because the future of these priceless national institutions is now under serious threat. We're covering the story as it evolves, and backing the ABC and its supporters in their campaign to defeat the government's very nasty plans for the two organisations. If you like our coverage of the issue and want to help, you could send us a contribution for the Press Fund, which helps us cover our operating costs. Many thanks to those who did so this week, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$19, Max Cordwell \$200, Silvia \$41, Semaphore Workers Club Guardian Tin \$213

This week's total: \$478 Progressive total: \$8,268

Govt is too negative – Dodson

Yawuru man Mick Dodson has called on the Abbott government to stop contributing to the negative discourse about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In a question-and-answer session following an address to the National Press Club in Canberra last month, Professor Dodson said the constant negativity from the government and mainstream media was making Indigenous people sick.

"The concerns that are parroted like a mantra from the Prime Minister and others in the government are: protect kids – and that's good, we all want to protect kids, that's a given – safe communities – of course we want safe communities – and jobs," he said.

"It's a three-piece mantra, as if we don't have social and cultural needs, as if we don't have linguistic needs, as if we don't exist as a people.

"It's a three-trick pony, and a very small pony at that.

"And all of three things are about our failure, supposedly, because we're Aboriginal."

"Makes people sick"

"The negativity actually makes people sick. If you're constantly told: 'You're a useless black and we're going to fix you', it makes you sick. We need more of the positive narrative out there."

Professor Dodson delivered a

positive narrative, speaking about the important roles of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), particularly in storing important archival materials.

He made the case for investing in a spectacular new building for AIATSIS, similar to the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC.

"Long after each of us in this room have passed on, what we leave our children, and their children, in fact what we leave as our contribution to the Australian nation, will be measured by the legacy we build, or fail to build, now," Professor Dodson said.

"As a nation we must now gather and cherish these materials, before it is too late. So where to from here? With goodwill, intelligent design and funding, there's no reason why the institute and the Australian nation cannot do much, much better.

"What is needed, and here I agree with Noel Pearson, is a plan. A Before It's Too Late Mark III plan. A comprehensive and urgent plan to identify, gather, safe-keep and share, the Indigenous heritage of this nation.

"To that end, I am moving to create the BITL Mk3 Steering Group – a small group which will include notable Australians both Indigenous and non-Indigenous that we can call upon to help put the meat on the bones of this plan."

Professor Dodson said to live up

to his self-appointed title of the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Abbott should stop talking negatively and capitalising on the "entertainment of black failure".

"Cheer squad"

"It's not just the white folks saying it. Some of our own prominent individuals are joining in like a cheer squad," he said. "The reality is many, many of us are very successful."

Professor Dodson pointed to the success of the Indigenous Governance Awards (as featured in the *Koori Mail*, November 5 pages 1, 18, 19 and 24) as an example of a positive story that was ignored by the mainstream.

He said that while he was broadly supportive of recognising Indigenous people in the Constitution, he didn't think the current political climate was conducive to reconciliation.

"There's a lot of undoing being done, sadly," Professor Dodson said. "I think the present government is picking fights on a number of fronts.

"I'm very concerned that on the one hand the Prime Minister says he's going to be the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs, but on the other some important things that have been put in place over the years are being attacked deliberately.

"The attacks on the Northern Territory Land Rights Act are disturbing, because it's the pillar. If it's weakened, the rest falls."

Koori Mail ☘

Abbott's days numbered

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The Palmer United Party (PUP) with its three Senators proved very amenable to doing deals and supporting a number of bills such as the repeal of Labor's taxes on carbon and mining companies, which also appear to be of direct benefit to the billionaire miner.

But divisions within PUP's ranks have created problems for Abbott. Jacqui Lambie, a former member of Australia's defence forces (ADF) strongly opposed the government's plans to limit a pay "rise" for defence personnel to 1.5 percent, in effect a real reduction in their income, and remove some of their allowances and leave provisions.

Lambie dug her heels in, saying she would not support any Abbott legislation until the increase was doubled and all benefits restored. Abbott resisted but last Monday after saying "last week was a ragged week for the government", he restored allowances but still hung out on 1.5 percent pay rise.

In the process Lambie and mining magnate PUP leader and MP Clive Palmer had a very public falling-out. Lambie resigned from PUP, meaning PUP can only guarantee two Senate votes in any deal – a big blow to Abbott.

While votes in the Senate are hanging on a knife edge, the House of Reps has become a circus, with Speaker Browyn Bishop ejecting a record number of MPs – 285 Labor to four Coalition during Question Time. Parliamentary procedures and democratic processes, as limited as they are, are treated with utter contempt.

Economic woes

Abbott and Treasurer Joe Hockey face other problems in relation to the economy. Taxation income from company profits will be lower than predicted because of low commodity prices on major exports. Likewise, sacking tens of thousands of public and private sector workers will hit the amount of personal income taxation paid. Both developments will hit the budget deficit.

The economy is not booming to say the least, and the government is doing nothing to create jobs. It is a job destroyer. There is a housing boom, in part fuelled by overseas investors and a shortage of housing. Public housing is being dismantled at a time when more is required. Rents and mortgages are eating into incomes and reducing consumption of goods and services, a recession in the making.

More and more people are hurting and the government is making more cuts – the main target being the most disadvantaged and the least well off.

Big business

Abbott has appealed to big business to do more to back him to

sell his (meaning their) policies. He seems to believe Murdoch media's propaganda that it is the marketing, not the policies behind the government's unpopularity.

But business leaders are not happy with the government's performance. They had expected much faster progress with deregulation, company tax cuts and union-busting legislation.

The Greens, Labor and cross-bench Senators blocked the Coalition's attempt to repeal Labor's Future of Financial Advice laws (FoFA). Amongst other things, FoFA requires financial advisers to put the interests of clients before those of the adviser or financial institutions. Apparently that was too much to wear for an industry managing billions of dollars of workers' investments!

Now they must be even more concerned with the deepening divisions within government ranks and the strong opposition within the community. Unfortunately Labor is not making the most of the situation, failing to put forward alternative policies in the interests of people. That role has been left to the Greens, who have performed well in both Houses.

The defeat of the Coalition in Victoria is both a vote against the policies of the state and federal governments. The final blow may well have been the announcement of the massive cuts to the ABC on the eve of the Victorian elections.

Watch this space as they say, especially closer to the next federal election. ☘

Write a letter
to the Editor

Fury over ABC response to cuts

Peter Mac

When the Abbott government cut five-year funding for the ABC by 5.0 percent and the SBS by 3.7 percent in the May budget it seems to have believed the ABC would respond by making savings on real estate and “back room” services, and by abandoning digital broadcasting, the giant media form of the future.

Instead, ABC managing director Mark Scott announced it would remain in digital broadcasting, and absorb the cuts by terminating or shrinking certain radio and TV programs, closing some of its offices, and retrenching 500 ABC staff members.

Some staff reductions would probably have happened eventually anyway, because of the long term technological transfer to digital broadcasting. However, the government’s ruthless funding cuts forced ABC management to retrench staff immediately rather than relying on natural attrition over time.

made it extremely popular. In contrast, other media forms, particularly the print media, are suffering from falling circulation and revenues, and the only way for media corporations to remain profitable is to enhance their digital presence.

But the ABC is heavily involved in digital broadcasting and the commercial broadcasters have to charge digital viewers a fee, whereas ABC broadcasts are free. The “solution”, according to them, is for the ABC to quit digital broadcasting altogether.

A second reason for the protests lies in the political power of digital broadcasting.

Last week the *Financial Review* commented: “When the ABC was created ... technologies were in their infancy, and there was and is a case for a national radio and television service to fill in the gaps. That case does not exist in the 21st century digital world. There is no market failure when big commercial news organisations are beating the daylight out of each other to provide massive digital news coverage.”



Photo: Jo Di Pietro

digital operations. However, other cabinet members have maintained a discrete silence on the issue, and last week Liberal MP Anne Ruston demanded that Scott stop “running around chasing new platforms that have been extraordinarily well-covered by commercial operators”.

Thieves fall out

Other Coalition members have questioned why Australia needs a national broadcaster at all. James Paterson from the government’s think-tank, the very right-wing Institute for Public Affairs declared: “Though the Abbott government’s attempts are laudable they ... leave wider questions unresolved, such as whether it would be viable as a privatised operation.”

Two weeks ago former Liberal prime minister Malcolm Fraser warned: “Forced cuts from the ABC and SBS [are] part of a whole ideological approach which, to me, is to ultimately get rid of public broadcasting. The government does not believe in government activity. They’re not prepared to say so straight out in relation to the ABC and SBS because both are too popular.”

But the good news is that they are, indeed, very popular. Nationwide rallies in support of the ABC

have been very well attended, and now government MPs are beginning to panic at rising public anger over the cuts.

Some media commentators and Coalition MPs have accused the ABC of cutting programs and closing local offices in order to embarrass the government, and Turnbull has revived the nonsensical claim that the ABC is being run by a workers’ collective!

Breaking ranks and determined to protect his patch, Education Minister Christopher Pyne is promoting his online petition for maintenance of the ABC’s Adelaide production studios, and National Party Senator Bridget McKenzie has demanded the preservation of all ABC rural and regional radio services.

Last week Finance Minister Mathias Cormann denied that Abbott had lied when he made his pre-election promise to maintain ABC funding. Cormann declared: “We are not making cuts. What we are making sure happens with the ABC is ... that it operates as efficiently as possible.” In magnificent Orwellian double-speak Abbott himself described the cuts as “efficiency dividends”.

One coalition MP told Cabinet the government must admit it had indeed imposed a funding cut, but he was met with an icy silence. He

commented: “It was like I’d farted in a lift”. Western Sydney MP Craig Laundy later told cabinet members to cease their “verbal gymnastics” on the issue.

When questioned on ABC TV about Abbott’s broken promise the hapless Turnbull was reduced to near gibberish, blurring out: “I think you’ve got to take his comments, which, look, I mean, what he said, he said and you know, it’s there, it’s on the record.”

Maddened at being forced into a false position he finally snapped: “Well look, if you take the view that Tony Abbott’s remarks the night before the election on SBS trumped and obliterated everything his colleagues had said on this matter, then yes, that promise – if that is a promise – has not been fulfilled.”

The government is now on the defensive, facing fierce public criticism about virtually all its policies. Its popularity is slipping abysmally, and ministerial contradictions over retention of stalled “barnacle” policies have caused it enormous embarrassment.

Meanwhile, new alliances in the Senate are opening up the possibility of an early election. And it can’t come a moment too soon. ☘

Other Coalition members have questioned why Australia needs a national broadcaster at all.

Staff identified for retrenchment may apply for 65 new positions which will be available in the digital area of operations. Scott has been accused of callousness in enforcing staff to undergo the often painful “skills audit” assessment process to determine who is to be retrenched. Nevertheless, the primary responsibility for the abrupt dismissal of ABC staff lies with the government.

Howls of outrage

The ABC’s response to the funding cuts has evoked a storm of protest from the government and the commercial media, for two reasons.

Firstly, digital broadcasting’s convenience and economy have

But the ABC’s charter obligation is not to fill in media market “gaps”, but rather to provide a nationwide broadcasting service that fearlessly presents an accurate, wide-ranging and well-informed news and current events service independent of commercial or government influence.

Commercial broadcasters loathe the very idea, and right-wing politicians and media barons bitterly resent the previous Labor government’s inclusion of digital broadcasting in the ABC’s charter of operations. They want to force the ABC out, leaving it under their total domination.

Minister for Communications Malcolm Turnbull has denied the government wants the ABC to quit

Pete’s Corner



Sydney

International Food Night

All proceeds to the Port Jackson Branch public housing campaign

Sunday December 7

4-7 pm

Gaelic Club

First Floor, 64 Devonshire Street, Surry Hills

Public housing then and now

Local historian Max Scolling on public housing 1940s onwards
Millers Point community leader Barney Gardner on the fight for public housing today

Entertainment

Folk singers: Margaret Walters and Christina Mimmocchi

Entry \$25 concession \$15

Drinks at bar

RSVP (for catering) by Friday November 28

via peace@mira.net or 0418 668 098

Organised by the Communist Party of Australia Port Jackson Branch

Toro Energy - Energy resource cowboys

Richard Titelius

At the G-20 meeting in Brisbane in early November action on climate change and renewable energy came to the front and centre of global economic, environmental and energy attention. With it came the push to move away from carbon based energy forms and to embrace clean renewable energy - of which nuclear energy has no part to play as it is neither clean nor renewable.

However, no one seems to have told the Board of Directors at Toro Energy Ltd about the diminished role to be played by nuclear energy in the future, when it called its Annual General Meeting on November 27 in the QV1 Building on St Georges Terrace in Perth, waving the flag for its uranium mines near Wiluna in north east Western Australia.

A protest organised by the Conservation Council of WA and Western Australian Nuclear Free Alliance for the morning of the AGM ensured that investors and potential investors of uranium exploration and mining would have access to an alternative point of view about uranium and nuclear energy.

Kylie Fitzwater, who helped to organise the protest, also attended the AGM itself and addressed the meeting, together with Ngaanyatjarra Elder Glen Cooke who also opposes the Toro Energy uranium mining project in the Lake Maitland and Lake Way area situated within 13 kms of the town of Wiluna.

Though Kylie Fitzwater and Glen Cooke were not in attendance

at the meeting as the Native Title claimants of the area, they were there to represent the interests of their people in the surrounding area. The Elder Mr Cooke is from the Western Desert (to the east of Wiluna) and was eight years old when he saw Aboriginal people with severe nuclear radiation sickness come into his area after the Maralinga blasts from 1956 to 1963.

The managing director of Toro Energy, Vanessa Guthrie, briefly spoke to the media and with the organisers of the protest before proceeding to the AGM in an effort to ease the community concerns over the risks of uranium mining. Toro Energy Ltd's website also obscures the environmentally unsustainable activities from its shareholders, governments and the community about the harm which uranium mining can cause to people, economies and the environment.

Kylie asked whether Toro had put aside the bond of 100 percent of the cleanup cost of the mine (stipulated by the WA Department of Mines and Petroleum) to which Vanessa Guthrie replied that as they had not received final federal environmental approval, that it would be premature.

Kylie also addressed the meeting on the extreme weather which the Wiluna area is subjected to from temperatures, floods and winds which would cause radioactive material from the mine tailings to "blow and flow around the landscape" for thousands of years.

Projections of water use by the mine have revealed that the operation would run out of water after



seven years which is about half the life of the project and would render the remaining water saltier than it already is.

Kylie added that the World Bank, which was represented at the recent G-20 in Brisbane, is now focused on clean energy and nuclear energy is neither clean nor renewable.

"Toro Energy is a small and inexperienced company who are overly optimistic about a revival of the nuclear industry," added

Conservation Council of WA Nuclear Free Campaigner, Mia Pepper. This highlights that even after a brief spike in the uranium ore price above \$45 per pound following the Australia-India Civil Nuclear Co-Op Agreement, the Uranium Spot Price and Toro Energy share prices are heading south once more.

Nuclear energy is no longer viable as its costs are going up and requires government subsidies to even remain in the running, while the

costs of renewable energy continue to fall. It also makes environmental sense to embrace renewable energy as to do so also means you are taking action on climate change.

The Communist Party of Australia supports the campaign to phase out nuclear energy and to end the mining of uranium on the grounds that it destroys the environment which includes the country of its original Aboriginal custodians. ✪

Pregnant refugees refuse to get off bus in Darwin

Two refugee families flown from Nauru to Darwin last Saturday around 10pm, have refused to get off a bus that was transporting them to Wickham Point detention centre.

One family, Adnan and his wife, Maryam travelled with their 10 year old son, Amir. The other couple, Hossein and his wife, are Kurdish Iranians.

Both women are around eight months pregnant.

Before they left Nauru, the families were told that they would be accommodated in the community in Darwin. But on arrival were told they would be taken to detention at Wickham Point.

The families have told Immigration officers they would rather take the risk and be sent back to Nauru than spend one night in detention. Both families endured around 15 months in detention on Nauru and have been living "freely" on Nauru since being found to be refugees.

The families have offered to pay for their own motel accommodation, rather than be sent to detention. "We are calling on the Immigration Department to immediately arrange community accommodation for the families.

There can be no excuse for trying to place them in detention. They could be accommodated in the community in an instant," said Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition.

"They are recognised refugees and should be afforded every protection; leave aside the unnecessary stress and anxiety that is being inflicted on the pregnant women. Adnan has a brother living in Melbourne who is more than willing to support and accommodate them.

"This is just one more example of the cruelty and bureaucratic madness of [Immigration Minister] Morrison's refugee policy."

Nauru will not permanently settle refugees. People on Nauru found to be refugees are being issued only with a one year visa.

Recently, Nauruan refugees have been the subject of violent vigilante attacks. One refugee, Merhzad, has been blinded in one eye as a result of a vigilante attack a few weeks ago and is still waiting to be properly treated.

"Merhzad and his family should have been brought to Australia along with the families of the two pregnant women. The treatment of all the asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru has recently drawn

international condemnation from the UN Committee on Torture."

Meanwhile, Scott Morrison continues to use the simplistic slogan "Stop the Boats" to add new layers of cruelty and abuse to men, women and children who have a legal right to seek asylum in our country. He is now attempting to use Parliament to give him unprecedented powers that can be exercised without Parliamentary, or judicial scrutiny.

If passed, the Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014 will empower Scott Morrison to:

- stop boats at sea, to detain them and take people anywhere, anytime he chooses, and to do so in complete secrecy and irrespective of the international obligations and domestic laws of other countries. Nothing is to be published. The High Court will be prevented from deciding the legality of the "turn back policy"; something presently before the High Court. The only condition is that actions taken will be in the "national interest" which the Minister alone will decide. This is tantamount to piracy and a version of people trafficking.

- deny asylum seekers natural justice in determining any claim for asylum. The department will arbitrarily determine claims for asylum by enforcing the Minister's guidelines to "fast track" claims, with no right of appeal to an independent tribunal. This measure will enshrine administrative "screening out", meaning asylum seekers will not even be allowed to make a protection application. It would directly violate non-refoulement obligations and dramatically increase the risks that asylum seekers would be returned to danger.
- render stateless children born to asylum seekers in Australia and potentially condemn them to indefinite detention.
- cap numbers of protection visas issued thereby subverting recent Senate and High Court decisions insisting that asylum seekers found to be refugees are entitled to permanent protection.
- require asylum seekers to "modify behaviour" to avoid persecution when being returned to their own country. This is one measure among many others designed to circumvent recent court decisions and restrict

refugee rights. Such a measure could mean that Christians or gay asylum seekers, for example, could be returned to danger. It could mean gays being expected to hide their sexual orientation or Christians hiding their faith or face persecution and punishment for apostasy. The purpose of the refugee convention will be undermined and Australia will be complicit with the actions of repressive regimes.

The Refugee Action Coalition broadly supports the dissenting reports regarding the Bill by the Senate "Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee".

"We condemn the recommendation that the Bill be passed," said Ian Rintoul. "All Senators should beware of blindly accepting reassurances from Morrison's department, and take note of the wide ranging criticism regarding the Bill's elimination of fundamental rights.

"If passed into law, the Bill will entrench the secrecy that surrounds Morrison and the Immigration Department and give Morrison unbridled authoritarian power over the lives of people who need, and have a right to, protection."

Stop the Bill; Stop Scott Morrison! ✪

Vale Alan Miller

November 1, 1928 – November 27, 2014

Alan Miller was a member of the Communist Party for almost 70 years. In that time he served as a functionary of the Party, its Deputy General Secretary, a member of its Central Committee Executive, the editor of its national newspaper, the *Guardian* and took on leading roles in the Victorian and South Australian organisations of the Party. He played a major part in re-establishing a Party in Australia on the basis of Marxism-Leninism in 1971. The CPA's debt to comrade Alan is enormous. He passed away last Thursday after a long battle with cancer. The following is a short biography of comrade Alan written by his friend and fellow battler for social justice, Les Purkis.

Alan Charles Miller was born in North Adelaide on November 1, 1928. He was a member of the young Communist organisation, which was the Eureka Youth League (EYL) founded in December 1941. He joined the EYL in 1942 and in December 1945 he joined the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). He was 17 years of age and, although the age of joining was officially 18, he was given permission to become a member on the basis of his political activity.



Alan and Beryl.

Soon after joining the Party he became a journalist on *The South Australian Tribune*, the CPA's State newspaper. He worked on the paper for five years until it was replaced by the Party's national newspaper *The Tribune* produced in Sydney.

It was necessary for him to get a job in industry. However, he was sacked by a leading metal factory because he was a Communist. He eventually worked at the Islington Railway Workshops where he was elected Secretary of the Islington Branch of the Party and a member of the union's Shop Committee.

In 1961 he became a functionary of the CPA and was elected a member of the SA State Committee Executive and Adelaide District Committee Secretary.

In 1971, he was a foundation member of the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA). The SPA was formed in order to continue a Marxist Leninist organisation in Australia. It was the SPA's estimation that the Communist Party had abandoned the fundamentals of Marxism Leninism. Leading up to the formation of the SPA, along with Party Comrades Peter Symon and Joe Goss, Alan Miller contributed to the first ideological document exposing the CPA's position. Joe Goss was

Secretary of the Adelaide branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. Peter Symon was a waterside worker and when the SPA was formed he became General Secretary. Alan was elected SA Secretary and a member of the Central Committee Executive. He was also appointed Editor of the Party's national newspaper which was then called *SPA* and published in Adelaide.

In 1978 he moved to Sydney to work for the Central Committee. In this period he was elected Deputy General Secretary and, later was again appointed Editor of the SPA's national newspaper which was then called *The Guardian* and published in Sydney.

In 1985 he moved to Melbourne to work for the Party. He was elected Victorian Secretary until health problems forced him to give up full-time work. In 1991 he returned to his home city of Adelaide where he continued to be active in a suburban Branch.

He was a member of the SPA Congress held in Sydney in October 1996 which adopted the name Communist Party of Australia as the old CPA had dissolved itself.

During his political life, he represented the Australian Communist Movement at Party Congresses, theoretical gatherings and discussions with Party leaderships in France, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, the Soviet Union, Mongolia, the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and New Zealand.

Alan considered Joseph Stalin an outstanding Communist and was never tired of pointing out that those who attacked Stalin were the very people who brought back capitalism in the Soviet Union.

In addition to his political writings, Alan wrote short stories, poems and sketches. He published a book of short stories. His stories and poems appeared in various journals and his sketches were performed. He also acted in plays performed by left-wing theatre companies. He won the Senior Cup for athletics at the Adelaide Technical High School and later was a member of



Alan Miller.

Alan held the view that a life well spent in the cause to advance society free of exploitation, in a word, Communism, was sufficient to be happy.

the Western Districts Athletics Club. He took part in the 400 metres South Australian State Championship running race. He reached the final and out of six runners came fourth. He played Australian Rules football for North Adelaide Senior Colts. He was a lifelong supporter of the North Adelaide football team in the South Australian National Football League.

Alan suffered from a mental illness known as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). However, this never stopped him from doing the things he wanted to do. He took comfort from the fact that the great English novelist Charles Dickens had OCD.

Alan was deeply in love and admired his Party comrade and wife, Beryl. She played a leading role in restoring and building the Communist Party of Australia. She was a Party member almost as long as Alan. Not only was she an outstanding Communist but the way she looked after Alan during his long illness was truly an example of loyalty and sacrifice.

Beryl's daughter, Diane and her sons, Peter and Paul from her first marriage and Alan's son, Ralph from his first marriage truly formed a strong family unit.

Alan's father, Arthur, worked for the PMG all his life. He was politely spoken well respected by all who knew him. He fought in the First World War including at Gallipoli. His experiences in the war led him to examine the capitalist cause of war and the socialist solution. He joined the Communist Party and was influential in his sons, Alan

and Alan's older brother Frank joining. Frank joined while he was in the Navy. The boys' mother Amy generously donated finance to the Party. Arthur and Amy were a loving couple and truly popular.

With Beryl's children it was Peter who joined the Communist Party. His contribution as a Party member was most valuable and consistent. Peter was a wonderful family man and deeply loved by his wife Merridy and daughters Heather and Fiona and widely respected by all who knew him. In a tragic turn of events at 48 he died of melanoma.

Alan made many close friendships in his life, none closer than that with John Young. It began at Prospect Primary School. In the school band Johnny played the kettle drum and Alan the big drum. The friendship lasted a lifetime. Johnny and his wife Val and Beryl and Alan continued the friendship spending some marvellous times together until John and Val died. Other outstanding friendships were with Les and Connie Purkis, Marcia Munn, Pat Flintoff and Colin Slocombe.

Alan held the view that a life well spent in the cause to advance society free of exploitation, in a word, Communism, was sufficient to be happy. Alan sought no reward or honour. He held that having done the job was its own reward.

It can be truthfully said that though he argued strongly for his political opinion he always avoided personal attack.

And in honour of Alan I must mention his love of cats and dry red wine. ☺

Successful Party School

One of the things that distinguish Communist Parties from social democrat and conservative parties is the importance placed on education, in particular the study of Marxist-Leninist theory and its application to the struggle for change. As Lenin said, "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement."

There are many different ways in which party education can be carried out. These include classes, discussion groups, private study, online courses and mentoring. Communist Party Branches are required to hold regular study classes and members are encouraged to read between classes.

This year the Central Committee resumed the holding of National Schools. The first was held in July and deemed by its students to be

highly successful, with requests for more such schools.

The CPA held another successful National School at the Party's headquarters over the weekend of November 22-23. It was aimed towards newer members and comrades seeking to revise and extend their knowledge. Tutors Anna Pha and Party General Secretary Bob Britton divided the sessions between the more theoretical and practical topics.

On Saturday, the themes were privatisation and superannuation in the morning and leaflet production in the afternoon. On Sunday, class struggle and the trade unions were covered in the morning followed by the basics of running a Party Branch.

Participation and group work were emphasised. Knowledge-

sharing from the diverse group of comrades was a notable feature.

Feedback was very positive. Some mentioned feeling inspired to tackle projects using their newly-acquired knowledge. A problem discovered through practice is that the course objectives were a bit ambitious. Separate sessions on some aspects, such as superannuation, could be considered in future.

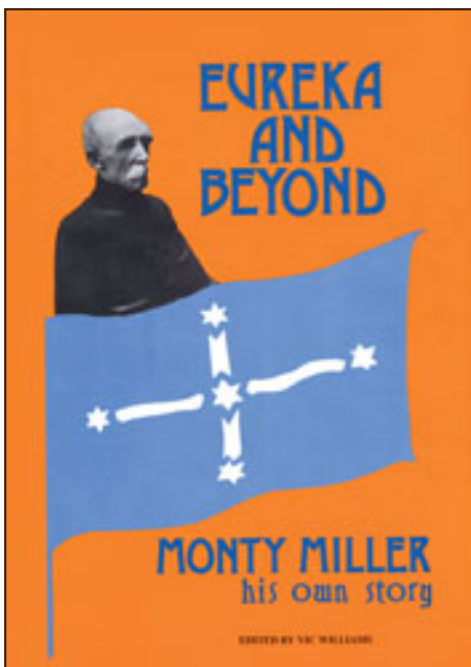
The success of the School builds on the experience of the National School held in July. We thank comrades for their feedback which will be used when planning future schools.

Two Schools are scheduled for 2015 – one on the weekend of May 16-17 and the other on September 12-13. Details for enrolment will be circulated to Branch Secretaries. ☺

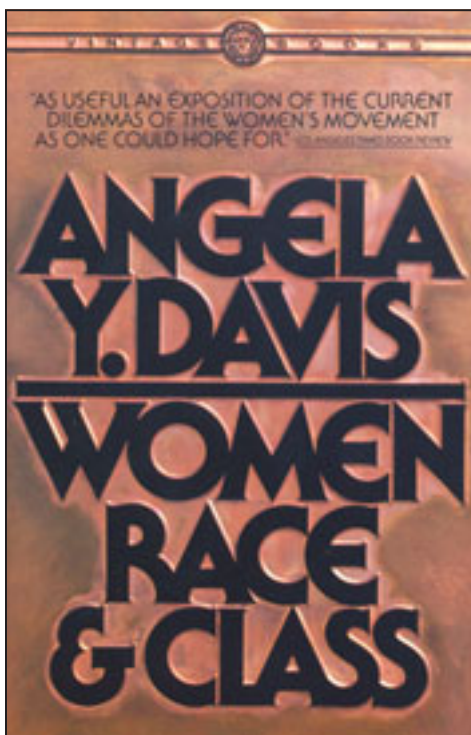
Summer reading and gift id



The Peace Arch Concerts
CD Paul Robeson, \$20 (incl postage)



Eureka and Beyond: Monty Miller - his own story, Ed Vic Williams, paper back, 110 pages, \$21 (incl postage)



Women, Race & Class, Angela Davis, Vintage Books, 1983, paper back 271 pages, \$28 (incl postage)



Voices from Prison: The Cuban Five, Ed Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder, 2014, paper back 84 pages, \$15 (incl postage)

Looking for some gift ideas or just thinking about catching up with some reading when the *Guardian* takes a break? Then why not shop where your money counts, rather than line the coffers of the multinationals! The Communist Party of Australia has a range of T-shirts, DVDs and books, including Marxist-Leninist classics, working class struggles, women's issues and cultural works.

The Communist Party Of Australia has some great new books on Cuba. Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Geurrero, Fenando González and René González, known as the Cuban Five, were framed and imprisoned in the US more than 16 years ago for the "crime" of gathering information for the Cuban government on the plans of murderous terrorists planning attacks on Cuba and in the USA.

Voices from Prison: The Cuban Five contains interviews (including the partner of Ramón), articles, poems, paintings, photographs and speeches which provide insight into the lives of these great revolutionary fighters. There are also tributes by fellow inmates whose lives were transformed by friendship with one or another of the Five during their time together in prison.

"*I will die the way I've lived*" contains a series of 15 watercolours by Antonio Guerrero for 15 years of imprisonment, with some very informative accompanying text by Antonio, Gerardo and Ramón. "The United States, with more than 2.2 million men and women behind bars today, has the highest incarceration rate of any state in the world. That system of capitalist 'justice', organised to dehumanise and break

both inmates and their families, is portrayed in these works," Mary-Alice Waters says in her introduction to the paintings and the Cuban Five. It would make a great present.

Between 1975 and 1991, some 425,000 Cubans volunteered for duty in Angola in response to requests from the Angolan government to help defend the newly independent country against multiple attacks by the US-backed South African regime. The Cubans played a critical role in securing Namibia's independence and in seriously weakening the apartheid regime in South Africa and deepening the revolutionary struggle in South Africa.

"Those not willing to fight for the freedom of others will never be able to fight for their own": Fidel Castro, July 1976. *Cuba & Angola: Fighting for Africa's Freedom and Our Own*, contains contributions written between 1978 and 2013 by a variety of authors including Ernesto Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Nelson Mandela, Gabriel García Márquez and interviews with four Cuban Generals. They cover Cuba and Africa, including the Missile Crisis and Operation Carlota. A very interesting read.

Women in Cuba: The making of a revolution within the revolution is not a book about women per se, but about the Cuban Revolution with first hand accounts of two of its leaders – Vilma Espín and Asela de Los Santos. "What strikes the reader more than anything else in Espín's account is the absence of dogma or schemas, the absence of clotted political jargon. There was only one guide: opening the way for the broadest layers of women to become involved – with organisation, effectiveness, and discipline – in ongoing struggles and the

construction of a new social order," Mary-Alice Waters notes in her introduction.

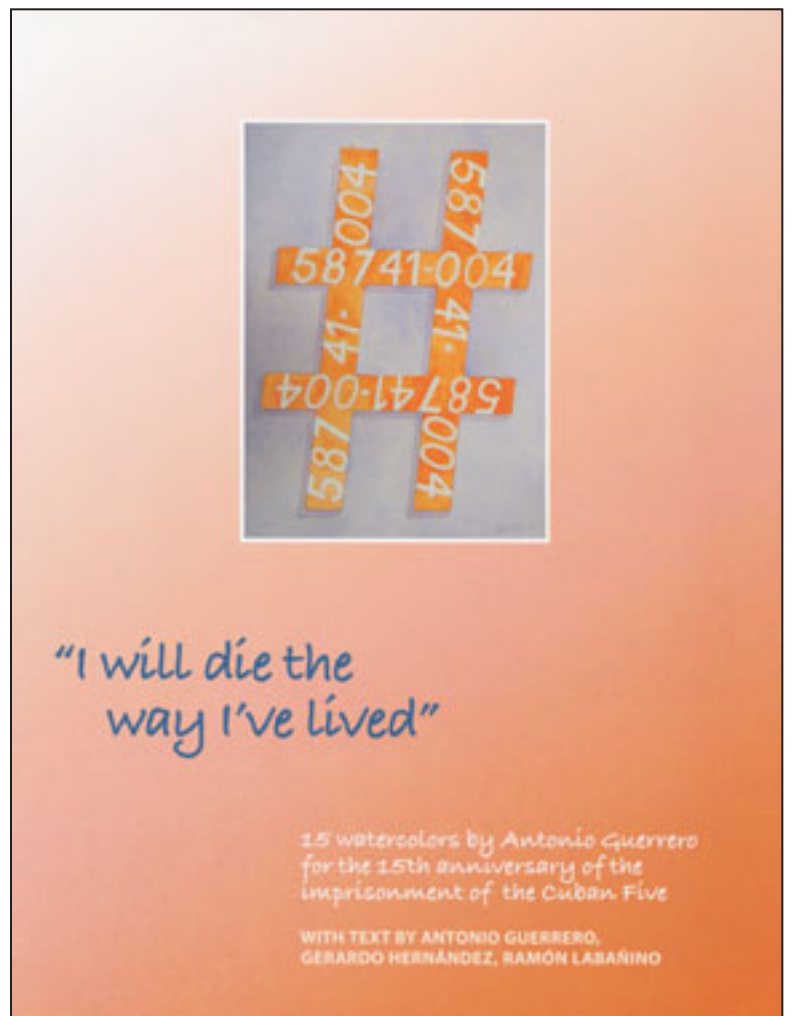
Yolanda Ferrer, a generation younger than the other women, as a 15-year-old took part in the national literacy campaign in 1961, was a founding member of the revolutionary militias, and is now General Secretary of the Federation of Cuban Women and a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee.

Their stories give a rich history of the Revolution, in which men and women played leadership roles and fought courageously along side each other. There are some humorous moments too, such as when Castro explained to a meeting in 1960 fundamental aspects of the Revolution and women's place in it. The integration of women into the workforce was a bit too much from some:

"My wife doesn't need to work," some said. "I'm supporting her." Or "Who will do the cooking?"; "Who will do the cleaning?"; "Who will wash the clothes and care for the children?"

"This was the battle for consciousness of men and women ...," Asela de Los Santos says. A really great read, in particular, for anyone interested in the Revolution, politics, building of socialism, including women's equality.

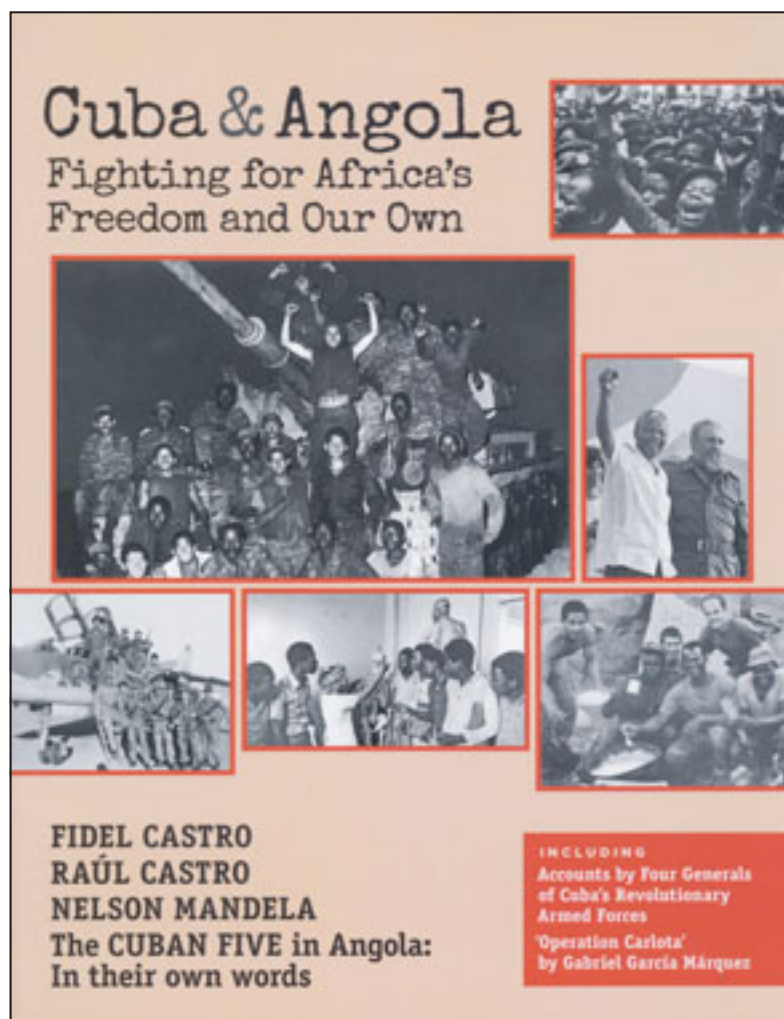
Now on a completely different subject to Cuba, but still about women and their experiences is Angela Davis' *Women, Race & Class*. It gives the best insight into the links between women's issues, racism and the class struggle that I've ever read. It contains a fascinating historical background on slavery and the emancipation struggle of Black women in the US, Communist women and women's rights. It is an extremely educational and interesting



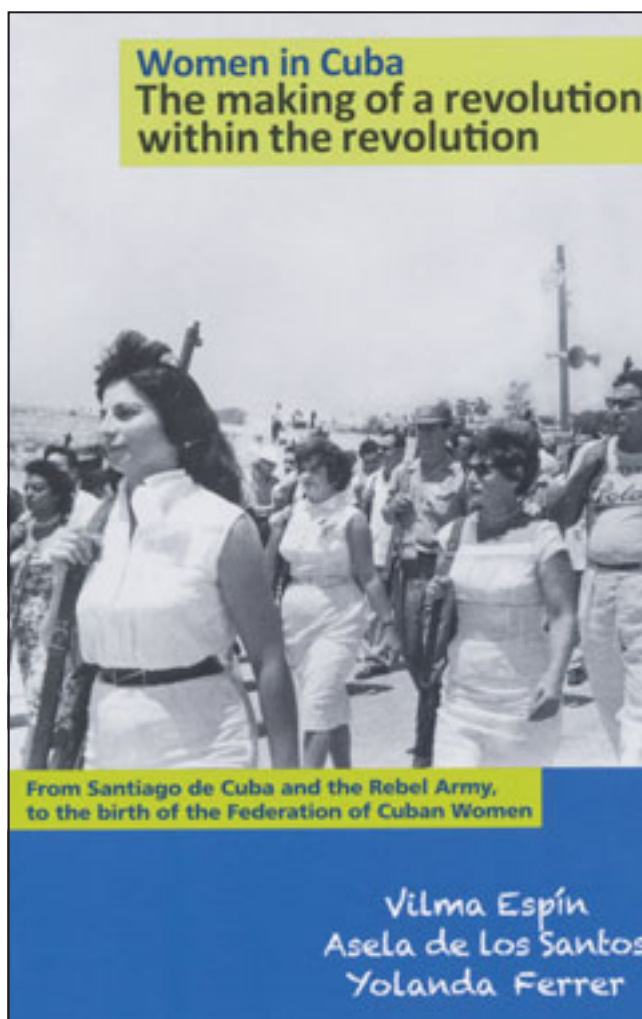
"I will die the way I've lived", Antonio Guerrero, Ed Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder, 2014, paper back 36 pages, \$14 (incl postage)



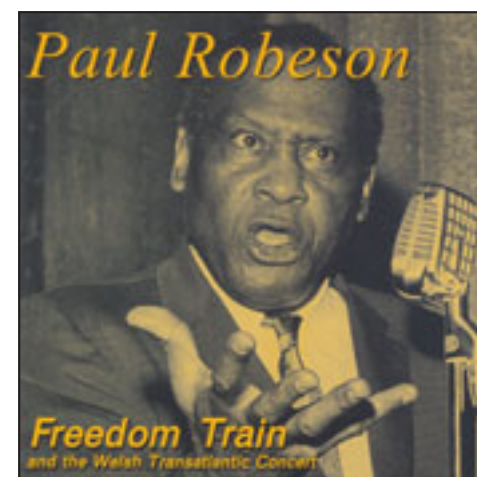
CPA — The editor's selection



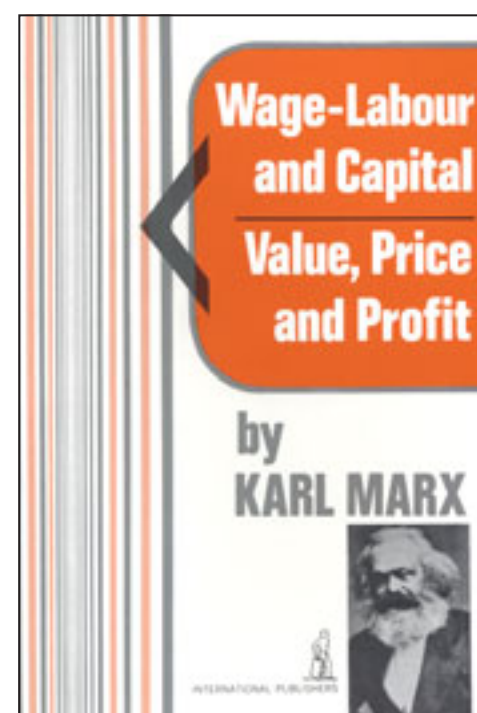
Cuba & Angola: Fighting for Africa's Freedom and Our Own, Ed Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder, 2014, paper back 144 pages, \$25 (incl postage)



Women in Cuba: The making of a revolution within the revolution, Ed Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder, 2012, paper back 346 pages, \$22 (incl postage)



Freedom Train and the Welsh Transatlantic Concert CD, \$20 (incl postage)



Wage-Labour and Capital and Value, Price and Profit, Karl Marx, International Publishers NY, 2006 edition, paper back, 62 pages \$15 (incl postage)

book recommended for all readers, regardless of gender.

Got a gut feeling your boss is exploiting you? Do you feel your wages really cover all that hard work you do? You are not wrong if your employer is making a profit. But would like to know how it all happens. Then you cannot go past Karl Marx's *Wage-Labour and Capital and his Value, Price and Profit* which offers two great pamphlets in one volume. Clearly written, covering important issues such as wages and profits, they are as relevant today as they were when written in the 19th Century. Essential reading for trade unionists and anyone interested in political economy or understanding how capitalism works.

There other political economy books on our website: cpa.org.au, just click on the "Shop@cpa" button.

Against Fascism and War, contains the famous report to the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, 1935 by George Dimitrov and a 1936 speech on The People's Front. There is a foreword by James West from the Communist Party USA giving a historical background to the great Bulgarian Communist leader who was elected as General Secretary of the International.

He concluded his speech on The People's Front with the words: "In the struggle against fascism and war, not empty words, not platonic wishes, but action is needed. To achieve this action it is necessary to bring about the unification of all forces of the working class and to carry out unswervingly the policy of the People's Front."

His call for anti-fascist unity has particular relevance today with the rise of neo-Nazis and

other extreme right-wing forces and economic crises facing capitalist states.

Now for something Australian: *Eureka and Beyond: Monty Miller – his own story* is a first-hand account of one of Australia's most historic events written in a colourful and entertaining style. At a young age Monty Miller fought and was wounded in the Eureka Stockade in 1854. At 85 he was sentenced to six months hard labour for his leadership in the anti-conscription struggles in 1917.

As well as Monty's own description of the Eureka Stockade, the book contains extracts from "Labour's Road to Freedom" with an introduction by the great Communist writer Katharine Susannah Throssell (Pritchard). There is an introduction by Vic Williams along with his poem "Are You Ready Monty Miller?"

CDs

When it comes to listening to one of the greatest voices ever and great politics combined, nothing goes past Paul Robeson. Paul Robeson was a staunch fighter against racism and used his deep bass-baritone voice around the world in the cause of peace and freedom, in support of trade union struggles and against fascism. He also worked tirelessly for friendship and peace between the US and the former Soviet Union. We have two great CDs in stock.

The first is *The Peace Arch Concerts*. This CD contains many old favourites including *Ol' Man River*, *Love Will Find a Way*, *Loch Lommond*, *Without Thee*, *Scandaliz' My Name*. In all there are 18 musical items as well as speeches from Paul Robeson and Harvey Murphy.

The second CD is *Freedom Train and the*

Welsh Transatlantic Concert. Songs include *All Men Are Brothers*, *Slumberland, Wales, Y Deln Aur (The Golden Harp)*, *This Little Light Of Mine*, and *Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel*. There is also a wonderful rendition of *We'll Keep A Welcome In The Hillside*, performed by the Treorchy Male voice Choir.

For reviews and background to the two CDs, see "Two great CDs: Paul Robeson", *Guardian*, #1597, 12-06-2013.

T-shirts

T-shirts always make popular and practical gifts. "Improve your Marx" (white shirt with black text) and Che Guevara (red or white with black graphic) are popular with students. If you are looking for something very Australian, the classic white on blue Eureka T-shirt is a winner.

On a more classic, revolutionary theme, the Lenin T-shirt (red or white with black graphic) or the CPA's own red T-shirt with a small yellow logo which includes the hammer and sickle and Southern Cross stars are also very popular. T-shirts are \$25 each including packaging and postage, sizes M-XXXL.

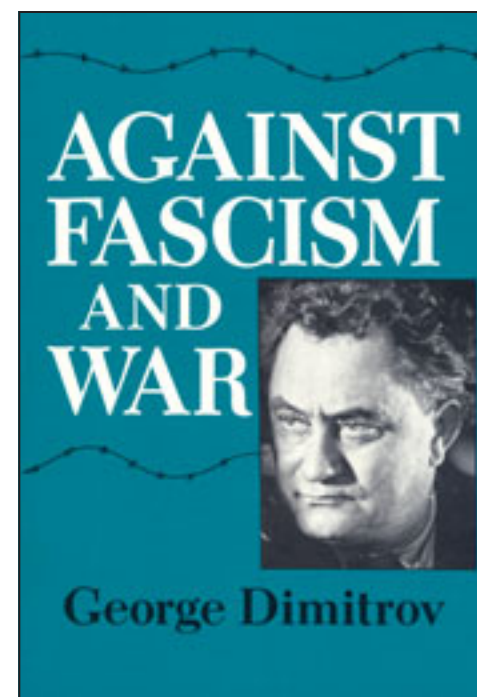
In the spirit of giving, every T-shirt or book order will receive a free copy of the CPA's publication *Hot Earth* which puts the CPA's case for planning and regulation to deal with the climate crisis.

The best present of course is a subscription to the *Guardian*. See page 11 for details.

And while you're in the mood for giving, don't forget the Press Fund! We still have wages and bills to pay over the break.

In unity

Tom Pearson
Editor



Against Fascism and War, George Dimitrov, International Publishers NY, 1986, paper back 125 pages, \$20 (incl postage)



Barclays boycotted over Israel arms trade shares

Michael Deas & Tom Anderson

The British bank Barclays has come under fire for its holdings in Elbit Systems, Israel's largest military company and the main supplier of drones used to attack and kill Palestinian civilians in Gaza. The bank is the named owner of US\$2.9 million worth of shares in Elbit.

More than 1.7 million people have signed a petition calling on Barclays to divest from "projects that finance illegal settlements and the oppressive occupation of the Palestinian people" and campaigners have occupied and protested at bank branches across the UK.

Elbit's share price rose in July off the back of the extensive use of its technology during Israel's summer massacre in Gaza, which killed more than 2,100 Palestinians, including some 500 children.

The company advertises its products as "combat proven" and recently reported a backlog in orders worth US\$6.2 billion.

Through its holdings in Elbit Systems, Barclays is profiting directly from Israel's deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure. Such targeting has been described by Amnesty International and Palestinian human rights organisations as amounting to war crimes.

Barclays market analysts have also talked up Elbit shares, recently rating their stock as "positive."

Call for action

Elbit Systems supplies Israel with Hermes drones that have been used to deliberately attack and kill

Palestinian civilians, including during this summer's onslaught on Gaza. According to data from the Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, armed drones killed more than 1,000 Palestinians in Gaza between 2000 and 2010.

Analysis of Palestinian Centre for Human Rights reports by drone researcher Mary Dobbins found that 800 drone strikes took place within a 50-day period during Israel's most recent attack on Gaza. In a joint statement published last month, Palestinian student groups described Barclays as "complicit in the war crimes carried out in Gaza using Elbit's equipment" and called on UK students to close their accounts with Barclays.

"Since Barclays refuse to end this unethical practice [of] investing and dealing in shares in Elbit despite the fact that their drones kill us, our children, our parents, our brothers, sisters and friends, we ask for students to close their student Barclays account and tell Barclays why," the statement explains.

Normal practice?

But in a bizarre move, Barclays appears to be denying that holding shares in Elbit amounts to profiting from Israeli militarism. In a statement published at the height of Israel's massacre of Gaza, Barclays claimed:

"Barclays holds a very small number of shares in Elbit Systems Ltd on behalf of clients and to hedge exposure against customers facing transactions. Holding shares in companies on behalf of clients, as well as maintaining appropriate hedging strategies, is normal practice



Elbit Systems supplies Israel with Hermes drones that have been used to deliberately attack and kill Palestinian civilians, including during this summer's onslaught on Gaza.

for banks, but does not equate to an investment made by Barclays."

Barclays repeated the main thrust of this defence in a recent email exchange with Corporate Watch, a UK-based research cooperative. Even if true, holding shares on behalf of others hardly seems like an adequate defence: Barclays is facilitating investment in Elbit and collecting a healthy commission on each trade in Elbit shares.

But it is the reference to "hedging strategies" where Barclays' claims really start to come unstuck. In this context, hedging is the practice of buying a number of shares that one is confident will rise in price to offset potential losses that may be incurred by a more risky investment.

In other words, Barclays is investing in Elbit shares to make money from the predicted rise in their price.

"Ducking its commitments"

Ryan Brightwell, a researcher with the Banktrack network of campaign groups tracking the operations and investments of private sector banks, finds no ambiguity:

"A bank has a choice of whether or not to make an investment on behalf of clients," he explained. "Shareholdings in Elbit for hedging purposes are investments, and could easily be replaced by other shares with a similar risk profile.

"Barclays has a policy commitment to remedy human rights violations it is linked to. But instead it is ducking its commitments and continuing to deal in a company which provides drones that have been used to bomb Gaza," he said.

Corporate Watch asked Barclays how it squares its trading in Elbit shares with the bank's claim not to invest in the arms trade.

Barclays spokesperson Will Bowen told Corporate Watch: "We are not 'investing' in these companies, i.e. seeking to generate a return. We are simply holding the shares on behalf of clients – this is standard practice. Barclays Stockbrokers offer a range of companies for customers to invest in ... It's not for us to tell customers what they can and can't invest in."

When pushed for further detail on the use of Elbit shares for the purposes of hedging, which clearly amounts to a form of investment, Barclays declined to comment.

Out of step

Barclays describes its holdings in Elbit as part of "normal practice". But Barclays is badly out of step with other major European investors. The Norwegian state pension fund, leading Danish bank Danske Bank, Dutch pension giant ABP and the Swedish AP pension fund have all divested from Elbit Systems.

Investment experts have told campaigners that Elbit appears on most blacklists prepared by socially responsible investment research companies.

Very few other European banks appear on a list of institutional shareholders invested in Elbit published

by Nasdaq.com, suggesting that most European banks believe that the company's role in Israeli war crimes make it an inappropriate investment.

Financial data provider Orbis states that Barclays also holds 4.25 percent of the total shares in BAE Systems. The huge UK military company has sold to Israel components used in F16 fighter jets and has applied for licenses to export other military equipment to Israel.

The bank is also a named investor in General Dynamics, Raytheon, Meggitt and four other companies that provide military equipment to Israel.

Support for apartheid

When South Africa was under white minority rule, a Barclays subsidiary made loans to the apartheid government and bought up millions of defence bonds. The campaign against Barclays was one of the most visible forms of solidarity in the UK with the South African struggle against apartheid.

A campaign encouraging students to boycott Barclays meant that the bank ultimately saw its share of the student market drop from 27 percent to around 15 percent. Encouraged by this popular movement, many local councils, trade unions and charities divested from Barclays.

Modern capitalism

In 1986, Barclays bank announced its withdrawal from South Africa after a decade of high-profile campaigning. In addition to being remembered as one of the big UK companies that took the longest to end its support for apartheid, Barclays is known today as being one of the clearest examples of everything that is rotten with modern capitalism.

In the past few years alone, Barclays has been exposed as having: avoided more than US\$783 million in taxes, promoted overseas tax havens, manipulated inter-bank interest rates and defrauded customers.

Just recently, it was involved in rigging currency markets, all while continuing to pay out billions in bonuses to its top executives.

The question now is whether or not Barclays will continue to defend its investment in Elbit and thus add active support for Israeli apartheid to its long list of crimes.

The Electronic Intifada ✪

Turning Ferguson outrage into united action for justice

People's World editorial

Outrage. That's the sentiment in Ferguson and around the country in reaction to the failure of the Ferguson grand jury to indict Darren Wilson for the murder of Michael Brown.

The decision was not unexpected. From the outset, local and state authorities carried out a campaign to criminalise Brown: video footage was released of him allegedly shoplifting at a local grocery; even grand jury testimony of forensic evidence purporting to favour the policeman's version of the deadly encounter was leaked to the press.

Still many held out a glimmer of hope that a process leading to justice would prevail. Instead the worst fears of decent minded Americans were realised. Once again a deadly pattern of racist police murder of black and brown youth was upheld, a pattern that almost guarantees immunity for the perpetrators in blue.

Indeed, the grand jury process from the beginning had the appearance – if not reality – of being

rigged. From the outset, St Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Bob McCulloch's close ties to local police were cause for concern, concerns that were justified when the prosecutor failed to provide the grand jury with possible charges against Wilson. Calls for a special prosecutor went unheeded, additionally undermining public confidence.

It's no surprise then that faith in justice system, particularly among young people, has been lost.

Sadly, some of the outrage in Ferguson took violent forms complete with the familiar pattern of police provocation and the reaction of some protestors. But the call of Michael Brown's parents along with the civil rights, labour and community organisations to honour his life with peaceful protests is sure to prevail.

Civil rights groups are calling for a completion of the Justice Department's investigation. The NAACP (National Advancement for Coloured People) is calling for a 120-mile 7-day "Journey for Justice" march from Ferguson to the

governor's mansion in Jefferson City.

The call for Governor Nixon to appoint a special prosecutor is ongoing.

The tragic events in Ferguson, beginning with the killing of Michael Brown at point blank range, the military response of local police, culminating in the failure of the grand jury to return an indictment has indicated that a new movement against police crimes is being born.

The country may be reaching a turning point. The spate of police murder of young black and brown men is at new level. Nearly 400 are killed yearly by police, exceeding the numbers lynched during the height of Jim Crow.

Whether a turning point will be reached will depend on the degree of public pressure to insure justice is done.

We urge our readers to continue fighting for justice for Michael Brown by participating in the militant and peaceful protests occurring all over the country. Let's keep the pressure on! ✪

Harper govt continues push for unlimited spying



Tim Pelzer

VANCOUVER, Canada: The rightwing Conservative government of Stephen Harper is pushing hard to implement legislation that will further undermine privacy rights and give the government unlimited power to spy on people without a court warrant, using recent attacks to justify government spying.

On October 15, the Harper Conservatives used their parliamentary majority to shorten debate and pass Bill C-13, which will allow internet and cell phone companies the right to pass information on to low-, middle- and upper-level government officials without a court warrant. Such officials can include tax agents, sheriffs, Reeves (presiding town council officers), justices of the peace, intelligence agents and mayors.

Under current lax rules, telecommunications companies are empowered to pass along users' personal information to the government as long as it's for the purpose of an investigation and no court warrant

major unions, is leading the fight to stop Bill C-13. "This extreme legislation will give a range of government authorities the ability to monitor our private lives, often without a warrant or any judicial oversight," charged spokesperson David Christopher. He said the bill would allow government to spy on Canadians anytime without a reason without the victims knowing their privacy had been breached. "We'll continue working with Canadians of every shade of political opinion to overturn this reckless spy bill. The Senate prides itself on being the chamber of sober thought, and if ever a piece of legislation needed a sober rethink it's this one."

Critics also contend that Bill C-13 is unconstitutional because in June the Supreme Court ruled that telecommunication companies cannot hand private information to the government without a warrant. If Bill C-13 becomes law, taxpayers will have to pay for legal efforts to defend the bill in the courts, according to Christopher.

Others, such as the Canadian Bar Association, Ontario Privacy Com-

missioner Ann Cavoukian, former Conservative cabinet minister Stockwell Day, the Liberals, Greens, New Democrats and Communists have criticised Bill C-13's draconian overreach. Federal Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien said that the bill will violate privacy by allowing government to collect information without a warrant. Before it was passed by Parliament, the New Democratic Party – the official opposition in Parliament – called for Bill C-13 to be split into two parts, so the online spying provisions were removed from the sections dealing with cyber-bullying and dealt with separately.

Critics also complain that 60 pages of the bill were lifted from the earlier conservative spy Bill C-30 that had been withdrawn after public opposition in 2012.

The Communist Party of Canada says that Bill C-13 is part of a larger effort to criminalise and repress legitimate dissident. "Ever since taking office, the Harper Conservatives have directed state security agencies to profile and focus on those they

consider 'enemies', such as environmentalists opposed to the expansion of the tar sands and hydraulic fracking, Aboriginal movements which resist the destruction of their traditional territories by governments and resource corporations, or groups the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (Canada's version of the CIA) vaguely labels 'multi-issue extremists,'" charged party leader Miguel Figueroa. "The expansion of police state powers will accelerate this drive to label Canadians as 'potential terrorists,' creating a basis for even more severe police spying and repression against labour and grassroots opposition forces."

Government officials, along with Royal Canadian Mounted Police Commissioner Bob Paulson, are already using a spate of recent attacks to justify Bill C-13's passage. On October 20, in the small town of St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, Martin Couture-Roleau, 24, a recent convert to Islam, drove his car into a group of three soldiers walking along the road. Police pursued the man, who crashed his car in a ditch. Police then shot him dead when he lunged at them with a hunting knife. One soldier was killed while the other two were injured.

On October 22, Michael Zeha-Bibeau, who also identified as being Muslim, went on a shooting rampage in Ottawa. Armed with an old hunting rifle, he killed a soldier guarding the National War Memorial and then entered Parliament, where he was shot and killed by security guards in a gun battle. Police suggest that the two men acted in retribution for Canada's decision to deploy warplanes to bomb Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria.

However, according to the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, the two men were not members of terrorist groups. The man who stormed Parliament had a history of mental illness and drug abuse. Prior to the attack Bibeau was telling people that demons were after him. Several years ago he robbed a McDonald's restaurant in Surrey, BC, with a steel pipe, hoping that he would be arrested and given some help. He was jailed one day and then released.

The Harper Conservatives have been trying since 2006 to introduce legislation that would make it easier for government to collect information on Canadians' private Internet activities. If Bill C-13 passes, they will have succeeded.

People's World ☪

"Ever since taking office, the Harper Conservatives have directed state security agencies to profile and focus on those they consider 'enemies'".

is needed. Last year, the government requested information 1.2 million times (every 27 seconds), according to Federal Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien.

Bill C-13 will make the situation worse because officials no longer need to conduct an investigation and will only have to be investigating a law, domestic or foreign, establish that the law relates to national security, or otherwise determine that disclosure will help in the "administering of any law of Canada." Under Bill C-13, communication companies cannot be sued for passing confidential information to government officials, which will only increase the amount of information handed over to the government, claim critics.

The Conservatives attached the spying provisions onto a bill addressing cyber-bullying. Bill C-13 is now before the Conservative-dominated Senate, where it will be evaluated and voted on.

Open Media, a coalition of 60 groups across the spectrum, from the National Firearms Association to



Region Briefs

A recent report, released by the Vietnam Family Planning Association, has provided advice on health and family planning to almost five million people in the last five years and distributed 3.5 million pamphlets and other information, in particular to workers and the young. Chairman of the association, Nguyen Ba Thuy, said that the association had faced difficulties with coordination between its branches and a shortage of funds. In the next five years, with more government support, the association will provide more services to ethnic minorities who live in remote areas.

Gahyun Lee, who worked at a McDonald's outlet in Yeokgok, Gyeonggi Province, South Korea, was dismissed from her job on September 15 following her visit to Los Angeles earlier that month to support US fast food workers. She had been previously warned by management to refrain from union activity after she spoke at a rally in support of global fast food workers on May 15. She was told she could reapply for her job, which she did but her application was rejected. The International Food Union (IUF) has launched an international campaign for her reinstatement. To support the campaign and send a message to McDonalds Korea, visit www.iuf.org

The International Renewable Energy Agency said that China's renewable energy capacity in 2012 already had a larger capacity than the Asia-Pacific region and Europe combined. Twenty percent of China's primary energy by 2030 will be from non-fossil fuel. This will require investing more than A\$145 billion a year and developing the necessary technology to build more efficient wind, nuclear, solar and hydropower stations. However, Western countries, submitting to the US's policy of containing China, have banned the export of the required technology to China.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo ordered his ministers not to attend a hearing of parliament where they would face questioning over the government's decision to increase the country's subsidised fuel price by more than 30 percent. This increase was at a time when the global fuel price was declining and parliament had opposed the increase. The hearing was Indonesia's political mechanism that provided a better way for the ministers and legislators in parliament to communicate with one another. Widodo stated at his presidential palace in Bogor, "We had just worked for one month (formed a new government in October), what do they want to ask us about? Let them settle their problem first". The statement was ironic and revealed divisions, irresponsibility and inefficiency within "the capitalist style democracy" in Indonesian politics introduced since the fall of Suharto.

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that "the region is suffering from the US's policies", and "the existence of a lone superpower is the main cause of the problems (for regional instability)." He called on countries in the region to find solutions by themselves without US involvement. In the past few months, tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has escalated, resulting in exchanges of fire and civilian deaths.

Letters to the Editor
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Whistleblower gives evidence

Former Queensland Government employee turned whistleblower, Simone Marsh, gave detailed evidence at the Senate Inquiry into the Queensland government last Friday.

Marsh, a senior environmental specialist, was seconded in 2010 to the Queensland Department of Infrastructure and Planning to work on Coordinator-General's reports.

Marsh has stated that she was pressured into drafting sections of reports related to plans by two coal seam gas companies to develop vast CSG fields and two LNG export terminals in Queensland.

She said the plans for the multi-billion dollar projects lacked the required information and proper assessments that should have been supplied regarding impacts on water resources, the economy or the environment.

Last year Marsh made a complaint of official misconduct in relation to the approvals to the Crime and Misconduct Commission but the complaint was never investigated. Since then, the Queensland government has narrowed the scope of the Commission to remove official misconduct.

According to Marsh, people across eastern Australia are now paying the price for the failure of the Queensland government to properly assess CSG projects.

"Farmers are already experiencing major drops in their bore water due to CSG mining. In the Surat Basin alone, 84 bores are predicted to run dry in the next two years, and hundreds more will be affected thereafter," she said.

"But it's not just farmers who have been impacted. The failure to conduct basic cost benefit analyses before approving these projects has

been a disaster for manufacturers and gas consumers along the eastern seaboard.

"Domestic gas prices have risen sharply because Queensland coal seam gas exports have linked us to higher world prices for the first time in our history.

"It has been estimated that this price shock will cost Australian industrial gas users \$3.2 billion per year, resulting in thousands of manufacturing jobs being lost" she said.

**Kate Dennehy
Lock the Gate Alliance**

Demonising the DPRK

An opinion piece in the Sydney Morning Herald (World wakes to crimes of a cruel regime) by Peter Hartcher demonising the DPRK (North Korea). Or I should say a report to the UN by, of all people, former High Court Justice Michael Kirby, does so.

From the day of its foundation, the DPRK (North Korea) hasn't had a moment's rest from outside interference. Sabotage, invasion, mass destruction, germ warfare, nuclear

threat, encirclement and crippling economic blockade have all been used in the US-led attempt to remove this impediment to regional domination. All of these efforts have failed. Naturally, the major capitalist powers subject such enemy or "rogue" states to an unrelieved campaign of vilification in order to enlist public opinion for aggression or at least neutralise opposition.

Michael Kirby said that the claimed violations parallel in many ways the crimes of the Nazis before and during World War 2. The leaders of that country should be brought before the International Criminal Court or a special, ad hoc UN tribunal, according to Mr Kirby. Clearly, that would require "regime change" and, presumably, a war.

Mr Kirby's parallel with the Nazis draws a monumentally long bow. Hitler's government used the resources of a powerful, developed country to annihilate whole populations that it did not approve of. Six million Jews alone perished in that project of extermination that was conducted on a massive, industrial scale. And, contrary to what Michael Kirby claims, the leaders of the Western allies were

aware of the human rights situation in Nazi Germany and the countries it occupied but weren't particularly concerned until the Third Reich began to encroach on their interests. Likewise, the heads of the leading capitalist countries today know full well the gruesome human rights situation in Saudi Arabia and similar compliant countries but choose to ignore it.

The DPRK is not just a thorn in the side of a declining power seeking to shore up its position in the Asia Pacific. Its territory, which borders the People's Republic of China, is eyed off jealously by the US military for the location of its troops and US nuclear weapons. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stressed that "resolving human rights differences should be through constructive dialogue and cooperation based on equality and mutual respect." That won't happen unless world opinion insists upon it and demands that the US halts its aggression towards the DPRK and China.

**T Southern
Brisbane**

Culture & Life

by
Rob Gowland

The search for truth?



Americans are 20 times more likely to be killed by a firearm than a person in any other developed country.

Despite the intervention of President Obama himself, the people of the US city of Ferguson were justifiably angered last week when the Grand Jury ruled that no charges should be laid against the white cop who shot dead an unarmed black youth, Michael Brown, although an autopsy had revealed that the teenager had been shot five or six times. That's a cop emptying his gun in a shooting frenzy. The white prosecutor heaped praise on the jury for their verdict, as did the police union. But people concerned by the appalling level of violence in America were horrified.

Americans are 20 times more likely to be killed by a firearm than a person in any other developed country. In fact, over 30,000 Americans are shot dead every year.

The family of the murdered black youth, while calling for calm, also called on Americans to "change the system!"

They didn't mean the system of capitalism, precisely, although that's what it will take. They meant the system of institutionalised racism that is the USA. Where racist "profiling" identifies blacks in a car as probable criminals, because of their race. Where a relatively small racial minority makes up the great majority of the prison population thanks to the combined effects of racism and poverty.

The people of the USA have long since lost faith in their judicial system. And why not? From 1969 to 2005, the US Supreme Court ruled in favour of corporations 50 percent of the time. Since 2011, the Court has sided with corporations 88 percent of the time.

In many parts of the country, police chiefs like mayors are elected, currying favour with voters by being "tough on crime" and establishing and using heavily armed paramilitary SWAT teams to wage the "war on drugs" not because it is effective (it isn't) but because it receives federal funding.

In Ferguson, the Grand Jury was presented with the testimony of no less than 60 witnesses. Inevitably, some of them contradicted each other, and these contradictions were used to discredit the validity of all the evidence. As so often in high-profile US court cases, courtroom theatrics prevailed over the search for truth.

The search for truth has taken a back seat in the case of the shooting down of Malaysian airliner MH17 too. Obama, Abbott, Merkel, Cameron and others of their ilk have all publicly blamed Russia without producing one scrap of evidence to support such an accusation.

Along with their protégés in Kiev they claim the plane was shot by a BUK defence missile system brought from Russia, but no evidence has ever been presented, except for questionable photos floating online which claim to show the system.

Outside Australia, news media in the last couple of weeks have been giving considerable attention to satellite and radar evidence confirming that the Malaysian plane was accompanied by fighter jets that could only be Ukrainian, lending considerable weight to the contention that the plane was shot down not by ground fire but by an air-to-air missile. This

is also supported by the physical evidence at the crash site, which is why the shelling of the site by the Ukrainian army and the consequent withdrawal of the Australian and other investigators is so suspicious. But oh, so convenient for Abbott, Obama and co as they can blame Russia without having to bother about the small matter of evidence.

However, Sergei Melnichenko, CEO of Russian firm Aviation Safety has provided evidence from an air traffic control centre in Rostov near the Ukrainian border that there were one or two warplanes in the air close to the Malaysian airliner. "The data clearly shows that at the moment of the crash and after it there were planes moving north of the Boeing course. Most likely, they were military, because ... they didn't respond to being scanned," Melnichenko said. Civilian planes always reply to signals from radar, while military aircraft usually don't.

Aviation Safety consultancy and analysis agency provides information, advice, and analytical services in the field of aviation safety for the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a collective of former Soviet republics. Melnichenko pointed out that it would have been impossible for a Russian warplane to make it over the border without being detected by Ukrainian and NATO radar. The presence of military planes north of the Boeing would put them in a position to the left of the plane. Some photos from the crash site showed damage to the cockpit's left side, consistent with a scenario of an attack by those planes.

In late October, the chief investigator with the Dutch National Prosecutors' Office, Fred Westerbeke, told *Der Spiegel* magazine that his team is open to the theory that another plane shot down the Malaysian airliner.

None of this carries any weight with Obama or his faithful sidekick Abbott, of course. They are not concerned with uncovering the truth as to why 298 people died when MH17 went down. Their concern is with making political capital. Along with all the Australian capitalist mass media, and in the finest tradition of the Cold War, they dismissed the new evidence as "Russian propaganda". The following day it had already disappeared from the news.

As well-known commentator Amador Eshtrak wrote on November 20: "It should be evident from the complete dearth of evidence that the US-led hostility toward Russia [over MH17] has other ulterior motives.

"The expansion of NATO as an instrument of American global hegemony in a post Cold War world, the encirclement and attempted enfeebling of Russia as a global economic rival, the thwarting of a multipolar world that threatens to undermine American power and its declining dollar supremacy are all part of this agenda." It is an agenda that is disturbingly reminiscent of the imperialist drive towards war that marked the build-up to WWI. However, make no mistake: a war against Russia (and China) driven by Christian religious fanatics who believe they are doing God's work will make the Great War look like a tea party. ☛



Rob Gowland
previews
ABC & SBS
Public Television

Sunday December 7 –
Saturday December 13

On Thursday January 15, 2009, with 155 people on board, US Airways flight 1549 ran into a flock of geese shortly after take-off. Both engines failed. With no power, Captain Chelsey Sullenberger decided to guide his crippled plane away from crowded Manhattan and attempt the near impossible – to land in the Hudson River. We've all seen the footage of the landing, but *Miracle On The Hudson* (ABC2 Sunday December 7 at 8.30pm) screening as part of the *Crisis* season of feature-length documentaries, tells the minute by minute story of that day through the first-hand testimonies of the passengers, eyewitnesses and rescuers.

The eight-hour miniseries *World Without End* will be shown on the ABC in four episodes (ABC from Sunday December 7 at 8:40pm).

There is a famous cartoon in which two ladies are watching a movie in a theatre. On the screen is a wedding scene. One of the ladies comments to the other: "Of course, in the book they never actually meet."

In the '30s and '40s, adaptations of historical novels to the screen by Hollywood tended to pay scant attention to being faithful to the book or to history. Later the fashion changed and gritty accuracy at least in clothes and appearance became the preferred style. But in the pursuit of ratings, TV adaptations of historical novels have developed a whole new look that is as unconcerned with historical accuracy or even reality as any of the movies that gave Hollywood such a bad name.

As *The Hollywood Reporter* notes, there is a certain type of modern television historical saga that invariably mixes "sex, cruelty, graphic violence, gore and political misdeeds" with "muscular storytelling and flavour-some character detail". It's a formula and TV producers are constantly on the lookout for "best sellers" they can adapt to fit the formula: best sellers like the house-brick-sized tomes written by Ken Follett.

Follett's novels set in the Middle Ages, *The Pillars Of The Earth* and *World Without End*, are also written to a formula. Each has at its core a laboured metaphor, the building of a cathedral in *The Pillars Of The Earth* and the building of a bridge in *World Without End*. The latter novel is specifically set at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War and the outbreak of the Black Death. But, as *The Hollywood Reporter* also notes, its TV adaptation emerges as a "soapy old-school pageant".

Adapting a best seller, especially one about the Middle Ages, should be good business sense. Not only do the producers have a core audience to swell the ratings, but they are able "to get in on the cable craze for bodice ripping, bloody swordplay and medieval hair extensions". In Follett's case, however, they have to contend with the difficulty of a sprawling cast of characters.

The script by John Pielmeier (who also adapted *Pillars*) has been criticised for not only streamlining and changing the plot, but also for "changing history". *The Hollywood Reporter* commented that "Dialogue shifts erratically between period stiltedness ('Have you not heard I'm with child?') and jarring modern speech ('Hey, you're Ralph Fitzgerald, aren't you?')."

The same reviewer found "the series' weakness is its villains. Cynthia Nixon appears to be having a fine old time as ... the ruthlessly conniving vixen Petranilla, who has no compunction about offing foes and family members alike with her lethal potions. But the actress is miscast and her character unsubtly drawn. It's inconceivable that her smirking malevolence would go unnoticed with all the accusations of witchcraft flying around. While writing an



The Secret Life Of The Cat (SBS ONE Tuesday, December 9 at 8.30pm).

incriminating letter that will lead to another death, she's even seen stroking a white cat, like some medieval Bond nemesis."

Rupert Evans, as Petranilla's "poisonous toad of a son, Brother Godwyn, spirals from sneering calculation to possessed dementia during the series, an evolution that's fun but overripe. Peter Firth supplies a standard-issue bad guy in the politically opportunistic brute Earl Roland, while as Queen Isabella, Aure Atika's wooden presence and impenetrable accent render her treachery a tad silly."

Shot mainly in Hungary, plus some exteriors in Austria and Slovakia on a \$46 million budget, the production "certainly is handsome, with a seamless blend of physical sets and digital work to provide a lush period tapestry. ... However, while the series is always at least mildly entertaining, it's also stodgy. Even

when it tosses in juicy ingredients (Incest! Fratricide! Gay monks! Lesbian nuns!), *World Without End* is just too tame and tasteful."

In *The Secret Life Of The Cat* (SBS ONE Tuesday, December 9 at 8.30pm), a team of scientists stake out the 50 cat residents of Shamley Green, a village in Surrey, UK. The cats are tagged with GPS trackers and collar cams for 24 hours, as they patrol territories, scale fences and scavenge for food.

GPS surveillance provides an astounding picture of just how far from home these pets wander each day. Collar cam gives a somewhat edgier insight into a gypsy life on the streets and alleyways. Claude, an eight year-old grey and white tomcat is, unbeknownst to his owner, a regular cat burglar who goes through the neighbours' cat flap and has a second dinner from the bowl of their ginger kitty Rosie once everyone is asleep.

In this week's episode of the nine-part series *Years Of Living Dangerously* (SBS ONE Tuesday December 9 at 9.30pm), Matt Damon takes viewers on an investigation into the impact of extreme heat on human health and mortality. Michael C Hall journeys to the low-lying deltaic country of Bangladesh where rising seas are expected to submerge 17 percent of the nation. Hall explores the prediction that by 2050, the migration of upwards of 150 million people worldwide will be the single most worrisome impact of our climate-changed future.

Find *Cities Of The Underworld* pretty boring, but the new six-part series *Underground Britain* (SBS ONE Saturdays from December 13 at 7.30pm) is actually interesting, as Rob Bell climbs, crawls, dives and burrows into caves, graves and hidden tunnels. ☼

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Struggle and resistance in a multi-polar world

CPA at the 16th International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties

The annual meetings of Communist and workers' parties are an initiative of the Communist Party of Greece. Their aim is to promote cooperation among the various fraternal parties across the globe. The most recent meeting was held in Guayaquil in Ecuador from November 12-15 and was hosted by the Communist Party of Ecuador. It was the second time the meeting has been held in Latin America – the first was in Brazil in 2008. It was another opportunity for delegates to learn about the sweeping, progressive changes taking place in much of Latin America.

An indication of the nature of the changes was the venue used for the meeting. The Ramada Hotel was expropriated by the progressive government of President Rafael Correa and put in the hands of 97 workers who formed a cooperative to run the hotel by themselves. The former owner, a banker, didn't care about the workers and their families, and ran away with his employees' pay and entitlements. The Citizens' Revolution gave the workers a loan to be repaid over eight years without interest.

They felt proud to be hosting the gathering of Communist and Workers' parties. The meeting also coincided with the anniversary of the massacre of more than 2,000 workers on November 15, 1922. It ended with a mass demonstration of thousands of workers who are prepared to defend the gains of their Citizens' Revolution, such as free education and healthcare and free access to museums.

The following is an abbreviated version of the CPA contribution to the meeting by the Party's President, Vinnie Molina. The full version will appear with a selection of others in the next issue of the *Australian Marxist Review*.

"The role of the Workers and Communist parties in the struggle against the imperialist and capitalist exploitation which brings about crises and wars and gives rise to fascist and reactionary forces. For workers and peoples' rights and national and social emancipation; for socialism!"

I would like to thank and congratulate the Communist Party of Ecuador for hosting this 16th International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties. Sweeping changes have taken place in Latin America. How we characterise these changes is the subject of some discussion in our movement but it is undeniable that deep, progressive changes have taken place that demand attention and respect, providing inspiration to millions around the world.

In fact, the consolidation of the socialist-oriented changes in Latin America is one of the few bright spots on the current international political scene. The economic crisis; the demands by capitalist governments and supranational financial institutions impose hardships on workers and other exploited people. New waves of privatisation are occurring as the bourgeois national state continues its handover over functions and assets to transnational corporations. Trade unions are persecuted, squeezed from workplaces and hobbled by repressive legislation. "Counter Terrorism" is being used as the excuse to increase surveillance and data collection of the people and to remove democratic rights before the law.

US imperialism is launching new wars and proxy wars with its usual allies in tow. The US military's "Pivot" or "Rebalance" to the Asia Pacific and Indian Oceans – in preparation for aggression against the Peoples Republic of China – is gathering force. The brutal economic and diplomatic blockades against Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remain in place. The ideological warfare against socialism and Communist Parties is escalating.

And while poorer countries are already battling the effects of climate change, governments of developed economies refuse to take the necessary steps to avoid an environmental calamity.

Fascism and war

Unfortunately, the new elements of the international scene are mostly negative. Fascism is on the rise. We have seen electoral gains by Jobbik in Hungary, the National Front in France and anti-immigrant UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) in Britain, to give just some examples. Most confronting of all was the leading role of neo-Nazi groups in the coup against the government of the Ukraine and the utterly reactionary consequences that have flowed from it.

The situation in the Ukraine carries grave dangers for the whole world. The US and NATO plans to move eastward have reached a major milestone. The battle now being waged aims to place their forces and high-tech hardware on the border of the Russian Federation in preparation for their ultimate goal – the breaking up of that entity and unrestricted access to its resources.

At the same time, the US pursues objectives in the Middle East. Not for the first time, US imperialism has created and armed the forces it now claims it must defeat. Islamic State is the latest such phenomenon. Regime change in Syria is clearly a major goal but a fundamental redrawing of the map of the Middle East is being pursued. So, too, the changes being pursued for greater access to the resources of the region and the strategic interests of the Zionist government of Israel. The ongoing dispossession and torment of the Palestinian people is evidence of that.

Unfortunately, at this time of extreme danger to peace in the world the response of the anti-war movement internationally is passive. In many parts of the world, it has lost its former

vigour. In Australia this, in part, resulted from the defeat of the massive people's mobilisation against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The regrouping and reinvigoration of the anti-war movement must be a major priority for the international Communist movement at this time.

A multi-polar world

Because of its intrinsic nature, imperialism will always meet resistance; provided it doesn't destroy the planet first, its defeat is certain. Even in the worst of circumstances, people will struggle. In Colombia the struggle of the people, including armed struggle, appears to be on the verge of breakthrough in the talks taking place in Havana. In Greece, workers led by PAME are planning a national strike at the end of the month. Progressive changes are lifting millions out of poverty in Latin America and the process of integration taking place on the basis of mutual benefit. These developments encourage us greatly.

US imperialism does not have the free hand it had in the immediate aftermath of the destruction of the Soviet Union. More and more countries are beginning to question the underpinnings of the post-WW2 global economic framework and the privileged position of the US within it. Libya was pursuing an African trading currency backed by gold before NATO intervened. Other countries are choosing to trade commodities such as oil in currencies other than US dollars. Perhaps most notable is the growing trade between China and the Russian Federation in their own currencies and the building of infrastructure to massively expand that trade.

Australia and our region

The political scene in Australia reflects the international situation in which US imperialism struggles aggressively to maintain its hegemony. The Coalition government led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott is pursuing an openly reactionary agenda. It is slashing spending on public services and axing thousands of public sector jobs. It is privatising the few remaining public assets.

Lines between the public and private provision of health services and education continue to be blurred with the ultimate objective of destroying the public system. Tertiary education fees and student debt are set to sky-rocket as the universities are de-regulated. Degrading cashless social security programs are being implemented, workers' compensation schemes changed to get workers back on the job quicker and sicker. Aboriginal land rights are under attack to enable their traditional lands to be plundered by mining transnationals.

A witch-hunt against the trade unions is being waged through a Commission into "trade union governance and corruption". It has set the stage for police task forces and controls over the unions' own resources. There is a secret police force operating on Australian construction sites disrupting on-the-job organisation and punishing trade unions and their members daring to organise or struggle.

The military is the only sector of public spending not to be cut. Joint Strike Fighters, Air Warfare Destroyers and submarines are



on the order books. The US is getting new spy facilities in the west of the country and has a new Marines base in Darwin in the north. Australian service personnel have been sent to bomb targets in Iraq and Syria.

Fear and division are being fanned by the government and the corporate media. Muslim communities are under attack from bigoted elements and racist political groups are recruiting strongly. Legislation to spy on Australians' use of phones and the Internet, restrict their movement and prevent people from speaking out about the government's covert actions is being rushed through the parliament with "bi-partisan" support. The maximum penalty is life imprisonment, with journalists and whistleblowers the main targets.

The federal government has scrapped a tax on the mining sector. It was a small levy on a small number of companies but even that was considered improper by the companies involved and the incoming Coalition government. Reckless climate change denial is driving public policy.

The role of Communists

The duty of Communists in the face of all these challenges in Australia is the same as it is the world over – to resist and to organise the broadest possible alliance of forces to resist effectively. The list of attacks and areas requiring a fight back is a long one. The enemy is well-resourced. However, the scale of the offensive against people's rights has already prompted a strong reaction. The biggest marches seen in recent times have taken place on the streets of the major cities. They lack class consciousness and direction to enhance and widen the struggle and oppose austerity measures or to put forward any alternative policies. That is the role of Communists at the current stage.

The offensive of the international capitalist class and US imperialism is global. The international connections of the struggle must be made; the hand of solidarity extended to people fighting the same enemy. The international Communist movement is a logical place for such linkages to be made but we will need to lift our connections beyond the level of joint statements to more practical initiatives. The Communist Party of Australia looks forward to playing its part in those undertakings. There are plenty of campaigns where our movement could focus its efforts. The case of the Cuban Five prisoners comes immediately to mind. Let us as a united Communist movement strike a blow against imperialism by securing the release of the Cuban Five. ✪



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