



Live exports – another ugly side to capitalist globalisation

Bob Briton

The effect on the Australian public of Four Corners' exposé of the live cattle trade with Indonesia has been dramatic. In just a few days, almost a quarter of a million people signed an online petition organised by the GetUp! lobby group to have the trade stopped. It seemed that everybody was talking about the program entitled *Bloody Business* in the days following the broadcast of the ABC's bombshell. Only those with financial interests in the lucrative trade were prepared to defend it or try to explain away what TV audiences saw. Butchers reported a drop in meat sales as consumers confronted some realities of the global food business.

Light had been shone on another of the ugly sides of capitalist globalisation. Big business, agribusiness in this instance, has been reaping hefty returns by exporting jobs from more regulated, higher wage countries like Australia to relatively unregulated, low wage centres like Indonesia. What has happened over the years to the meat industry in this country is not a pretty picture, either. Meat processing corporations have been on an extended drive to force the union out of the industry and introduce more "flexible" practices. Guest workers on type 457 visas have been abused in this process.

The fight for jobs

The Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU) has been leading protests against live animal exports for decades. In the 1980s, the union was locked in frustrating negotiations with Australian authorities to shut down the trade or at least get a ratio of live-to-packaged meat that would safeguard local jobs. The government was having none of that – in today's neo-liberal world, markets and super profits rule.

A report from as long ago as 2002 by S G Heilbron Pty Ltd (commissioned by the Australian Meat Processor Corporation) estimated that the live export trade had cost the Australian economy \$1.5 billion in lost GDP, around \$270 million in household income and around 10,500 jobs. The AMIEU website has YouTube interviews with abattoir workers in North Queensland suffering cancelled shifts and inadequate working hours per week who daily watch cattle trucks driving right past the abattoir, taking animals to huge ships for slaughter overseas. Over 700 meat workers had either been laid off or had their shifts severely cut back in the six months leading up to the posting of one particular YouTube to the internet last year.



Until a program like *Bloody Business* breaks through public apathy, it is a case of "out of sight, out of mind". The AMIEU is portrayed by industry heavyweights as simply protecting their "patch". Even protests by Labor MPs have been rebuffed. In September last year, Agriculture Minister Joe Ludwig had to put the members for Lyon, Page and Fremantle in their place when they expressed support for a private members' bill to ban live exports. "We have currently a policy on live animal exports and ... I've got no intention on changing that, but I always encourage members, senators to bring forward their issues because of course it is about engagement and understanding the perspective from different regions."

That was before the furore caused by *Bloody Business*. In the aftermath of the program, exports destined for the most notorious of the Indonesian abattoirs were halted. When the controversy didn't go away, a moratorium on the whole trade with Indonesia was put in place for six months or until "the government establishes sufficient supply chain assurance for cattle from Australia to Indonesia," as a more conciliatory Mr Ludwig said last week.

Not just Indonesia

The government no doubt hopes that "tough" action on the exports to Indonesia will limit growing objections to the whole trade. For decades protests about the treatment of animals shipped to the Middle East have

fallen on deaf ears. Conditions at abattoirs in Egypt, for example, were briefly mentioned and shown on *Bloody Business*. The welfare of sheep and cattle aboard ships has also been in the headlines over the years. In 2002, for example, more than 14,000 sheep perished aboard four separate vessels travelling from Western Australia and Victoria to the Middle East. The government considers a two percent mortality rate for transported sheep and goats and one percent for cattle as acceptable. That is still a lot of animals.

Causes of the deaths include insanitation (47 percent), salmonellosis (26.9 percent), trauma (12.2 percent) and "miscellaneous" (13.9 percent). Over 2.5 million animals have died on route since the 1980s. Reports of disease and deaths at sea damage the reputation of Australian exports of chilled and frozen meat which are still worth roughly 6.5 times the live export trade.

The live trade lobby argues that the industry employs over 12,000 people and contributes \$1.8 billion to GDP annually. This ignores the fact that many of the jobs tied to the live trade would be taken up by local operations if the largely self-regulating live trade were shut down. The "value-added" component of local processing would be a boost to local communities dependent on the meat industry.

Live trade spokespersons also claim that Middle East markets have a preference for "hot meat" and that the animals have to have a Halal killing. Animals can be killed according to

Halal requirements in Australia with the added humane safeguard that they are stunned prior for killing. Animals Australia (an animal welfare organisation involved in the Four Corners report) has reported since 2003 that Halal requirements are routinely ignored in Egypt, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar. Big interests in the live export trade talk about respect for local traditions but are really defending maximum profits with the least bother.

Another fine mess

This reckless attitude – so typical under capitalism – has landed local graziers caught up in the live export trade in a fine mess. Small farmers are also affected. The federal government is tapping its contingency fund to compensate local producers for some of their losses. A first instalment of \$5 million is being talked about. Assistance to upgrade the industry in Indonesia is also being discussed, including the installation of more restraining boxes for cattle for use during slaughter.

This desperate patch-up and the scandal that prompted it should be a lesson to the neo-liberal zealots in government but they probably won't be. Big business pulls the strings and it will take concerted action to force some compliance. The people of Australia are clear, though. They have asked for the live export trade to be shut down entirely over the next three years.

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Book says US-NATO war served Al-Qaeda strategy

The Guardian

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Strong arm of the ruling class

The front page of last Friday's Age (10-06-11) described Victoria's new armour-clad, police SWAT squad as the "Strong arm of the law". Its formation is in fact one in a series of extremely backward and anti-democratic moves by the state Coalition government as it exercises the strong arm of the capitalist, ruling class. Victorian premier Ted Baillieu is a member of one the richest Australian dynasties and is not short of a dollar!

After its election in December 2010, the Baillieu government wasted no time in winding back the clock on the human and other democratic rights of working people. Baillieu's hatred of trade unions is no secret. Chief Commissioner of Police, Simon Overland, portrayed the new heavily armed, shield-wielding riot squad as being set up to deal with the likes of drunken teenagers and rowdy football crowds. The truth is that they are there to wield the strong arm of the capitalist class against protestors, trade union pickets and any other actions that threaten their profit-churning and exploitation of workers. At the same time the Victorian Police have dumped their multicultural advisory unit.

In line with its zero tolerance and "lock 'em up" mentality, the government plans to impose statutory, minimum two-year sentences for certain violent offences that cause serious injury. Again, it is not just about drunk, partying youth, but would apply to picket lines and demonstrations. The penalties would apply to adults and juveniles aged 16 or 17, regardless of the circumstances – a recipe to create hardened criminals rather than address the causes of the offences. Two new super prisons (run by the private sector) are planned to meet an estimated 45 percent increase in the number of male prisoners and 60 percent for females by 2020.

The government also has other plans to attack wages and working conditions such as cutting the minimum shift to 90 minutes and renegeing on its pre-election equal pay commitment.

It is going to take a strong, united movement of the trade unions, left and progressive political parties, and other democratic and progressive forces to break the strong arm of the ruling class. The longer the struggle is delayed, the more repressive and difficult will be the conditions of the struggle.

Cruel trade

The federal government has been forced to temporarily ban live cattle exports to Indonesia because of the horrific cruelty to animals in Indonesian slaughter-houses. The ban followed the ABC's *Four Corners* program with its graphic imagery of barbaric torturing and slaughtering of the animals. Understandably, the public was shocked and demanded action.

The industry was thrown into chaos as producers had to deal with thousands of heads of cattle already in transit to ports. It is believed about 10,000-13,000 people were affected in Australia – primary producers, truckies, etc. Primary producers and consumers are the ones that are carrying the burden of irresponsible management of live cattle exports.

The government has appointed Bill Farmer, a former diplomat and ambassador to Indonesia from 2005-2010, to carry out a review into Australia's live export trade. Given the urgent nature of the situation, an interim report is due by July 29 and the final report is scheduled for the end of August. The government is under considerable pressure in Australia and internationally to demonstrate that the \$320 million export trade with Indonesia is cleaned up.

Many questions have already been raised about the role of Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) and the way it conducts business. Cattle producers want to know what their levies are spent on and who will compensate them for loss of income. There are comparisons between the MLA and the corrupt behaviour of the Wheat Board which also caused embarrassment to the government when it paid bribes and broke trade sanctions against Iraq.

What is happening with the live cattle exports is just another example of a deregulated, market-driven, profit-making capitalist mode of production. It is a systemic problem. If it means cruelty to animals – so be it until exposed. If it means exporting jobs to other countries where labour is cheaper – it will be done. The problem of live animal exports is much bigger than just their slaughter in Indonesia. It remains to be seen whether Farmer tinkers at the edges to ease public angst and appease Indonesian customers, or seriously addresses the whole issue including the cruelty associated with sea transportation and Australian jobs.

PRESS FUND

Federal Climate Change Commissioner Tim Flannery says that after 2020 we may need to impose martial law to enforce carbon emission reductions and avoid climate "tipping points". The government isn't worried. It hasn't considered imposing price controls on polluting industries to accompany its proposed carbon tax, or nationalising the electricity industry, which mostly uses coal as an energy source, thereby producing almost 50 percent of our carbon dioxide emissions. But speaking of targets, you can help us meet our Press Fund target by sending in a contribution for the next issue! Many thanks to this week's generous supporters, as follows:

In memory of Harry Black Fariba \$20, Ray Harrison \$20, MUA Sydney branch and WWF retired members' branch \$100, R Molloy \$20, F B Rowdy \$25.

Peter Reed, in memory of Bob Reed, \$100

Also: Michael Day \$15, Vince Coleman \$20, RF \$15, "Round Figure" \$15

This week's total: \$350 Progressive total: \$7,470.

The Human face of Solidarity



Protestors outside the Colombian embassy in London wearing shirts with Liliana's image.

Vinnie Molina

On my recent visit to Colombia I visited Colombian trade unionist Liliana Obando. She has been held at the Buen Pastor Women's Prison in Bogota for almost three years.

The visit is grueling; arriving to line up for the visit at 7 am is not early enough. It took four hours of processing before I saw Liliana through the window in Yard 6. People I met in the queue waiting to get a number told me they sometimes spend the night outside to get one of the first places.

Getting the number is just one step, many check points follow. You are searched by dogs and questioned; if you bring food stuffs it must be searched thoroughly. You are weighed, pass through the metal detector and take your shoes off before passing to a small room where you are searched again. Finally you are asked who you are visiting. Liliana is in the 6th yard where political prisoners are held. When they learn that a whole new round of processing begins.

After a not so pleasant search, ID or passport and two finger prints are taken. The food is returned and you are walked to another building where another finger print is taken. At each of these checks your arm is stamped; you end up with an armful.

There is still another metal detector and search before getting to the door of Yard 6. Again you are asked to give your ID, name and address. Finally the prisoner who has been waiting since 8 am gets to see their visitor.

Liliana was charged with one count of rebellion and one count of fundraising for a terrorist

organisation. Rebellion is a "catch all" charge aimed at the political opposition, trade union and human rights activists. Under normal circumstances Liliana and other political prisoners charged with rebellion have their cases quashed due to irregularities in due process including the use of fabricated evidence. However, because the latter charge must be heard by a specialised anti-terrorist judge Liliana's charges come under a much more complex process and the judge has greater leeway in imposing harsher sentences up to 40 years.

Liliana's case is one of up to nine cases that emerged after computers were seized in an illegal incursion into Ecuador in which FARC (popular resistance movement) commander Raul Reyes was assassinated with 25 others. The tragic event of March 1 2008 resulted in a number of personalities, parliamentarians, trade unionists and academics being named and charged using computer files taken from the FARC encampment as evidence.

On May 18, 2011 the Supreme Court made a critical finding in the trial of former parliamentarian Wilson Borja who was also charged with links to FARC based on evidence allegedly found on the Raul Reyes computer files. The judge found the files were obtained illegally; the army didn't follow correct procedure. The computer files were deemed not admissible as evidence. Lawyers for Liliana believe she should also be immediately released.

Liliana and I spent three hours talking about her case and about international solidarity. She thanks the international solidarity movement for being instrumental in breaking the

silence and providing a voice for the 7,500 political prisoners currently in detention so their stories can be taken beyond the walls.

The international community calls for respect for human rights in Colombia, the humane treatment of political prisoners and for a humanitarian exchange of prisoners of war. A humanitarian agreement will be a first step towards a political solution to the deep armed and social conflict. Recently, for the first time almost 50 years of armed conflict was recognised by Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. The recognition of the armed conflict and its causes is an important step towards the recognition of both the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and the ELN (National Liberation Army) as belligerent forces in the conflict and should lead to their removal from terrorist lists in Colombia, US and the European Union.

At 2:45 pm I heard the whistle that signals visits are over. It was time to line up to leave the premises by 3 pm.

Liliana thanks all those in Australia and around the world whose solidarity keeps her revolutionary spirit high. She looks forward to her freedom after already spending three years behind bars despite her innocence. These three years have left serious scars on the life of her loved ones. I also had the opportunity of spending a few lovely days with her mother and children. They welcome seeing a human face of solidarity and I value learning their story. Koalas and kangaroos are essential toys in that household. For more information visit: www.inspp.org ✪

27 Australian soldiers killed in Afghanistan



The CPA deeply regrets the loss of life of the latest 4 Australians to be killed in Afghanistan.

Our policy is for Australian troops to be brought home immediately.

This brings to 27 the number of Australians killed, 170 injured.

4107 Afghan civilians have been killed since 2007 (18 in the first few days of June this year).

Australian soldiers have been accused of killing 6 civilians in Afghanistan, 5 of whom were children.

The cost for Australia of the war is \$9.3 billion up till June 2011. Another \$1.3 billion has been allocated for the period 2011-2012.

Correction
Mr Richard Towle, UN representative in Australia has advised *The Guardian* that he agrees with refugee lawyer Ms Marion Le and UN Human Rights Commissioner, Ms Navi Pillay that Nauru is preferable to Malaysia as a possible site for an off-shore asylum seeker detention centre. However, he does not agree with Ms Le's use of the expression "the lesser of two evils", nor with *The Guardian's* statement "however, it's still an evil", regarding the Nauru option. We thank Mr Towle for this clarification of his position, and we regret any inconvenience our statement may have caused him.

We must get out of Afghanistan

Peter Mac

Last week the 27th Australian soldier killed in Afghanistan was buried. Professor Hugh White, head of the ANU Strategic and Defence Studies Centre commented bitterly: "The mission has long since ceased to be about winning" and Liberal MP Russell Broadbent has expressed opposition to continued military involvement.

Last week Prime Minister Julia Gillard acknowledged growing opposition to Australia's involvement in the Afghanistan war, but stated "... we know why we are there ... and our mission is being accomplished. We are doing what we intended to do and we have a timeline for achieving our goal." She failed, however, to define either the goal or the timeline for achieving it.

A recent internet poll in Australia resulted in declarations of opposition to continued participation by most respondents, a trend echoed on local talk-back radio. In the US, the proportion of opinion poll respondents expressing opposition has rarely fallen below 50 percent. In one poll 74 percent supported a phased withdrawal of US troops and in a highly disturbing trend for the White House 39 percent said the US should get out immediately.

As justification for the invasion, most US respondents cited the combating of terrorism and the defeat of Al-Qaeda. That's not surprising. Securing an overland route to the Caspian Sea and its vast oil supplies for western interests, or contributing to a military encirclement of China are never mentioned as primary motivation for the invasion in the mass media.

However, respondents also cited the assassination of Osama bin Laden as justification for a withdrawal. The US invaded Afghanistan in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in 2001, on the deliberately superficial pretext that bin Laden was there, and it was necessary to capture or kill him because he was the leader of Al Qaeda, the organisation the Bush administration blamed for the attacks. That tactic accounts for the wild public rejoicing of many US citizens after his death: they have



now logically concluded that since he's gone the war in Afghanistan can end.

But the White House has revealed that bin Laden's assassination was planned a year in advance, which raises the possibility that the US knew of his whereabouts for even longer, perhaps since the September 11 attacks, and that they deliberately left him alone. They might have even been in collusion with him. After all, the Clinton administration named him public enemy No. 1, but in 1998 declined an offer from the Sudanese government for his deportation to the US, and the Bush regime flew his family out of the US the day after the September 11 attacks, in the only plane flying into or out of the country.

The US certainly used demonic images of bin Laden to foster public support for the invasion. So why was he killed? The answer may well be because economic self-interest is now outweighing military priorities. US President Obama has called for a US\$400 billion cut in military expenditure, in order to reduce the US\$4.3 trillion US national debt. In fact, the US is teetering on the edge of an economic abyss. Its government lives in constant fear that a foreign power will establish an international "basket of currencies" trading regime,

as the former government of Iraq was about to do, prior to its invasion by the US and its allies.

The use of the greenback as the international trading currency has cushioned the US against the potentially fearful impacts of its national debt. The dumping of the greenback in favour of a multi-currency regime would inflict massive damage on the economy of the US, and would deal a mortal blow to its position as the globally dominant power.

Claims of withdrawal

Acutely aware of mounting public opposition to the war, Obama has declared that the 100,000 US troops will leave Afghanistan by 2014, in a phased withdrawal starting next month.

But procrastination is the name of the game. Carl Levin, Democrat member of the Senate Armed Services committee has called for an immediate withdrawal of 15,000 troops, but former Presidential republican candidate John McCain has nominated a figure of only 3,000.

Moreover, current US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has stated his opposition to a withdrawal of troops if it would threaten the safety of remaining forces, and his incoming successor Leon Panetta has called for a "condition-based" withdrawal.

Taken together, both statements imply that some US forces should remain in Afghanistan indefinitely, just as in Iraq, where 47,000 US troops are still stationed.

The Pentagon warlords are certainly not impressed with the economic arguments for withdrawal. They're also frightened that their allies will take the US government at its word and immediately withdraw their own troops, leaving the US as the sole remaining force. Last week Gates thundered: "I assure my fellow ministers that there will be no rush to the exits on our part - and we expect the same from our allies!"

Going home

Australia has to bring its troops home, not just because of the declining power of the US but because we should never have been involved in the first place. We have been complicit in an aggressive multinational invasion that has wrought terrible damage

on Afghanistan and has resulted in the installation of yet another corrupt, despotic government.

Just as in the Vietnam War, our young soldiers are dying in a bloody, totally unjustified conflict with no end in sight (despite claims to the contrary by conservative politicians), to fulfil the imperial ambitions of the United States.

Afghan citizens, including combatants and civilians, have died in far greater numbers than the troops of the western armies. The Afghan people did not ask us to invade their country. They had just as much right to live in peace as our citizens. Because of its role in the invading force, Australia should offer the people of Afghanistan post-war reparations.

And we should be mourning the Afghan dead as well as our own. As poet John Donne observed: "... never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee".

Pete's Corner



Sydney

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O'Farrell tries out Tea Party industrial laws

Attack on NSW public sector workers is the model for Abbott's new "WorkChoices"

Len Waster

The recently elected Liberal O'Farrell NSW government has effectively tried to bushwhack the state's labour movement by rushing through amendments to the industrial laws. These amendments aim to slash wages and remove the rights of NSW public sector workers. With these amendments NSW's industrial laws will be the most extreme ever enacted in Australia.

NSW's 400,000 public servants, nurses, teachers, police, firefighters, public transport workers and ambulance workers will be the only workers in Australia with no recourse to, or protection of an independent industrial court. Instead, they will be ruled directly by government dictate. Their employer will take upon itself the sole say on the conditions its employees will work under.

The new laws give a single government minister, the Minister of Finance, direct control over wages and conditions. The government retains the pretence of an Industrial Relations Commission, but the Commission must give effect to any policy "that is declared by the regulations to be an aspect of government policy that is required to be given effect to by the Commission", that is, whatever regulation the government cooks up, the Commission must dish it out to the NSW public sector workforce.

The NSW government can use its new powers to issue a regulation on anything it wants in relation to its public sector workforce - it could regulate for a complete wage freeze, removal of leave, cuts in redundancy provisions, variations in staff to client ratios, removal of rights to take industrial action or to associate in unions, or legitimacy of workers to monitor occupational health and safety conditions in their workplaces.

Certainly, the most immediate effect of the amendments - to restrict wage increases to 2.5 percent per annum, effectively a wage cut, given the rate of increase in costs of living - is to block wage and salary rises already in the pipeline that the Industrial Relations Commission was to rule on in the next few months.

The Public Service Association, with 45,000 members, had a wage case before the Industrial Relations Commission that was expected to result in an increase of 3.5-4 per cent in the next few weeks.

The NSW Nurses Association, with

35,000 members in public hospitals and 1,200 in disability services, was seeking an increase in penalty rates for night staff and expecting to gain a 3.9 percent wage increase for disability services and aged care workers, in line with the 3.9 percent already awarded to public hospital nurses this financial year.

Police are the only public sector workers who are exempted from the 2.5 percent cap - for now - because the Association pressed Christian Democrat MP Fred Nile to get the exemption from the government.

Nevertheless, president of the Police Association, Scott Weber, declared the Association was not convinced it could take the government on its word:

"Before the election, Barry O'Farrell said we would retain our right to an independent umpire. But less than two months after the election, he tried to take it away. How can we trust this government again?"

Greens MLC David Shoebridge, in a marathon six-hour speech aimed at filibustering the government's attempt to bulldoze the new laws through the NSW Upper House of Parliament last week, has pointed out that the new laws are even more radical than John Howard's WorkChoices:

"Despite all its flaws, even under WorkChoices unions could approach the Commonwealth Industrial Relations Court to set minimum entitlements without being threatened with a veto by the government. Under O'Farrell's new laws, all bets are off, and the government of the day will get the power to veto wage rises, and cut back on conditions, by simply issuing a regulation".

In reality the NSW Liberal-National government's attack on public sector workers' rights, is a trial run by the right wing, in a key state, to develop an even more vicious set of anti-worker laws than the Howard government's detested laws. What O'Farrell is trying on in NSW now is a taste of what an Abbot Liberal government will have in store for all workers in Australia if it is elected.

According to Shoebridge, "It is now clear NSW is just the first stage in the federal Coalition's plan to relaunch WorkChoices. ... A failure by Tony Abbott to reject the NSW Coalition's IR plan can only mean one thing - that this is the new IR model for the Federal Coalition."

The attack on workers' rights affects

everyone in NSW - our health, schools, TAFE, aged care, our communities and all our essential services.

These same sorts of attacks are being carried out and copied around the world, as global capital reasserts its control in the aftermath of the 2008-09 global financial crisis and prepares to withstand future crises. Its aims in doing this are to subjugate labour while pushing the costs of the crisis onto the working class internationally.

The capitalist ruling class, through institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, is implementing its neo-liberal policy: austerity measures in Europe and the UK, suppression of unions and horrific attacks on workers in developing countries, and privatisation of public services and attacks against public sector workers everywhere. Fanatics and potential neo-fascist movements, such as the Tea Party in the USA are being cultivated to advocate and implement these policies.

The action of the O'Farrell government closely mimics that of US governors recently elected with Tea Party endorsement, such as Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, whose vicious and undemocratic anti-public sector laws have caused widespread workers' and popular revolt. This is of little surprise given the intimate links between the Australian Liberals and the US Republicans, and the infestation of both political formations with Christian fundamentalists, anti-evolutionists, climate change deniers and neo-liberal ideologues.

Already the revolt against the O'Farrell laws is rapidly emerging.

Your Rights at Work groupings, of the kind that so effectively combated the Howard government's WorkChoices, are starting to form.

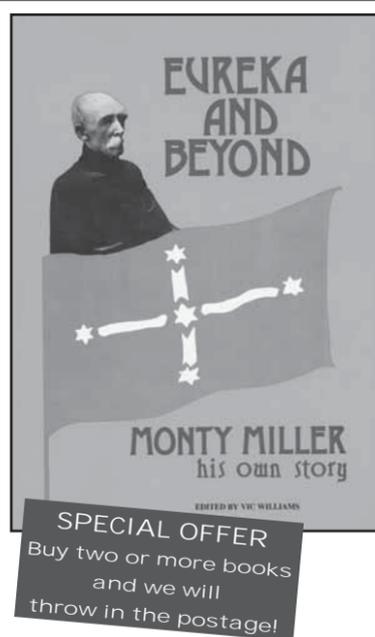
Pickets and demonstrations have been held outside the NSW Parliament House and a major action is being planned for this Wednesday June 15, when the second reading of the Bill will be passed in the Lower House.

A series of regional rallies is also planned by Unions NSW over the next few months, leading to another major action outside Parliament in August.

Now is the time for the whole labour movement to mobilise to make these laws unworkable in NSW. Only in this way will we stop such laws becoming the model for all Australia. ✪



NSW's 400,000 public servants, nurses, teachers, police, firefighters, public transport workers and ambulance workers will be the only workers in Australia with no recourse to, or protection of an independent industrial court.



Eureka and Beyond - Monty Miller his own story

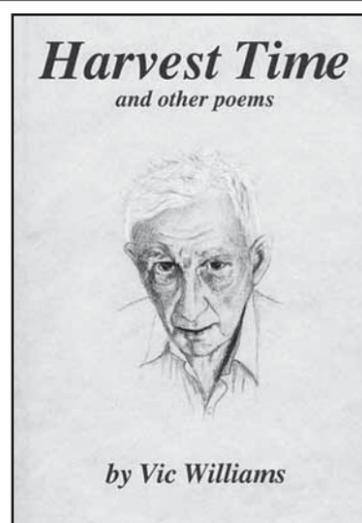
Edited by Vic Williams

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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. This book contains Monty's own description of the Eureka Stockade, extracts from another work "Labor's Road to Freedom" with an introduction by Katharine Susannah Throssell (Pritchard). There is an introduction by Vic Williams along with his poem "Are You Ready Monty Miller?" It is a first-hand account of one of Australia's most historic events. Written in a colourful and entertaining style, you won't be able to put it down until the end. Buy two copies - one for yourself, and one for a friend.

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Letter to the ABC Board from Friends of the ABC

Maurice Newman AC, Chairman, ABC Board

Re: ABC In-house Production and the Melbourne Accommodation Project (MAP)

Since its inception the ABC was envisaged as a producer – a maker of programs of cultural value and intellectual integrity, not simply a broadcaster of material produced externally. Its independence depends on it having a strong component of in-house production in all program genres.

Yet in recent years, Friends of the ABC has viewed with dismay the ABC's shedding of many talented creative and technical staff who have produced programs that delighted and informed ABC TV audiences. We have seen ABC TV production scaled down to the point where no Australian drama is any longer produced in-house and the broadcaster's highly acclaimed Natural History Unit has been closed.

ABC resources have been increasingly diverted to the private production sector at the expense of in-house television production in Sydney and in Melbourne, where its Ripponlea studios were once a hive of activity making programs for the ABC.

We are unaware of any non-news and current affairs television production that is happening or has been planned for Queensland, South Australia or West Australia at this time, and understand that no decision has been made on the future of Tasmania's single in-house production.

10,425 members of the community who signed the petition to the ABC Board which FABC presented to you late last year called on the Board to rebuild the ABC's production capacity to ensure the broadcaster develops a range of high quality programs, and is no longer so dependent on outsourced production.

It is the view of many discerning ABC audience members that the quality of much local ABC television programming has declined. FABC regularly receives feedback that TV programming has become too populist and less innovative – the entertainment less stimulating, and factual programming more lightweight.

A secure base from which to nurture and develop future in-house and external talent is being lost, as the critical mass required for the ABC to remain a program producer is eroded.

ABC outsourcing looks no longer to be used to provide opportunities and support for up-and-coming producers with new ideas. Outsourced programming screened on ABC TV is often barely distinguishable from that which appears on commercial outlets. Not surprising, given that ABC television production looks to have been overwhelmingly handed over to production companies and that programs produced for the ABC are also being made with sales to commercial content providers in mind at the outset.

The financial interest of private production companies to secure ongoing business with the ABC is a further incentive not to take the risks that are needed to achieve edgy programming.

The strongly centralised commissioning model which results from the ABC's high level of outsourcing inevitably leads to loss of diversity and innovation within program genres. It is also resulting in less local production in states outside NSW. This is unacceptable for a public broadcaster which is meant to operate in the interests of the entire nation.



Secret trials of genetically modified wheat and barley have begun near Narrabri in NSW. The stated goal is to produce more nutritious bread. But the CSIRO which is running the three-year long experiment together with various government research agencies and a US company, Arcadia Biosciences, is using the commercial-in-confidence excuse not to divulge the information about what exactly they are doing. Field trials of genetically-modified plants carry the danger of contaminating natural strains. This possibility worries not only environmental groups but farmers as well, especially organic farmers.

Germany is the first major industrialised country to decide to phase out all of its 17 nuclear reactors. The oldest eight reactors are off the grid now and the last one will be closed by 2022. The decision was prompted by the recent nuclear disaster in Japan but the issue of nuclear power has been argued about for years. Germany has 22 percent of its electricity needs covered by nuclear energy and will have to look for other sources.

Substandard accommodation without heating, facilities or bedrooms; not enough food, allegations of theft, rorting of rents and neglect – these are the conditions refugees live under in a resettlement program which is supposed to be responsible for their housing and welfare. The company in charge is headed by none other than the familiar face of the former Australian Wheat Board chairman Trevor Flugge who had been embroiled in the Iraqi kickback scandal before the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Mr Flugge had paid \$55 million for the company after it had won the contract to resettle refugees and within months serious problems emerged. The Department of Immigration had been told about many of the concerns but had failed to act. Moreover it renewed the contract with the company in March. However, the Minister for Immigration ordered an urgent investigation and a scathing report was released at the end of May into the treatment of refugees in the Newcastle area.

Australia has the world's largest number of international students as a proportion of its tertiary enrolments. The \$18 billion sector damaged its reputation after attacks on Indian students in 2009. Student numbers dropped and universities felt the financial strain. Later this year the Australian Human Rights Commission will release its minimum standard for student safety and welfare. It is aiming to protect 470,000 international students from inadequate housing, work exploitation and violence. One of the main questions to resolve is accommodation. Universities are urged to provide housing guarantees to international students. Public transport concession for all students, regardless of their citizenship, is also a priority.

Coal train stopped in tracks

Greenpeace activists last week obstructed a coal train at Mount Arthur coal mine owned by BHP Billiton – one of Australia's most polluting companies – in the Hunter Valley.

One activist – Erland Howden – secured himself in a tiny box and was prepared to stay there for 72 hours.

Greenpeace are calling on BHP Billiton to pay for its pollution. It follows on from when the mining giant was handed its pollution tax bill of \$338 million for 2010-2011. It's a small amount for the company – just 0.6 percent of its annual revenue – but a huge amount for Australians. This money would make a significant difference to

making clean energy bigger and cheaper and helping families adjust to a low carbon economy.

BHP Billiton successfully avoided the super resources tax and is now busy lobbying to cheat its way out of paying the pollution tax.

Greenpeace are tired of the big polluters getting their voice heard above ordinary Australians. While the government is negotiating a price on pollution, the activists are calling for a fair deal – not one that serves the interests of the big polluters.

Erland aka 'the boy in the box' said when he was young he was taught to clean up after himself. He took the action to tell BHP Billiton to clean up its own mess. ☘

Take Action

- Contact Mr. Hubie van Dalsen, President, Metallurgical Coal at BHP Billiton – the company's carbon price negotiator. Tell him you want BHP Billiton to pay its fair share of the tax on pollution 1300 55 47 57
- Contact Climate Change Minister Greg Combet and Energy Minister Martin Ferguson. Tell them to stand up for the national interest not the big polluters. Combet: 02 4954 2611 greg.combet.mp@aph.gov.au Ferguson: 03 9416 8690 martin.ferguson.MP@aph.gov.au

Industrialised emitters exposed

A new study for Oxfam reveals that developing countries are making more of an effort to cut their greenhouse gas emissions than developed countries. Oxfam estimates that over 60 percent of emissions cuts by 2020 are likely to be made by developing countries.

The analysis, which was completed by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and commissioned as part of Oxfam's new global GROW campaign, compares four of the most widely respected studies of emissions reductions pledges.

Oxfam Australia Climate Change Advisor Kelly Dent, in Bonn, Germany for the UN Climate Change Conference, said while all countries should do their fair share to tackle

climate change, rich industrialised countries are not pulling their weight.

"No longer can Australia and other developed nations use the excuse that we must wait for action from China and India before we move to drastically cut our emissions," Ms Dent said.

"We now have evidence that China's total emissions reductions could be nearly double those of the US by 2020. The emissions reductions of developing countries could also be three times greater than those of the EU by 2020.

"Currently Australia is on course to actually increase its emissions by around 24 percent on 1990 levels by 2020.

"Poorer countries are working hard to reduce their pollution – while

also suffering the worst impacts of climate change – even though they are not historically responsible for the majority of the world's emissions," Ms Dent said.

The SEI study also finds that the emission reductions of China, India, South Africa and Brazil could be slightly greater than the combined efforts of the seven biggest developed countries – the US, Europe, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Russia – by 2020.

It also shows that the total emissions cuts pledged by all countries are not sufficient to prevent global temperatures rising above the two degrees target agreed by governments in December 2010 at the UN Climate Change talks in Cancun, Mexico. ☘

From health service to health care industry

Jeremy Seabrook

IN November 2010, a US think-tank, the Commonwealth Fund, published a report that stated that Britain is the only one of 11 industrialised countries where wealth does not determine access to health care. Perhaps this is why the National Health Service (NHS) is under attack from the Conservative/Liberal coalition government in Britain, a coalition which has staked everything upon “deficit reduction”, but is, at the same time, undertaking the most far-reaching “reforms” of the health service since its inception in 1948.

The health service in Britain became a major part of the welfare state, that historic compromise between capital and labour following the war against Nazism and Fascism in 1945. The welfare state was a pledge that “never again” would the inflation and insecurity that seized Germany in the 1930s give rise to the extremism and violence that led to conflict and left Europe in ruins, strewn with bones and ashes.

Such a noble endeavour did not go uncontested. Those of us old enough to remember, recall fierce objections to the introduction of health care free at the point of delivery; and Aneurin Bevan, the radical Labour politician responsible for it, admitted it had been achieved only by “stuffing the doctors’ mouths with gold”. A poll of members of the British Medical Association in February 1948 found 40,000 opposed the service and only 5,000 in favour. The Conservative popular press published dire warnings that the poor would rush to furnish themselves with the amenity of spectacles, and have all their teeth drawn for the sake of free dentures.

These benign publications gave little publicity to the backlog of untreated sickness and undiagnosed disease, much of it a consequence of industrial life – cancers, consumption and lung diseases caused by exposure to hazardous materials, years of malnutrition that stunted bodies and deformed limbs, and left a legacy of disability and early death among industrial workers and their families; a legacy which still remains, since life expectancy in parts of Glasgow is still 12 years less than that in southern England.

Improvement in health care

Over the years, the National Health Service became one of Britain’s most cherished institutions. Set up at a time of extreme austerity in the late 1940s, it nevertheless addressed harsh inequalities of health care, and led to an unprecedented improvement in the growth and nurture of a new generation, an extension of life expectancy and the relief of debilitating and painful conditions which the poor had stoically borne in the past.

I can remember the women of my childhood, afraid to consult a doctor, hoping that the lump they had discovered in their abdomen or breast would pass with the use of patent medicines bought from the chemist; and in due course, they died, often in great pain, without even speaking of their symptoms to those they loved.

We always passed the monumental bulk of our local infirmary (the very word implied debility) with apprehension, for it was common knowledge that hospitals were places where people went to die. We held our breath as we walked by “the fever hospital”, site of the casualties of Victorian industrial life, abridged by insanitary



conditions and outbreaks of cholera, diphtheria and typhoid well into the 19th century.

It is significant that the “compromise” between capital and labour reached in the Western world after the Second World War lasted only as long as the power of organised labour. With the erosion of that power, decay of the Soviet Union and the ideology of a single global economy that poured into the vacuum, the labour of the world entered into fierce competition for the privilege of serving a capitalism to which “no alternative” was triumphantly proclaimed.

This has permitted those who have bided their time, waiting for the balance of global power to tilt away from labour, to embark upon a dismantling of the welfare state in the West, and to embark upon a profane pilgrimage of return to a capitalism that knows nothing of human need, and everything of the necessity for profit.

They have been patient, these enemies of human well-being. Even Margaret Thatcher, whose great project was the demolition of manufacturing industry in Britain, did not openly attack the health service, although she was content to see it wither from lack of support. Indeed, the mass unemployment engendered by her successful attempt to “integrate” Britain into a global division of labour – including the “big bang” which deregulated the finance industry – depended upon the welfare state to mute the human impact of the disemployment of millions.

Tony Blair, Labour’s messiah, as it were, to the Tories’ prophet, Margaret Thatcher, introduced aspects of the market into the National Health Service. Under the Private Finance Initiative, a program of hospital building was initiated, whereby capital would be provided by the market and repayment deferred to the decades to come. Although he was also an enthusiast of “Competition”, “choice” and a plurality of “health care providers”, his government tripled

investment in the health service. The people of Britain insisted they didn’t want competition or choice: they just wanted good, reliable health care when they needed it. At the end of Labour’s period in power, almost 90 percent of the people of Britain said they found the health service “good” or “excellent”.

Of course the society in which the health service exists is quite different from that in which it was set up. No one imagined in 1948 that the cost of alcohol- or drug-related disorders would consume so many resources, nor that traffic accidents and criminal injuries would make such demands, nor even that life expectancy would have stranded so many people in hospital wards at the end of their days.

These changes have placed strains on a service where demands have risen and thousands of people now routinely visit Accident and Emergency hospital departments for minor ailments, while the emergency ambulance service last year had to deal with trivial calls – a woman who had a problem with her knitting, a car-driver who wanted to know the time, a man who complained about the birdsong that kept him awake at night, Elvis sightings, UFOs and requests for taxis.

Sabotage

During the period of Labour government, their Conservative opponents were busily working away at ingenious means to sabotage a health service which it was their highest ambition to transform into a “health care industry”. This quiet work of demolition became headline news in August 2009, when a Conservative Member of the European Parliament, Daniel Hannan (former speechwriter for past leaders of the Conservative Party), described the NHS in a US TV interview as “a relic” and a “60-year-old mistake”.

Other prominent Conservatives called the NHS “a national sickness service”, and accused it of being “no longer relevant to the 21st century”, and “failing to meet public expectations”. David Cameron, who has shown himself a master of dissimulation, rendering plausible his mendacity by means of indignation whereas Tony Blair relied on righteousness, was quick to distance himself from these remarks, saying that he stood “four-square” behind the NHS. He has also invoked his gratitude to the NHS for the care it gave to his six-year-old son who died of cerebral palsy in 2009.

This personal tribute appeared to have been reinforced in the 2010 election campaign, when Cameron promised “no more top-down reform” of the health service. Immediately after the formation of the coalition, he announced the most sweeping reorganisation since 1948, whereby consortia of doctors, general practitioners, would receive 60 percent of the health budget to commission care.

They would be “free” to buy in treatment from “any willing provider”, private companies, charities, not-for-profit companies or existing health service employees. That this simple expedient is a prelude to privatisation is obvious: general practitioners will require advisers, experts and advocates to ensure they are getting the best treatment, or “value for money” (a tautologous piece of commonsense on the tongue of every politician). This opens the way to large-scale US and other private interests, not a few of which have made significant contributions to Conservative Party funds. Providers will be paid “according to performance”, as though health care were some kind of cabaret act.

The present government has adopted so many policies which appeared in no election manifesto – indeed these were peppered with denials that any such policies were even contemplated – that the issue is no mere matter of “broken promises” (all parties do that), but of deception so blatant that they are close to forfeiting their claim to have been legitimately elected; a serious breach of those very “democratic processes” which the whole world is exhorted to emulate.

The justification for all this depends upon an abuse of the language of “modernisation”, “radical reform”, the meaningless declaration that “doing nothing is not an option” – a political idiolect unintelligible to most people.

The Liberal Democrats, junior partners in the coalition, have been under pressure from

During the period of Labour government, their Conservative opponents were busily working away at ingenious means to sabotage a health service which it was their highest ambition to transform into a “health care industry”.

Book Review by Joel Wendland

Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention

The esteemed late professor of African American studies and author Manning Marable closes his powerful biography of Malcolm X with these words:

"A deep respect for, and a belief in, black humanity was at the heart of this revolutionary visionary's faith. And as his social vision expanded to include people of divergent nationalities and racial identities, his gentle humanism and anti-racism could have become a platform for a new kind of radical, global ethnic politics. Instead of the fiery symbol of ethnic violence and religious hatred ... Malcolm X should become a representative for hope and human dignity. At least for the African-American people, he has already come to embody those loftier aspirations."

Marable's conclusions reflect the fact that the outpouring of love and honour shown by African Americans at the time of his assassination show they have always held him in high esteem despite ideological or programmatic differences. Positive public opinion of Malcolm X among whites, however, as Marable writes, is a new phenomenon.

For most whites, during and after his life ended, Malcolm X served as little more than a symbol of imagined reverse racism and the supposed danger of violence by African American men. Disdainful attitudes among the police (especially white officers, detectives and the "brass"), as recorded by Marable in the book, reveal the level of fear and hate many in the power structure held for Malcolm X. The decision by Doubleday, the original contracted publisher for the famous *Autobiography*, to drop the book after the assassination also suggests the level of hostility that corporation felt whites held toward the civil rights leader.

Spike Lee's epic 1992 biopic *X* and the emergence of the multicultural popularity of hip hop, which frequently appropriated images of and words by Malcolm X, helped to change those hostile perceptions of the civil rights leader, however. The widespread use of the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (as told to Alex Haley), especially in universities, also played an important role in propelling this change, Marable explains. In these settings, the autobiography has often been read as a "rags to riches" tale; a story of the poor but exceptionally intelligent Black man who rises to his calling, a narrative that fits well with the dominant individualist "bootstraps" myth of American social mobility.

Marable carefully shows the extent to which that famous book should be viewed sceptically. His reading of the record of the communications between Malcolm X and Alex Haley, as well as those between Haley and agent and publishers, for example, show Haley delaying publication for more than a year because of Malcolm's own rapid, ongoing ideological transformation as well as the drama over his break with the Nation of Islam. Haley repeatedly asks his publishers for more time in order to gain a stronger sense of how these changes were impacting Malcolm X's thinking and the new directions he sought to move in. Even further, three important politically laden chapters were not included in the final book.

While the *Autobiography* remains one of the most significant American political works of the 20th century, it shouldn't be regarded as the definitive account of Malcolm X's life. For example, as Marable documents, Malcolm X's description of his criminal exploits in his early life are likely exaggerated in the *Autobiography*.

Marable points out that through this exaggerated account, Malcolm X sought to replicate the myth of "bootstraps" in a new framework, where the story of personal transformation takes place not within and because of an idealised capitalist democratic America,

but rather despite the realities of a society rife with inequality. Malcolm wanted to highlight the impact the Nation of Islam – the discipline, education, and sense of community it instilled – had on his life.

Within the organisational framework of a separated and idealised community that rejected white supremacy and the pervasive denigration and structural inequality it imposed on African Americans, Malcolm X sought to suggest his personal narrative was proof of America's failures and of the Nation's righteousness. Later he would seek to have it read as the potential for self-actualisation through the political struggles of the world's oppressed, Marable suggests.

Even as he broke with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X recognised and remained loyal to this particular influence it had on his life as long as he could. That conflict also reveals how, as Marable argues, Malcolm X articulated a process of transformation away from accepting or reproducing the images or stereotypes created, imposed and demanded by white society – in much the same manner as Fanon's more focused theoretical and scientific writings. (Fanon's writings wouldn't have significant readership in the US until several years after Malcolm X's death.)

It is in this context – the unrelenting critique of white supremacy and colonialism – that his life must be read. In addition, the common refusal by his critics to examine the transformative and transformational elements of Malcolm's thought and work is no longer warranted. Marable's work makes plain that attempts by his critics to dismiss him as simply violent or racist or separatist is baseless.

Controversial elements of the book – corruption and questionable practices in the Nation of Islam, sexual infidelities, sexuality, infighting, Marable's reading of the events and subsequent police investigation of the assassination – should not detract from the importance of Malcolm X's life or from our joint effort to understand his contributions to American radical politics. Those difficult

details humanise the man and the people who surrounded him. The controversial dimensions of the story also highlight the importance of unity, the need to forge political and communitarian alliances across and through socially constructed differences, something Malcolm increasingly saw as the most important factor in the struggle against white supremacy.

Other features of the book add to the political significance of Marable's work. Marable's meticulous use of secret FBI and police surveillance files reveals an important part of the story. The role of police and FBI informers and agents within Malcolm X's and the Nation's circles is given detailed examination. Marable also relentlessly critiques and contextualises sexism within the Nation and in Malcolm X's thinking and life, though his ability to reinvent and develop his thinking, as well as the fact that women were leaders among the people who gathered around him in the Organisation of Afro-American Unity, suggest the possibility that this behaviour, too, may have taken a turn had he survived his conflict with the Nation of Islam.

Much has been made of Marable's examination of Malcolm X's sexuality and the threads of evidence that suggest he may have had sexual relationships with at least one man. That this informed speculation has been labelled "allegations" or "charges" or "accusations" suggests the need to still take steps forward with respect to an egalitarian understanding sexual orientation. Human sexuality isn't a crime.

And I for one feel a deeper connection to Malcolm X's humanity knowing he may have sought physical and emotional intimacy with other men. Is he a new gay icon? Probably not yet.

This is one of the most important new books out this year. Readable and groundbreaking, it will be hard to put down once you begin reading it.

Political Affairs ✪



their supporters to block the "reforms"; and such has been the outcry of professionals in the health service – who are of a different order from those who resisted tooth and nail the introduction of the NHS 63 years ago – that the government has said it will "pause, listen and engage" and modify some of the more extreme passages of the current Bill passing through Parliament. They will insert some democratic control over "consortia" which will commission treatment for patients whom we may expect any time now to see re-branded as "customers".

Free-market ideology

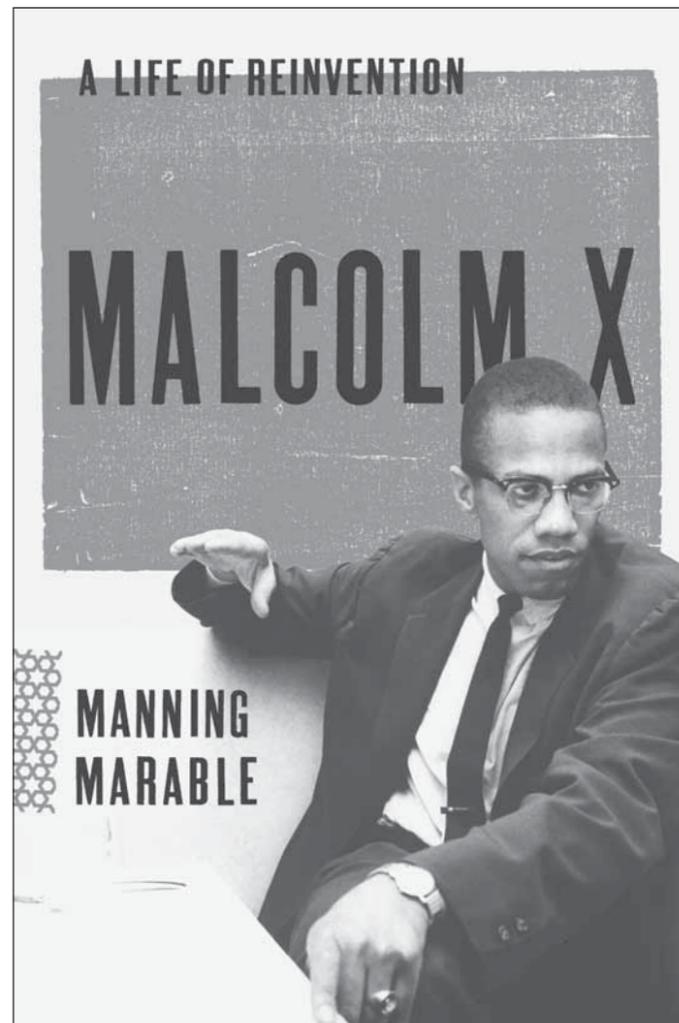
David Cameron has taken on the task of completing a process initiated with such panache by Margaret Thatcher, extending to the public sector the privatisations and free market ideology which resulted in the de-industrialisation of Britain in the 1980s and 1990s. While promising to increase spending on the health service "year on year", he has simultaneously demanded £20 billion in "efficiency savings", which have already led to significant cuts in services.

It is an epic project. The world is watching; for at the very moment when it is clear that India, China, Brazil, Indonesia and other advancing economies (are they economies or countries? – the words have become interchangeable) must introduce some form of protection for their most vulnerable people against the ravages of global capitalism. The West – the model supposed to inspire them – is busy destroying by guile and subterfuge the very shield their people required against the violence of free markets.

It would be a great irony if, far from creating the "level playing field" with its upstart competitors which it claims, the West should clutch in its dotage at the discredited dogmas of laissez-faire, an ideology it was obliged to abandon as a result of the human wreckage with which it littered the 19th century, even as the "emerging" world overtakes it, both in economic success and in humanitarian protection for its people.

If the present administration incessantly invokes the future, modernisation and reform, this is precisely because it is hurtling Britain backwards into the familiar, but far from comforting, embrace of an ideology which makes people captive once more, hostages to markets, whose freedom is the highest law.

Third World Network ✪



Bahrain faces fresh torture claims

The Bahraini authorities must independently investigate fresh claims that dozens of doctors and nurses on trial before a military court were tortured in detention and made to sign false confessions, says Amnesty International.

Relatives of the accused have alleged to Amnesty International that security officials at Bahrain's Criminal Investigations Directorate forced detainees to stand for long periods, deprived them of sleep, beat them with rubber hoses and wooden boards containing nails, and made them sign papers while blindfolded.

One of the detainees, who was bailed last month, was slapped in the face while blindfolded, insulted and threatened: "If you don't confess I'll take you to someone who will make you confess".

The same detainee was forced to remain standing for hours, denied sleep and placed in front of a cold air conditioning unit all night and then interrogated again the next morning while still blindfolded.

"I was so tired that I kept quiet and only answered yes or no," he told Amnesty International.

"After a while he gave me some

papers and made me sign them while I was still blindfolded. I did not see what I signed, but I signed on eight or nine papers."

The trial of the 48 medical staff, most of whom worked at the Salmaniya Medical Complex, opened at a military court in Manama last week but was adjourned until June 13. Some of the defendants have been released on bail but others remain in prison.

The doctors and nurses face a range of charges arising from their involvement in treating people injured when security forces violently crushed mass pro-reform protests in February and March. They are accused of misusing their positions at Salmaniya hospital to make false allegations of security force violence, to have operated on some patients unnecessarily causing their deaths and to have denied medical treatment to others for sectarian reasons, as well as a string of related offences.

A relative of one of the accused who attended the court told Amnesty International that the prisoners' heads had been shaved and most had lost a lot of weight since their arrest weeks ago. The men among them were made

to stand in the hot sun for around 30 minutes before the session began: "They were blindfolded and handcuffed, and these were only removed when the session began."

"The Bahraini authorities must immediately undertake an independent investigation into these new torture allegations and bring any officials responsible to justice," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"The court must also throw out any 'confessions' that were obtained through torture or other duress as international law requires."

Before the trial opened, detainees were only able to communicate with their families by phone. Their lawyers had not been permitted to see them and were not allowed to be present when they were interrogated, first by security officers and then by the military prosecutor when they were held in pre-trial detention. The Bahraini authorities ignored their lawyers' requests to see their clients.

"All detainees must be granted prompt and regular access to lawyers of their own choosing, their relatives and any medical treatment that they may require," said Malcolm Smart.

"The authorities must also ensure that doctors, nurses, paramedics and other health and medical workers are able to carry out their work without discrimination, interference or fear of reprisal." ✪



Call for solidarity for dismissed DHL worker in Norway

Unions affiliated to the International Transporters Workers Federation (ITF) are being urged to stand by a DHL worker in Norway who has been dismissed by local managers.

Monica Nkechi Okpe, a shop steward and branch secretary of the ITF-affiliated Oslo Transport Workers' Union at the global delivery company's supply chain in Norway was dismissed from her position on May 6. The company has stated that she was sacked because of "unexplained absences". However, the union refutes these claims; it believes that the reasons for the dismissal were manufactured by local management as part of efforts to dispose of an effective trade union representative.

The ITF understands that the case is currently being investigated and could be taken to court in Norway.

In protest letters to the company in Norway as well as to regional, European and head office representatives, the ITF and its campaign partner UNI global union, said:

"The ITF and UNI are extremely concerned at this reported activity of the DHL management in Ulven and we would seek your urgent investigation of this situation to ensure that Monica is reinstated immediately.

"Sadly this is not the first time we have had to write to DHL management about firing trade union activists, therefore in the meantime, we see it as our duty to inform our international community and will do so."

The ITF and UNI are calling on unions to send protest letters to the company and messages of solidarity to the union.

For more information visit: www.itfglobal.org ✪

In Cyprus, Communists gain, but so do rightists

Gary Bond

In parliamentary elections on May 22 in the island nation of Cyprus, the governing AKEL party – the island's Communist Party – gained seats and increased its voting percentage.

AKEL, the Progressive Party of Working People, increased its representation by one seat over the 2006 elections, for a total of 19 seats in the 56-member House of Representatives. Its percentage of the vote also increased to 32.67 percent.

Those elected included AKEL General Secretary Andros Kyprianou and the head of the party's International Relations Department, George Loukaides. The president of Cyprus, Dimitris Christofias, elected in 2008, was previously AKEL general secretary.

AKEL's good showing can in part be attributed to the hard work of the party's rank and file who, before the election, knocked on virtually every door in Cyprus.

But credit also is due to the pro-people program that the AKEL government has implemented since 2008. One measure that stands out is the increase in the minimum wage to a level, which, dollar for dollar, is actually slightly higher than that in the US.

President Christofias has said that Cyprus will never adapt anti-people policies as a response to the global capitalist economic crisis.

But despite AKEL's good results, its partner in the governing coalition, the Democratic Party or DIKO, lost two seats and now holds nine, giving the AKEL-DIKO coalition a total of 28 seats. And the right-wing opposition Democratic Rally party known as DISY gained two seats, for a total of 20 seats, one more than AKEL. In addition, the Social Democratic Party EDEK, and the European Party or EVROKO, a right-wing splinter off DISY, won five and two seats respectively.

Following the election, the right-wing DISY began to manoeuvre to have a candidate of its choice elected as president of the new House.

First it tried to convince the Democratic Party to leave the government and join it in an anti-AKEL coalition. That effort to split the governing coalition failed.

So DISY leaders turned to AKEL, proposing a presidency which would rotate between them. AKEL rejected this proposal.

Then DISY approached the Social Democrats in another attempt to cobble together an anti-AKEL coalition. DISY was able to

find common cause with them by promising to support their candidate. Even with their support and the more obvious support of the right-wing EVROKO Party the rightist DISY-led coalition still did not have enough votes to elect a House President.

Consequently, enormous pressure was put on a right-wing DIKO deputy. The deputy yielded to this pressure and, as a result the Social Democrats' Yiannakis Omirou was elected president of the Parliament, by one vote. The erstwhile DIKO deputy, Zaharias Kouliou, who broke ranks, has been expelled from the party and DIKO's leader has demanded that he resign from Parliament.

Political observers in Cyprus believe that the right wing's real goal is to oust Communist President Christofias in 2013 and elect DISY leader Nicos Anastasiades in his place. But the Social Democratic EDEK may prove to be an unreliable partner for such a venture. The two would seem to be a political odd couple to begin with and EDEK has demonstrated its willingness to break with coalition partners. Only time will tell if this most recent "marriage of convenience" will last.

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NATO inflicted Libyan deaths

Deborah Dupre

In the CIA kick-started war on Libya, The New York Times report by John F Burns, calling Libyan civilian casualties “propaganda,” does not square with a series of WBAIX in-hospital interviews (posted below) by Joshalyn Lawrence that show civilian victim survivors of US/NATO intensifying bomb raids, both witnessed by a human rights fact-finding mission including Cynthia McKinney and former members of parliament, who report it is NATO spin that mainstream media is reporting.

“Sightings of civilian casualties have been rare,” reported Burns on June 6. “Visits to bombing sites, hospitals and funerals have produced a succession of blunders, including patients identified as bombing victims who turned out not to be, empty coffins at funerals and burials where some of those interred turned out not to be airstrike victims at all.”

The Lawrence videos, on the WBAIX channel, of hospitalised civilians is evidence that, rather than injuries and killings by bombs being “rare” or reporting “blunders,” they are realities. Graphic images of the wounded are documented in the WBAIX videos created by Lawrence.

In the videos, one after another wounded innocent civilian described atrocities to Cynthia McKinney, in a fact-finding mission with a team including a delegation of former MPs and professors from France, all now in Tripoli.

The live-stream Lawrence videos on DeBar’s channel document the NATO attacks and the injured, showing their wounds and describing friends and co-workers killed.

McKinney’s fact-finder team is seen entering one hospital room after another, each with the injured and the doctor explaining how the injury occurred and showing the injuries.

Houses are “completely destroyed” and meanwhile, according

to McKinney, NATO has its own psychological operation in progress.

In a June 7 statement by McKinney, she refutes NATO claims about making “significant progress” in “protecting Libyan civilians” and “targeting military intelligence headquarters in downtown Tripoli.”

The fact-finder team, of which McKinney is a delegate, planned a program to visit camps of internally displaced persons in the area but this could not occur because of US/NATO attacks.

“[W]e are not able to complete our program while Tripoli is under attack. I will do my best to visit some of the areas bombed today when and if this attack lets up.”

Like *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* headlined “Libya government fails to prove claims of NATO casualties” and the *Los Angeles Times* headline was “Libya officials put a spin on a conflict.”

“These bombs and missiles are not falling in empty spaces: People are all over Tripoli going about their lives just as in any other major metropolitan city of about two million people,” stated McKinney.

Why?
“I don’t understand why they want to kill us,” said one young woman seen standing with others outside the Tripoli hospital room, explaining that the old are also being injured and killed.

“Why?” is the question repeatedly asked by the injured who are able to speak.

Political analyst Webster Tarpley answered that question on Monday, June 6, on *Press TV*, stating that the “goal of all this all along has been to smash Libya into various parts to drive Qaddafi out of power and to seize control of the oil to re-impose the yoke of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in still more severe form than we ever had it.”

“And I think right now desperation is growing, especially in London and Paris, that old Suez



The goal of all this all along has been to smash Libya into various parts to drive Qaddafi out.

1956 combination of unreconstructed imperialists,” said Tarpley.

“They are desperate now because their methods so far are not working. They tried high level bombing, combined with this rebel rabble underground with a lot of Al-Qaeda fighters included in it and that’s not working.”

Wayne Madsen, who was among those in the hospital with McKinney and others, seeing the patients and witnessing the injuries, has reported that early mainstream media reports included photos of Libyan opposition waving weapons and discharging them into the air, while “NATO member nations were supposedly locked in debate as to whether or when to provide weapons to the rebels.”

“Someone in the media finally pointed out that the weapons being waved about in the photos were NATO standard issue,” reported Madsen.

Foreign Secretary William Hague has said that NATO’s almost three month long mission is intensifying and it could last many more months, according to *Press TV*.

Tarpley speculates that the US

aggression on Libya could bring President Obama down. Republicans who have been long-time warmongers “are now seizing on the Libyan war as a means of attacking Obama.”

The War Powers Act “would have required Obama to get congressional approval for what he is doing within 60 days, meaning by about May 20,” stated Tarpley. “At May 20, the second clock starts which gives him 30 days to pull out. If Obama does not pull out of the attack on Libya by about the 20th of June, he could be brought down by the Republicans in the House, who might use that as a vehicle to express their resentment so they build up some other issues.”

African Americans in Harlem urged public support as they protested the US/NATO attacks on Libyan Africans and the targeting of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, the man praised by Nelson Mandela for supporting the anti-apartheid struggle and the man who has said “No” to the establishment of a US military command (Africom) on the African continent to take African resources. (See “African Americans’ emergency gathering to stop Qaddafi assassination”

by Deborah Dupré, National Human Rights Examiner.com.)

McKinney asked on June 7, “What were you doing today between 1pm and now? The people of Tripoli endure the trauma of repeated bombings in their immediate environment.”

Referring to “imperialist” Nuremberg crimes against humanity in Libya, Tarpley said that “undoubtedly,” depleted uranium and cluster bombs are being used, “and all the rest.”

Investigations have revealed that the US Navy used cluster bombs on Libyans that injured the innocent, including children.

“And that’s what they call democracy these days.”

Deborah Dupre holds American and Australian science and education graduate degrees and has 30 years experience in human rights, environmental and peace activism. Email her at gdeborahdupre@gmail.com and visit her website, www.deborahdupre.com. This story first appeared at examiner.com.

Bay View ☘

Global repression of union rights

Colombia and the Americas maintain the lead in a grim record of murder and repression of workers involved in trade union activities in the latest world Annual Survey of violation of trade union rights released by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) at the 100th ILO Conference.

The Annual Survey, conducted across 143 countries, paints a picture of people fighting for greater economic rights and freedom to organise, with many governments and businesses responding with repression, sackings, violence, death threats and murder.

Covering the year 2010, the Annual Survey reveals:

- 90 murders of trade union activists (49 in Colombia alone)
- another 75 recorded death threats and at least 2,500 arrests
- at least 5,000 sackings of unionists because of union activities.

“Around the world, workers, communities and populations are trying to claim basic rights to decent work and a decent life, and in many countries these people are being met with sackings, violence and in extreme cases murder by

governments and by employers and businesses,” General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, Sharan Burrow, said.

The global trends highlighted in the survey include governments not enforcing labour laws, lack of support for the funding of inspection or protection, the lack of rights and abuse of migrant labour across the world, but particularly in the Gulf States, and the exploitation of the mainly female workforces in the world’s export processing zones.

Across the Middle East, the 2010 Annual Survey paints a picture of governments trying to repress their people engaged in trying/fighting to better their lives economically through union representation, better wages and collective bargaining.

- In Egypt, the report shows sackings and reprisals by employers, police violence and numerous arrests as more and more workers joined independent trade unions and took strike action.

- In Tunisia, the report spotlights the rising tide of social protest linked to the fight for economic

rights, and the government responding by meddling in the affairs of the trade union movement.

- In Bahrain, the report underscores the recurrent problem of unemployment and inequality, and this year the ITUC is monitoring the disappearances, arrests and violence directed at the independent trade unionists over the past months.

“Independent trade unions are essential to improving the living standards of ordinary workers across the globe. The ITUC Annual Survey shows that in fighting for basic rights to a decent job and decent life, many unionists put their lives on the line for the good of their communities.”

Ms. Burrow also issued a warning to the global governing bodies and to the G20.

“The world’s unemployment queue is growing. Without proper jobs or hope for the future, governments risk increasing political instability. Union rights are fundamental to democracy, to economic growth and to a civilised future,” Ms. Burrow said. ☘

Sydney



WHERE IS
CUBA
HEADING?

The recent 6th Congress of the Cuban Communist Party adopted new economic development guidelines intended to bring about a better Cuban economy and socialist system. They include such things as co-operatives, small farms, and a broader range of options for self-employment and are intended to increase labour efficiency and productivity in order to guarantee stable levels of production and supplies of basic goods and services accessible to all citizens but no longer subsidised. The removal of subsidies, possible lay offs, the right to buy and sell homes and cars and other changes have sparked debate about where Cuba is heading.

Come and hear the next stage
in Cuba’s revolution
discussed by

Cuban Ambassador Pedro Monzon Barata and
Cuban Consul General Reinaldo Garcia Perera

Saturday 18 June
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6-8pm

All welcome. Enquiries: Denis on 0418 290 663 / cpa@cpa.org.au
Organised by Communist Party of Australia www.cpa.org.au

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Fight for the future

If the people involved in the Middle East uprising look towards Bourgeois democracies as answers to unemployment and food shortages they are in for a terrible shock. All they need to observe is capitalist Spain, right in the heart of the West where unemployment has forced people to question the political system so much so they are permanently occupying the streets.

Bourgeois democracies actually purposely create unemployment because they can then use the unemployed person to scare everyone else who has a job into being obedient to "their master". Capitalism tries to monitor unemployment to around 10 to 20 percent which is the real figure in Australia as opposed to the lower "official" figure the capitalist compulsive liars propagate. Spain however has gone into the forties and this will be interesting to observe because without the Soviet Union as a contrast for working-class people Western capitalism might start to accept higher

figures of unemployment throughout their so-called democracies.

Looking towards capitalist democracies for answers to food shortages is also a wrong move because Western capitalist dictatorships, especially the English speaking ones of Australia and the USA, have done everything possible to make sure there has been no attempt to try and address climate change internationally for over thirty years simply because the capitalist dictatorships that rule us have too much \$\$ to make.

So food shortages since capitalism has heated the planet up by one degree has meant that from about 1999 food production has been declining with less rainfall and more and more people are starving. I know capitalist propaganda is a powerful obstacle to the truth but we must keep fighting for not only the people of the Middle East but for the future generations of the planet.

**H Patterson
Vic**

Investing in nuclear weapons

The revelation that Australia is investing in companies that manufacture nuclear arms puts the ethics and morality of government policies in serious question.

Australia is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and as such has certain obligations – Article VI of the Treaty states that "parties to the Treaty undertake to pursue negotiations in good faith on



Perth Raffle – Fantastic Prize

This great photograph by Cuban photographer Brayan Collazo is the first prize for the annual Australia Cuba Friendship Society Perth raffle for 2011.

The raffle will be drawn on Saturday July 23, 2011 at the Santiago de Cuba Carnival to be held at Kulcha in Fremantle. A celebration has been organised with local band Latin Fusion at KULCHA from 8pm.

For more information visit: www.kulcha.com.au or send us an email to: acfsperth@gmail.com

Raffle tickets are \$5 each. Get as many as you can to increase your chances of owning this fantastic prize. Get your raffle tickets early to avoid disappointment. All proceeds to go to support the oncology unit of Las Tunas provincial hospital in Cuba.

effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race" etc.

One could hardly call our financial investment an expression of "good faith". The fund spokesman also suggested that signatories to the treaty are permitted to arm themselves with nuclear weapons, however Article I states that "not in any way assist or encourage or induce any non-nuclear weapon state to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons".

This is too alarming and Australia's participation in weapons of mass destruction programs must end.

**Pauline Mitchell
Secretary
Campaign for International
Co-operation and Disarmament**

Horrific cruelty

The horrific cruelty that recently aired on ABC's "Four Corners" – including cattle being beaten, having their throats hacked, and their eyes gouged out in Indonesian abattoirs – is, sadly, business as usual in the live-export industry.

Multiple investigations by PETA, Animals Australia, and other organisations have revealed rampant cruelty at every step of the live export process.

For example, sheep who are discarded by the wool industry and who have already suffered the misery of mulesing – in which huge chunks of flesh are carved off their backsides, usually without any pain relief – are forced to endure hellish, weeks-long

voyages to slaughter on extremely crowded, disease-ridden ships. Many sheep succumb to illness, starve to death, or are trampled. Survivors are often dragged from the ships at their destination and thrown into the backs of trucks and cars. At slaughter, most will have their throats cut while they are still conscious.

Banning live exports to some slaughterhouses in Indonesia is a start, but animals will continue to suffer as long as any live export remains legal. It's time for Australia to ban this cruel practice entirely.

**Jason Baker
Director of Campaigns
PETA Australia**

Culture & Life

by

Cindy Sheehan

Police State?

"Totalitarianism is patriotism institutionalised."
Steve Allen

"Patriotic" Americans are still berating me for "demeaning" my son's "sacrifice." A typical message goes something like this:

"Your son died to give you the right to spew your filth against this country. If it wasn't for the military and people like your son, you wouldn't have the freedom to protest."

Oh, really? If I have the "freedom to protest" then why have I been arrested so many times and why did I have a four-month restraining order from protesting near the White House last year that would have landed my buns in jail for six-months if I violated it? Why are activists still being arrested for solely exercising what used to be our fundamental rights?

In fact, attorney Bill Quigley has documented that more than 2,600 activists have been arrested since Obama was sworn in 2009.

The Constitutional Lawyer turned POTUS (President of the US) is committing atrocities against peace, justice and human rights at a pace that Bush and Cheney only dreamed possible. If Obama can't have one of us arrested or executed on his orders, then he will gladly diagnose our principled questioning as a mental disorder. Obama

even told Steve Pelley of 60 Minutes that if any American dare question his obvious lies around the re-death of Osama bin Laden, then he/she should have "their heads examined."

I find it extremely interesting that the fundamental values of peace, truth, and justice have been turned into a mental disorder by the POTUS who, as I have pointed out before, has committed innumerable atrocities against these values. However, what I am finding increasingly alarming is the USA's rapid descent into a police state.

On June 7, my sister and I were driving from Sacramento to Los Angeles on a trip that both she and I have made dozens of times since my family moved near Sacramento in 1993. We almost immediately noticed the elevated presence of cop 'copters hovering over the interstate and over nearby communities. Neither of us had ever witnessed so many military convoys and such a police presence in any of the previous times we made the trip. We speculated what it could be all about and I even had to come to a complete stop on I-105 when it looked like a Los Angeles Sheriff's 'copter was about to land on the roof of my car. Hmm, there is definitely a shift happening, but it's often hard to pin things down.

Well, the very next day, I learned about two events that shocked even me – I thought the Empire couldn't shock me, but I was wrong.

The very day that my sister and I were travelling the length of our gorgeous state, a Stockton, California man was having his door broken down by what he thought was a SWAT Goon Squad.

According to Kenneth Wright, a single father of three young children ages, 3, 7 and 11; he heard some commotion outside his Stockton home, so he looked out his upstairs window and saw 15 cops that looked like members of SWAT. Before he could get downstairs to the door, they had battered it down and entered his home. Wright spent the next six hours handcuffed in the back of a cop car with his three frightened children.

Is Kenneth Wright the alleged murderer of thousands of brown people in the Middle East and North Africa? Has this scoundrel cheated millions of people out of their retirement/life savings? Did Mr Wright authorise the use of torture, or even invade one country illegally?

No, of course not. It turns out that the cops who broke down Mr. Wright's door brutalising him and traumatising his children weren't local or state law enforcement, but an Education Goon Squad that had been granted some kind of vicious police state authority because Mr Wright's ex-wife allegedly committed "fraud" on her student loans. How many of us have student loans that are in danger of being defaulted on because we can't find a job? The primary question is, though, why do most of us have to commit ourselves to years of debt to get a University education which should be free in the most wealthy country in the world?

The scandal of the rising cost and increasing inaccessibility of higher education can be directly related to the oppression and exploitation of the people that handle Obama like the Marionette that he is.

If the above story doesn't terrify you, then what about this one:

In the wee hours of Memorial Day, cops in Miami were involved in a high-speed chase that ended with the injuries of four innocent bystanders and the shooting execution of the suspect. Witnesses to the crimes of the PD videotaped the entire incident and were then, themselves subjected to police brutality as the Miami cops held guns to their heads and smashed their cell phones. Luckily, one of the victims had the presence of mind to secure the sim card of his phone in his mouth.

Ask yourself: "How terrified would I be if I just witnessed cops brutally shooting a man to death, then holding a gun to my head?"

Incidentally, the Miami PD has also recently been involved in arresting activists from the organisation Food Not Bombs for having the audacity to feed the area's homeless.

The Robber Class obviously



doesn't want hungry people fed, sick people healed, uneducated people schooled, homeless people housed, or poor people prosperous. Their agenda is total domination of the world's resources and complete income inequality in our own country.

The next time you fly and either have to subject your body to unacceptable levels of radiation in one of the Pervo-Scanners or get molested by TSA (Transport Security Administration) – think to yourself: "This is how it starts – my nation is being turned into a police state with nary a whimper."

At least I loudly protest these violations when I fly and I educate everyone within earshot (including the TSA) that Michael Chertoff (former director of the NSA under Bush) profits from the full-body X-ray machines in airports. The last time I was being illegally molested by a TSA agent because I refused to go through one of the Pervo-Scanners, she said: "Am I hurting you?" And I answered: "Yes, you are beating the crap out of my 4th Amendment."

The above stories illustrate that we no longer even have the pretence to the rights to privacy or against

illegal search and seizure. Even if the state grants warrants, or passes laws that our privates are now fair game for government perversity, oftentimes these laws directly contravene the Constitution.

However, with the recent reauthorisation of the USA Patriot Act, the Constitution has again been rendered "null and void."

The obvious solution to what ails our nation is to end the wars and invest part of the money in education – forgive student loans and provide free/low cost university education to everyone in this country. Ending the wars will not only have a positive effect on our economy, but we won't be creating enemies faster than we can kill them, so all of this jack-booted police state thuggery would not be necessary.

With the profit motive being so tempting to the Robber Class, it seems like one of the only recourses left to us now is to film everything that happens around us and hide the sim cards of our phones in one of our body's crevices – we can at least be witnesses to and document Obama's rush to totalitarianism.

Information Clearing House ☸



Lenin

From the beginning of our era
Till turbulent modernity
No name in history is dearer
And nearer to posterity.

What power had he, no matter whether
Men came from East, West, North or South,
To join all continents together
By slogans passed from mouth to mouth!

It lies, Vladimir Lenin's greatness,
In that, to the last word, we find
Him plain and true, and therefore deathless,
And hence, forever with mankind.

Berdy Kerbabayev, translated by Dorian Rottenberg

Independence

If you gaze upon our planet closely
From a rocket's height you will remark
That the land of Africa is rosy
And she has the contours of a heart.

Red's the colour of her bauxite, iron,
Or more aptly blood has this same hue.
In small lots the continent's divided,
Stripped by her invaders to the nude.

Open-hearted folk, clear-eyed and honest,
Trusting, full of generosity,
Were for their own kindness sorely punished
By long years of pain and poverty.

In the well-known song of Transvaal blazing
Words we sang in Russia long ago
Have today a different sound and phrasing,
Tautened like the string of a long-bow.

Sing loud, arrows of your freedom archers,
Flint-lock guns of partisans, fire true!
Independence comes not without hardship.
Nations their just causes shall pursue.

Rob Gowland is on leave. This page will be devoted to poetry for the next few issues.

If you are fire

To smoulder smokily, to run to waste, then die...
A life like that is verily a shame.
No, if you're fire,
Fly straight up to the sky.
Burn, glorious and free, a living flame!

Though brief the life-span of true inspiration,
Your heat will benefit your generation,
While, smouldering, a centenarian ember
Leaves no one anything to value or remember.

Djuban Muldagaliyev, translated by Dorian Rottenberg

I can hear as vibrant as a gong-blow
The loud voice of independent Congo.

In this century it is out-dated
For the Cameroons to be mandated!

Never shall a prize for piracy
Zanzibar and Madagascar be!

And the Coast of Ivory shall billet
Europeans only on a visit.

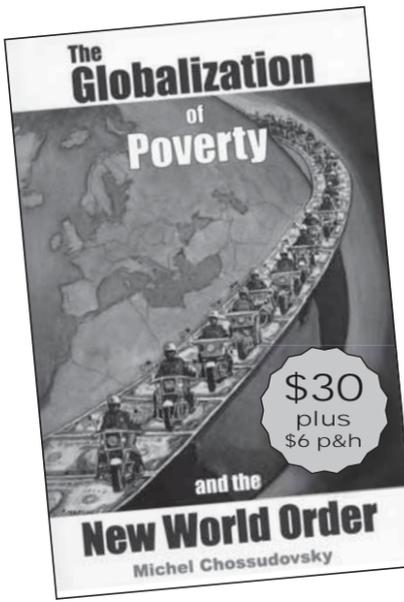
O what brave and desperate young fellows
Out in Senegal once did I see!

Such folk are a force beyond all quelling –
Justice stronger is than villainy.

In young Guinea I heard bugles playing
For the children's pleasure and delight.

Africa is "black", said the invaders.
We, my friend, pronounce her fair and bright.

Yevgeny Dolmatovskiy, translated by Peter Tempest



**The Globalisation of Poverty
and the New World Order**
Michel Chossudovsky

This is a second edition with valuable updates and additional chapters that not only deal with important economic questions but extremely well researched and revealing information on experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Latin America, the former Soviet Union and the Balkans. Michel Chossudovsky spent considerable time researching his topics, including extensive travels in many of the countries reported on. The part on the New World Order includes coverage of the dismantling of the welfare state, narrowing of the tax base, illusory independence of central banks and the crisis of the state. If you thought the *The Global Economic Crisis – The Great Depression of the XXI Century* (edited by Michel Chossudovsky and Andrew Gavin Marshall) was great, then wait until you read this one. An absolute must!

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Speakers from Australians for Sustainable Development:
Jack Munday, AO, lifetime political activist,
John McInerney, Independent Councillor City of Sydney

June 24
DETENTION SYSTEM FOR REFUGEES – REPLACING A GROSS INJUSTICE
Sophie Peer, Refugee Council Australia;
David Bitel, lawyer, past President Refugee Council Australia

July 8
CARBON TAX, ETS OR THE STATUS QUO? – ARGUMENTS FOR OR AGAINST
Frank Stilwell, Prof, Political Economy, Sydney Uni;
John Kaye, NSW Greens MP

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Wendy Bacon, Prof, School Journalism & Media Studies UTS;
Stuart Rees, Prof, Director, Sydney Peace Foundation

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THE NBN DEBATE – WHITE ELEPHANT OR INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE?
Dean Economou, Dr, Technology Strategist, NICTA;
Stephen Long, ABC economics Correspondent

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Book says US-NATO war served Al-Qaeda strategy

Gareth Porter

Al-Qaeda strategists have been assisting the Taliban fight against US-NATO forces in Afghanistan because they believe that foreign occupation has been the biggest factor in generating Muslim support for uprisings against their governments, according to the just-published book by Syed Saleem Shahzad, the Pakistani journalist whose body was found in a canal outside Islamabad last week with evidence of having been tortured.

That Al-Qaeda view of the US-NATO war in Afghanistan, which Shahzad reports in the book based on conversations with several senior Al-Qaeda commanders, represents the most authoritative picture of the organisation's thinking available to the public.

Shahzad's book *Inside Al-Qaeda and the Taliban* was published on May 24 – only three days before he went missing from Islamabad on his way to a television interview. His body was found May 31.

Shahzad, who had been the Pakistan bureau chief for the Hong Kong-based *Asia Times*, had unique access to senior Al-Qaeda commanders and cadres, as well as those of the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban organisations. His account of Al-Qaeda strategy is particularly valuable because of the overall ideological system and strategic thinking that emerged from many encounters Shahzad had with senior officials over several years.

Shahzad's account reveals that Osama bin Laden was a "figurehead" for public consumption, and that it was Dr Ayman Zawahiri who formulated the organisation's ideological line or devised operational plans.

Shahzad summarises the Al-Qaeda strategy as being to "win the war against the West in Afghanistan" before shifting the struggle to Central Asia and Bangladesh. He credits Al-Qaeda and its militant allies in North and South Waziristan with having transformed the tribal

areas of Pakistan into the main strategic base for the Taliban resistance to US-NATO forces.

But Shahzad's account makes it clear that the real objective of Al-Qaeda in strengthening the Taliban struggle against US-NATO forces in Afghanistan was to continue the US-NATO occupation as an indispensable condition for the success of Al-Qaeda's global strategy of polarising the Islamic world.

Shahzad writes that Al-Qaeda strategists believed its terrorist attacks on 9/11 would lead to a US invasion of Afghanistan which would in turn cause a worldwide "Muslim backlash". That "backlash" was particularly important to what emerges in Shahzad's account as the primary Al-Qaeda aim of stimulating revolts against regimes in Muslim countries.

Shahzad reveals that the strategy behind the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the large Al-Qaeda ambitions to reshape the Muslim world came from Zawahiri's "Egyptian camp" within Al-Qaeda. That group, under Zawahiri's leadership, had already settled on a strategic vision by the mid-1990s, according to Shahzad.

The Zawahiri group's strategy, according to Shahzad, was to "speak out against corrupt and despotic Muslim governments and make them targets to destroy their image in the eyes of the common people". But they would do so by linking those regimes to the United States.

In a 2004 interview cited by Shahzad, one of bin Laden's collaborators, Saudi opposition leader Saad al-Faqih, said Zawahiri had convinced bin Laden in the late 1990s that he had to play on the US "cowboy" mentality that would elevate him into an "implacable enemy" and "produce the Muslim longing for a leader who could successfully challenge the West."

Shahzad makes it clear that the US occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq were the biggest break Al-Qaeda had ever gotten. Muslim religious scholars had issued decrees for the defence of Muslim lands against



Syed Saleem Shahzad, the Pakistani journalist whose body was found in a canal outside Islamabad last week.

the non-Muslim occupiers on many occasions before the US-NATO war in Afghanistan, Shahzad points out.

But once such religious decrees were extended to Afghanistan, Zawahiri could exploit the issue of the US occupation of Muslim lands to organise a worldwide "Muslim insurgency". That strategy depended on being able to provoke discord within societies by discrediting regimes throughout the Muslim world as not being truly Muslim.

Shahzad writes that the Al-Qaeda strategists became aware that Muslim regimes – particularly Saudi Arabia – had become active in trying to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by 2007, because they feared that as long as they continued "there was no way of stopping Islamist revolts and rebellions in Muslim countries."

What Al-Qaeda leaders feared

most, as Shahzad's account makes clear, was any move by the Taliban toward a possible negotiated settlement – even based on the complete withdrawal of US troops. Al-Qaeda strategists portrayed the first "dialogue" with the Afghan Taliban sponsored by the Saudi king in 2008 as an extremely dangerous US plot – a view scarcely supported by the evidence from the US side.

Shahzad's book confirms previous evidence of fundamental strategic differences between Taliban leadership and Al-Qaeda.

Those differences surfaced in 2005, when Mullah Omar sent a message to all factions in North and South Waziristan to abandon all other activities and join forces with the Taliban in Afghanistan. And when Al-Qaeda declared the "khuruj" (popular uprising against a Muslim ruler for un-Islamic governance) against the Pakistani state in 2007, Omar opposed that strategy, even though it was ostensibly aimed at deterring US attacks on the Taliban.

Shahzad reports that one of Al-Qaeda's purposes in creating the Pakistani Taliban in early 2008 was to "draw the Afghan Taliban away from Mullah Omar's influence".

The Shahzad account refutes the official US military rationale for the war in Afghanistan, which is based on the presumption that Al-Qaeda is primarily interested in getting the US and NATO forces out of Afghanistan and that the Taliban and Al-Qaeda are locked in a tight ideological and strategic embrace.

Shahzad's account shows that despite cooperative relations with Pakistan's ISI (Inter-Services

Intelligence) in the past, Al-Qaeda leaders decided after 9/11 that the Pakistani military would inevitably become a full partner in the US "war on terror" and would turn against Al-Qaeda.

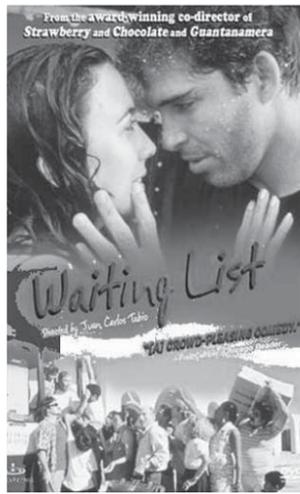
The relationship did not dissolve immediately after the terror attacks, according to Shahzad. He writes that ISI chief Mehmood Ahmed assured Al-Qaeda when he visited Kandahar in September 2010 that the Pakistani military would not attack Al-Qaeda as long it didn't attack the military.

He also reports that Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf held a series of meetings with several top jihadi and religious leaders and asked them to lie low for five years, arguing that the situation could change after that period. According to Shahzad's account, Al-Qaeda did not intend at the beginning to launch a jihad in Pakistan against the military but was left with no other option when the Pakistani military sided with the US against the Jihadis.

The major turning point was an October 2003 Pakistani military helicopter attack in North Waziristan which killed many militants. In apparent retaliation in December 2003, there were two attempts on Musharraf's life, both organised by a militant whom Shahzad says was collaborating closely with Al-Qaeda.

In his last interview with The Real News Network, however, Shahzad appeared to contradict that account, reporting that ISI had wrongly told Musharraf that Al-Qaeda was behind the attempts, and even that there was some Pakistani Air Force involvement in the plot.

IPS



Perth

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