

the BEACON

Journal of the
Melbourne Unitarian
Peace Memorial
Church

April 2013
Price /\$2

SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

MAY DAY IS OUR DAY: MAKE IT COUNT

EDITORIAL

May Day is an international day of recognition and celebration of the achievements and struggles of the world's people and for the maintenance and improvement of working conditions, wages, and affordable access to the services necessary to live a dignified, peaceful and satisfactory life. It is a day when all over the world people march, demonstrating their demands for a fairer, more democratic society.

May 1st is a public holiday in over 80 countries but not yet in all Australian states. Over the years the history of the struggles which brought us the momentous 8-Hour Day, pensions, annual leave, sick leave, health and safety, and other important improvements to the wages and conditions of working people, have been deliberately diminished. No effort is made to ensure that younger generations understand the sacrifices and struggles that their forefathers bore in order to bring us these conditions. There is no tribute to the role of the working class and its sacrifices and achievements.

Labour Day, once celebrated by the trade union movement and the wider community, has been replaced by MOOMBA – a celebration of capital.

How many today are aware of what Labour Day was and the historical importance of the 8-Hour Day?

Capitalist media deliberately minimises the importance of May Day and gives it scant attention. Yet May Day is the only day left in the year for the working class and its allies to celebrate achievements and highlight demands for the retention of the conditions still left to working people and for the ongoing demands necessary if we are not to become the new slave society in this increasingly global and exploitative world.

Why is May Day more important today, and why should every one of us make a decision to join this important march? Because the attacks on our democratic rights, our right to organise, to unite, to fight for justice for all are under savage attack, and an Abbott-led government will worsen those attacks.

Successive governments have sold off the essential infrastructure that our forefathers fought so hard to install. Gas, electricity, water, communications, healthcare,



education and pensions are all under attack. Since privatisation, prices have soared, jobs have been lost, and profits that were once ploughed back into the publicly owned infrastructure system, leave the country.

May Day allows us the opportunity to demonstrate our opposition to unfair legislation, to demand improved wages, pensions and conditions, to come together in solidarity around a program for justice, democracy and a new society.

That is why we should all join in the activities and show those who sell us down that we will not continue to tolerate policies that benefit the few and discriminate against the many.

As well as the above demands, there are many others that affect us all: an end to our involvement in illegal wars, for an independent foreign policy, a recognition of our compassionate responsibilities towards asylum seekers, and support for the struggles of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters.

Instead of sitting at home saying something needs to be done, join the May Day celebrations in your state and do something. Stand up for your rights and those of the Australian people! ■

PART ONE

President Chavez: A 21st-Century Renaissance Man

By James Petras

President Hugo Chavez was unique in multiple areas of political, social and economic life. He made significant contributions to the advancement of humanity. The depth, scope and popularity of his accomplishments mark President Chavez as the 'Renaissance President of the 21st-Century'.

Many writers have noted one or another of his historic contributions highlighting his anti-poverty legislation, his success in winning popular elections with resounding majorities and his promotion of universal free public education and health coverage for all Venezuelans.

In this essay we will highlight the unique world-historic contributions that President Chavez made in the spheres of political economy, ethics and international law and in redefining relations between political leaders and citizens. We shall start with his enduring contribution to the development of civic culture in Venezuela and beyond.

Hugo Chavez: The Great Teacher of Civic Values

From his first days in office, Chavez was engaged in transforming the constitutional order so that political leaders and institutions would be more responsive to the popular electorate. Through his speeches Chavez clearly and carefully informed the electorate of the measures and legislation to improve their livelihood. He invited comments and criticism – his style was to engage in constant dialogue, especially with the poor, the unemployed and the workers. Chavez was so successful in teaching civic responsibilities to the Venezuelan electorate that millions of citizens from the slums of Caracas rose up spontaneously to oust the US backed business-military junta that had kidnapped their president and closed the legislature. Within seventy-two hours – record time – the civic-minded citizens restored the democratic order and the rule of law in Venezuela, thoroughly rejecting the mass media's defence of the coup-plotters and their brief authoritarian regime.

Chavez, as all great educators, learned from this democratic intervention of the mass of citizens, that democracy's most effective defenders were to be found among the working people – and that its worst enemies were found in the business elites and military officials linked to Miami and Washington.

Chavez' civic pedagogy emphasised the importance of the historical teachings and examples of founding fathers, like Simon Bolivar, in establishing a national and Latin American identity. His speeches raised the cultural level of millions of Venezuelans who had been raised in the alienating and servile culture of imperial Washington and the consumerist obsessions of Miami shopping malls.

Chavez succeeded in instilling a culture of solidarity and mutual support among the exploited, emphasising

'horizontal' ties over vertical clientelistic dependency on the rich and powerful. His success in creating collective consciousness decisively shifted the balance of political power away from the wealthy rulers and corrupt political party and trade union leaders toward new socialist movements and class oriented trade unions. More than anything else Chavez' political education of the popular majority regarding their social rights to free health care and higher education, living wages and full employment drew the hysterical ire of the wealthy Venezuelans and their undying hatred of a president who had created a sense of autonomy, dignity and 'class empowerment' through public education ending centuries of elite privilege and omnipotence.

Above all Chavez speeches, drawing as much from Bolivar as from Karl Marx, created a deep, generous sense of patriotism and nationalism and a profound rejection of a prostrate elite grovelling before their Washington overlord, Wall Street bankers and oil company executives. Chavez' anti-imperial speeches resonated because he spoke in the language of the people and expanded their national consciousness to identification with Latin America, especially Cuba's fight against imperial interventions and wars.

International Relations: The Chavez Doctrine

At the beginning of the previous decade, after 9/11/01, Washington declared a 'War on Terror'. This was a public declaration of unilateral military intervention and wars against sovereign nations, movements and individuals deemed as adversaries, in violation of international law.

Almost all countries submitted to this flagrant violation of the Geneva Accords, except President Chavez, who made the most profound and simple refutation against Washington: 'You don't fight terrorism with state terrorism'. In his defence of the sovereignty of nations and international jurisprudence, Chavez underlined the importance of political and economic solutions to social problems and conflicts – repudiating the use of bombs, torture and mayhem. The Chavez Doctrine emphasised south-south trade and investments and diplomatic over military resolution of disputes. He upheld the Geneva Accords against colonial and imperial aggression while rejecting the imperial doctrine of 'the war on terror', defining Western state terrorism as a pernicious equivalent to Al Qaeda terrorism.

Political Theory and Practice: The Grand Synthesiser

One of the most profound and influential aspects of Chavez' legacy is his original synthesis of three grand strands of political thought: popular Christianity, Bolivarian nationalist and regional integration and Marxist political, social and economic thought. Chavez' Christianity informed his deep belief in justice and the equality of people, as well as his generosity and forgiveness of adversaries even as they engaged in a violent coup, a crippling lockout, or openly collaborated and received financing from enemy intelligence agencies. Whereas anywhere else in the world, armed assaults against the state and coup d'états would result in long prison sentences or even executions, under Chavez most of his violent adversaries escaped prosecution and even rejoined their subversive organisations. Chavez demonstrated a deep belief in redemption and forgiveness. Chavez's Christianity informed his 'option for the poor', the depth and breadth of his commitment to eradicating poverty and his solidarity with the poor against the rich. ■

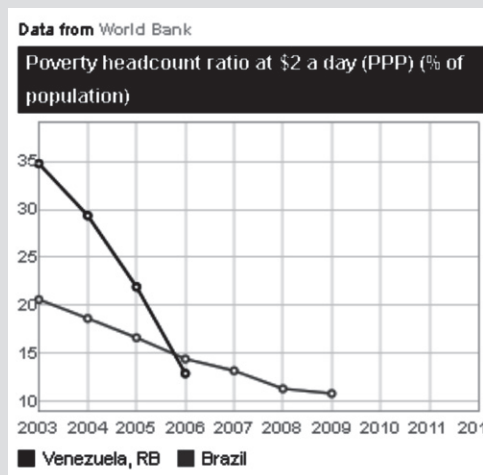
DID YOU KNOW...

AP: Chavez wasted his money on healthcare when he could have built gigantic skyscrapers

By Jim Naureckas 7 March 2013 'Information Clearing House' – One of the more bizarre takes on Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's death comes from **Associated Press** business reporter Pamela Sampson (3/5/13):

Chavez invested Venezuela's oil wealth into social programs including state-run food markets, cash benefits for poor families, free health clinics and education programs. But those gains were meager compared with the spectacular construction projects that oil riches spurred in glittering Middle Eastern cities, including the world's tallest building in Dubai and plans for branches of the Louvre and Guggenheim museums in Abu Dhabi.

That's right: Chavez squandered his nation's oil money on healthcare, education and nutrition when he could have been building the world's tallest building or his own branch of the Louvre. What kind of monster has priorities like that?



In case you're curious about what kind of results this kooky agenda had, here's a chart (NACLA, 10/8/12) based on World Bank poverty stats – showing the proportion of Venezuelans living on less than \$2 a day falling from 35 per cent to 13 per cent over three years. (For comparison purposes, there's a similar stat for Brazil, which made substantial but less dramatic progress against poverty over the same time period.)

Of course, during this time, the number of Venezuelans living in the world's tallest building went from 0 per cent to 0 per cent, while the number of copies of the Mona Lisa remained flat, at none. So you have to say that Chavez's presidency was overall pretty disappointing – at least by AP's standards.

MAY DAY PROGRAM 2013

30TH APRIL, 7pm. Film Night, Democritus Workers League, 583 High St. Northcote.

2nd May, 5pm. Wreath Laying at the 8 hour monument. Opposite Trades Hall.

2nd May, 6.30pm. Multicultural Event, Old Ballroom, Trades Hall. Speakers, cultural items and a multicultural smorgasbord.

5th May, Assemble 1pm Cnr Victoria & Russell St., **MAY DAY MARCH** followed by speakers, activities, stalls etc.

5th May, MAY DAY CONCERT, immediately after March and speakers.



Our church is a public and usable asset with portable seating and excellent conference, meeting and function facilities. We welcome its use by those who support our motto 'Seek the Truth and Serve Humanity'. Interested individuals or groups can contact the church office – we would be delighted to speak to you. A donation is payable.

PAYPAL ACCOUNT

The church has now opened a PayPal account. If you have access to PayPal – all you need do is log on and the church's PayPal address is admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au Visit our web page and click on the link. You will be able to pay your subscription and make donations.

The **work** that you **can't** sell *by Eva Cox*

*The stuff that makes good societies, communities and families tick can't always be officially valued. The problem is, welfare policies don't recognise this. **Eva Cox** on why income support needs an urgent rethink.*



There are many tasks and responsibilities that make up a good society, that are neither officially counted nor valued. The market prices those only goods and services that are exchanged and gross domestic product (GDP) includes only those transactions. These goods and services constitute a relatively small part of the complex relationships of interdependence that make quality families, communities and societies.

However, too many current policies assume that recognising paid work by government is all that is required. The result is that income support and welfare payment policies increasingly penalise those who don't or can't sell their labour or product.

So where are we now? Interfamily production and consumption doesn't count. Caring for your own children is out but paid care for other children was in. Giving away your home-made jam doesn't count but selling it does. Creating something beautiful, funny or sacred is of no value unless it is sold. Telling stories for nothing is not valued — make sure it is paid for!

Advocates of ALP values bang on and on about working families. Other forms of contribution are invisible or unwelcome. Current income support policies fail to recognise that many complex social contributions come from outside the workforce. The policies are becoming increasingly authoritarian and paternalistic, as shown by cuts to sole parent incomes, the imposition of compulsory income management and the low level of Newstart. Unfortunately, these policies are bipartisan — voting for the Coalition will change nothing.

There needs to be a serious rethink about why we pay income support payments so they offer more than a pressure point to get a job. Sole parents and the unemployed are easy scapegoats, something which the Government is exploiting. Comments on a recent *New Matilda* article by Koraly Dimitriadis show the dimensions of the debate. She is a writer and a single mother whose Australia Council grant tangled her into definitions of what is income and when governments should provide it.

The comments reflected both the official policies and the deep prejudices they are exploiting and exacerbating. Many failed to recognise the time demands of both parenting and producing creative outputs and suggested she should get a proper job. Others understood that the combination left little time to put in an extra 15 hours a week stacking supermarket shelving, assuming this job was available in school hours.

Dimitriadis' story provides a starting point for discussing what tasks and skills should be eligible for public income support. The 1980s critique of GDP in Marilyn Waring's book, *Counting for Nothing*, documented the uncounted, untraded work done mainly by women in most pre-industrial societies and, later, in households. When men left home to work for wages, women provided the social services and glue that make families and communities good places to be.

The current policy emphasis on paid work is extraordinarily narrow in its failure to recognise the value of other necessary contributions. There are also not enough adequately paid jobs for everyone to share, as now there are about five actual job seekers for every advertised vacancy, and even official full employment has a 5 per cent unemployment rate. Add those who can't find a job and the many others who cannot even look for paid work and it is obvious we need to create income support for unpaid contributions to social wellbeing. Good parenting, for instance, deserves a decent income base.

The accounts below were gathered during research undertaken by Kristie Rue on income support. They show what happens when sole parents experience inadequate support. For many families the only area where cost-cutting measures are available is food and children's activities. The impact of cutting these areas reaches far into the future. Parents are being encouraged to keep their children active, have them involved in team sports to encourage socialisation and activity, to fight the ongoing obesity epidemic and in turn reduce the cost on the healthcare system. It takes time and transport to find cheap food and deal with income cuts.

A 33-year-old mother of one has just been affected by the changes to income support. She has been studying for the past two years, retraining in order to enter the workforce. She also has the commitment of being a sole parent with no local family support. So many positions require flexibility in work hours, evenings and weekends, but this mother needs to think of her child and his needs and has to declare the inability to do overtime without notice. How many organisations are going to employ her when there are similarly qualified applicants who have no restrictions on their time?

For parents who are still studying, access to JET childcare fee reduction will increase the out-of-pocket expenses for childcare. In addition, a parent will only receive the pensioner education supplement until she has completed her current degree. She will lose her education supplement when she has completed the degree, but will not be qualified to teach as she needs to complete a Dip Ed.

Louise is currently halfway through her qualification, and is already financially struggling to support herself and her son. The costs of running a car to and from

university and taking her son to school, as well as after school care means there is little left over for the essentials. Taking public transport is not an option due to the extra travelling time and the restricted hours of care. Louise is also concerned with her ability to perform at her best. Studying full time, being a full-time parent, and now working part-time, means there are so many demands on her time that her ability to focus on her studies and commit to learning and performing at her best will be in question.

Karen has not always been a single parent. Five years ago she had a mortgage, a partner and, on the surface, stability. Under the surface it was a life filled with domestic violence, and it was this life she chose to leave. Because of her parental commitments she was not able to secure employment which covered her mortgage repayments and she lost her home. For many women who are now in similar positions if their youngest child is over eight, the decision to leave has just been made more difficult.

“
There are also not enough adequately paid jobs for everyone to share, as now there are about five actual job seekers for every advertised vacancy, and even official full employment has a 5 per cent unemployment rate.

There are now around 100,000 sole parents in messes such as these. Official policy is that parents have to accept or keep a job if they net \$50 extra per fortnight. But working for \$25 per week does not allow for time and stress costs. People need to have time and resources to support those in need, including nurturing time for the young and developing good relationships.

Australia is rapidly moving away from the basic right to expect support from the welfare state, if you have inadequate income. The changes seem more ideological than financial, as there is no suggestion the government will cut excessive administrative costs of nearly \$150 per person per week for the NT Income Management program.

There needs to be an immediate upgrading of income support for sole parents on Newstart which recognises that they already have a time-consuming job. They should all

be returned to parenting payments which have a longer taper and higher base than Newstart. On the wider issue, we need to develop an income support system that recognises diverse ways of contributing and being, rather than assuming social inclusion is based only on paid work. ■

The author thanks Kristie Rue for her input into this article.

This article was originally published on *The Conversation* (www.theconversation.edu.au) and has been republished with permission.



Rising to the
challenge of the
**Asian
Century**

by *Joseph A Camilleri*

The tyranny of distance has always been a fact of life in Australia. If we look at a map with Australia at its centre, we see a country seemingly in the middle of nowhere – even our nearest Asian neighbours are a good seven to eight hours flying time from Melbourne. Yet the lived reality is that settler Australia has been shaped largely by international influences – our trade, our economy, our legal and political institutions, our cultural and religious traditions are all products of our close connections with Britain and other parts of Europe. Our links with the rest of the world have since diversified, but their importance has, if anything, grown over time.

Nowadays no one disputes that we live in an interdependent world. Yet the far-reaching implications of life in a rapidly globalising world are now widely understood. Cross-border flows – of goods and services, technology, arms, money, people, information and images – are reshaping all facets of social organisation. The volume, speed and intensity of these flows are without precedent. No society today, even one that suffers as much as we do from the tyranny of distance, can be unaware of the consequences of climate change, of population movements, the spread of nuclear weapons, or the bewildering flows of images and information. These closely interacting trends pose a major challenge to the way we organise ourselves and to accepted notions of governance.

For Australia these changes are compounded by yet another change, that is, the rapid shift in the world's centre of economic and political influence away from the West and towards the East. Though the rise of Asia has been underway for the best part of three decades, it has yet to command the attention it deserves in our parliaments, our media, our schools and universities, in short, our public discourse.

Late last year the Federal Government released its much-awaited White Paper *Australia in the Asian Century*. This was a welcome step in that it acknowledged the extraordinary rise of several Asian economies, notably China and India. A report just published by the US National Intelligence Council has since provided an even more graphic picture of the trends that are gathering pace.

The report forecasts:

- that by 2030 Asia will wield more global power than the United States and Europe combined
- that within two decades China will overtake the US as the world's largest economy
- that advanced nations in the West, many of them with ageing populations, will experience slower growth and falling living standards.

Not surprisingly, given the shape of things to come, Australian governments, federal and state, are looking to Asia as the path to economic salvation. The White Paper makes no secret of this fact. Our governments see China, India, South Korea, Japan and the emerging economies of Southeast Asia as the obvious destination for our exports, primarily energy resources and other minerals as well as food and other agricultural products. Asia is also viewed as a major source of investment, a trend we generally favour, except, it appears, when such investment enters strategically or politically sensitive terrain. It is one thing for the United States to operate military facilities on Australian soil, but quite another for Chinese capital to invest in our communications infrastructure or even to buy up a few farms.

Let's be frank. Asia is now of interest to Australia's political and economic elites first and foremost as the economic engine that can be relied upon to steer Australia through future financial crises, as it did in the 2008 crisis, and so help us to secure export income and preserve jobs, at least in certain industries.

But how well founded is such a calculus? Troubling questions have yet to be clearly articulated, let alone answered. What is to be the future of our two-speed economy? And what of the wide and deepening economic gulf between resource-rich and resource-poor states, between the west and north of the country on the one hand and the southeast on the other? And what of the environmental consequences of mining pursued at breakneck speed, not to mention the implications for Indigenous communities?

Especially intriguing is the government's apparent interest in developing a world-class educational system – a laudable objective which we all hope will soon materialise – except that much of the White Paper appears to reduce the purpose of education to largely, if not exclusively, economic, or should I say materialist ends.

We wish, it seems, to develop our training infrastructure and language competencies because this will enable us to engage in ways that will yield material advantages measured largely in dollar terms. But is this all there is to Asia? What of the histories of Asian societies, their cultures, their literatures, their values, their ancient and still living wisdom? Is all this not of interest to contemporary Australia? How can our much vaunted multiculturalism flourish if it does not do so in the context of a deeper understanding of the richness of the diverse civilisations, cultures, religions, ethical traditions, political and legal systems that comprise Asia?

These questions are of immense relevance to Australia, not least because we often pride ourselves on our achievements as a multicultural society, one that boasts more than 200 ancestries, close to 200 languages and more than 120 religions. These questions are important too because Asia will increasingly influence our demographic, cultural and political as well as economic profile. The influx of Asian migrants, tourists

“

Whether our outlook is secular or religious, whether we are Muslims, Christians, or Buddhists, we have to acknowledge our commonalities and yet value our differences.

and international students is just a taste of things to come.

Notwithstanding the White Paper on *Australia and the Asian Century*, most of our political leaders have yet to absorb the full implications of the changes that are unfolding. Put simply, the issues are too important to be left in the hands of politicians. Negotiating cultural difference at home and abroad, especially as we engage with Asia, is a long-term mission in which we can all play a part. For this we need to develop a deeper understanding of the role that education and all forms of communication, including

the social media, can play in equipping ourselves for the task. Whatever our professional endeavours, whether in business administration, accounting, finance, information systems management, marketing or business law, in nursing or education, international development or international relations, we all have to come to terms with the creation of pluralist societies founded on mutual respect and compassion.

Whether our outlook is secular or religious, whether we are Muslims, Christians, or Buddhists, we have to acknowledge our commonalities and yet value our differences. Just as in the Middle East Israelis and Palestinians, Saudis and Iranians have to understand that enmity and violence are not the way of the future, so in Asia, Japan has to accept the errors of its past, China has to demonstrate a new spirit of generosity, India has to reclaim the global citizenship of its founders, Gandhi and Nehru. Chinese on the one hand and Vietnamese and Filipinos on the other have to recognise that the South China Sea must be a site not of conflict but of collaboration. And when governments cannot see the value of fruitful coexistence, civil society must proclaim the principle loud and clear.

Australia now has a unique opportunity to forge enduring friendships with the peoples of Asia, and so help build the framework for common action in response to the major problems that confront us all. The Asian century could well be a time when through the dialogue of peoples and institutions we can develop the wisdom and the creative energies that will help our communities, our nations, our region, our world to become more habitable places in which to live. ■

TUNE INTO THE Unitarian Half Hour

EVERY SATURDAY AT 10.30 AM
3CR • 855 AM • COMMUNITY RADIO

Increase our Circulation:
Nominate potential subscribers for
three free monthly copies without
ongoing obligation! (Try before you buy)

We need a Global Labour Movement Charter



The right of all workers to organise collectively without being subjected to violence, intimidation or legal harassment

The right to organise unions and take collective action including industrial action and solidarity actions

Secure employment

Health & Safety at work, compensation, rehabilitation

A living wage for all workers in all industries

Decent work, with appropriate hours of work proposed by workers, paid leave and paid holidays

Full rights for women workers

Indigenous workers' rights & Land Rights

Permanent residence with full employment rights for all refugees and all migrant workers in all countries

No child labour

Education, housing, health and childcare provisions

Social security and adequate welfare benefits

Australia asia worker links - workers change the world

PO Box 45 Carlton South Victoria 3053 Australia
tel: + 61 3 9663 7277 email: aawl@aawl.org.au web: aawl.org.au
ABN: 82 920 590 967 INC ASSN No: A1318 AAWL March 2010

The New Propaganda is Liberal – The New Slavery is Digital

by John Pilger

What is modern propaganda? For many, it is the lies of a totalitarian state. In the 1970s, I met Leni Riefenstahl and asked her about her epic films that glorified the Nazis. Using revolutionary camera and lighting techniques, she produced a documentary form that mesmerised Germans; her *Triumph of the Will* cast Hitler's spell.

She told me that the 'messages' of her films were dependent not on 'orders from above', but on the 'submissive void' of the German public. Did that include the liberal, educated bourgeoisie? 'Everyone', she said.

Today, we prefer to believe that there is no submissive void. 'Choice' is ubiquitous. Phones are 'platforms' that launch every half-thought. There is Google from outer space if you need it. Caressed like rosary beads, the precious devices are borne heads-down, relentlessly monitored and prioritised.

Their dominant theme is the self. Me. My needs. Riefenstahl's submissive void is today's digital slavery. Edward Said described this wired state in *Culture and Imperialism* as taking imperialism where navies could never reach. It is the ultimate means of social control because it is voluntary, addictive and shrouded in illusions of personal freedom.

Today's 'message' of grotesque inequality, social injustice and war is the propaganda of liberal democracies. By any measure of human behaviour, this is extremism. When Hugo Chavez challenged it, he was abused in bad faith; and his successor will be subverted by the same zealots of the American Enterprise Institute, Harvard's Kennedy School and the 'human rights' organisations that have appropriated American liberalism and underpin its propaganda.

The historian Norman Pollack calls this 'liberal fascism'. He wrote, 'All is normality on display. For [Nazi] goose-steppers, substitute the seemingly more innocuous militarization of the total culture. And for the bombastic leader, we have the reformer *manque*, blithely at work [in the White House], planning and executing assassination, smiling all the while'.

Whereas a generation ago, dissent and biting satire were allowed in the 'mainstream', today their counterfeits are acceptable and a fake moral zeitgeist rules. 'Identity' is all, mutating feminism and declaring class obsolete.

Just as collateral damage covers for mass murder, 'austerity' has become an acceptable lie. Beneath the veneer of consumerism, a quarter of Greater Manchester is reported to be living in 'extreme poverty'. The militarist violence perpetrated against hundreds of thousands of nameless men, women and children by 'our' governments is never a crime against humanity.

Interviewing Tony Blair 10 years on from his criminal invasion of Iraq, the BBC's Kirsty Wark gifted him a

moment he could only dream of. She allowed Blair to agonise over his 'difficult' decision rather than call him to account for the monumental lies and bloodbath he launched. One is reminded of Albert Speer.

Hollywood has returned to its cold war role, led by liberals. Ben Affleck's Oscar-winning *Argo* is the first feature film so integrated into the propaganda system that its subliminal warning of Iran's 'threat' is offered as Obama is preparing, yet again, to attack Iran.

That Affleck's 'true story' of good-guys-vs-bad-Muslims is as much a fabrication as Obama's justification for his war plans is lost in PR-managed plaudits. As the independent critic Andrew O'Hehir points out, *Argo* is 'a propaganda movie in the truest sense, one that claims to be innocent of all ideology'. That is, it debases the art of filmmaking to reflect an image of the power it serves.

The true story is that, for 34 years, the US foreign policy elite has seethed with revenge for the loss of the shah of Iran, their beloved tyrant, and his CIA-designed state of torture. When Iranian students occupied the US embassy in Tehran in 1979, they found a trove of incriminating documents, which revealed that an Israeli spy network was operating inside the US, stealing top scientific and military secrets. Today, the duplicitous Zionist ally – not Iran – is the one and only nuclear threat in the Middle East.

In 1977, Carl Bernstein, famed for his Watergate reporting, disclosed that more than 400 journalists and executives of mostly liberal US media organisations had worked for the CIA in the past 25 years. They included journalists from the *New York Times*, *Time*, and the big TV broadcasters. These days, such a formal nefarious workforce is quite unnecessary.

In 2010, the *New York Times* made no secret of its collusion with the White House in censoring the WikiLeaks war logs. The CIA has an 'entertainment industry liaison office' that helps producers and directors remake its image from that of a lawless gang that assassinates, overthrows governments and runs drugs. As Obama's CIA commits multiple murder by drone, Affleck lauds the 'clandestine service ... that is making sacrifices on behalf of Americans every day ... I want to thank them very much'.

The 2010 Oscar-winner Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty*, a torture-apology, was all but licensed by the Pentagon. The US market share of cinema box-office takings in Britain often reaches 80 per cent, and the small UK share is mainly for US co-productions.

Films from Europe and the rest of the world account for a tiny fraction of those we are allowed to see. In my own filmmaking career, I have never known a time when dissenting voices in the visual arts are so few and silent. For all the handwringing induced by the Leveson inquiry, the 'Murdoch mould' remains intact. Phone-hacking was always a distraction, a misdemeanour compared to the media-wide drumbeat for criminal wars.

According to Gallup, 99 per cent of Americans believe Iran is a threat to them, just as the majority believed Iraq was responsible for the 9/11 attacks. 'Propaganda always wins', said Leni Riefenstahl, 'if you allow it'. ■

www.johnpilger.com

Evo Morales looks at December 21 – the ‘Mayan apocalypse’ – As a new beginning

EVO MORALES, BOLIVIA’S FIRST INDIGENOUS PRESIDENT, CALLED FOR A NEW AGE TO BEGIN DECEMBER 21, 2012.

Speaking at the United Nations in September, Morales said the date signals an end to individualism and capitalism and a turn toward the collective good. That’s a common theme for Morales, who often speaks of ‘vivir bien <<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/article/bolivia%E2%80%99s-economy-grows,-but-challenges-still-persist-111906>>,’ a phrase that can be translated as living well. ‘Vivir bien’ is often defined by the Andean nation’s leaders as pursuing the collective good in balance with the Earth, and contrasted with ‘living better,’ which is seeking to amass wealth at the expense of the planet or other people.

Below is an excerpt from Morales’ speech.

“I wish to take this opportunity to announce an invitation to an international meeting on the 21 of December this year. A meeting closing the age of non-time and receiving the new age of balance and harmony for Mother Earth. It would take so long to tell you about the knowledge of our indigenous brothers in Mexico, in Guatemala, in Bolivia, in Ecuador, but basically we are issuing this invitation to hold a virtual debate, and also in person, on the following topics:

- Number 1: Global crisis of capitalism
- Number 2: Mold of civilization, world government, capitalism, socialism, community, culture of life
- Number 3: Climate crisis, relationship of the human being with nature
- Number 4: Common energy, energy of change

- Number 5: Awareness of Mother Earth
- Number 6: Recovery of ancestral uses and customs, natural cosmic calendar
- Number 7: Living well as a solution to the global crisis, because we affirm once again that one can only live better by not plundering natural resources. This is a profound debate that I would like to have with the world.

- Number 8: Food sovereignty of course, security with food sovereignty
- Number 9: Integration, brotherhood, community economy, complementarity, right to communication, community learning for life, the new holistic human, the end of patriarchy, awakening of self knowledge, and of course health which is so important.

“And I would like to say that according to the Mayan calendar the 21 of December is the end of the non-time and the beginning of time. It is the end of the Macha and the beginning of the Pacha, the end of selfishness and the beginning of brotherhood, it is the end of individualism and the beginning of collectivism – 21 of December this year. The scientists know very well that this marks the end of an anthropocentric life and the beginning of a bio-centric life. It is the end of hatred and the beginning of love, the end of lies and beginning of truth. It is the end of sadness and the beginning of happiness, it is the end of division and the beginning of unity, and this is a theme to be developed. That is why we invite all of you, those of you who bet on mankind, we invite those who want to share their experiences for the benefit of mankind.”

.....
Transcript of Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, at the General Assembly of the United Nations on September 26, 2012.

Transcription by Sara Shahriari

Watch the video, with comments on the significance of December 21 beginning at 31:20, here <<http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/general-assembly/general-debate/67th-session/watch/bolivia-general-debate-67th-session/1863127442001>>.

VALE

PEACE ACTIVIST

PAULINE MITCHELL

1930–2013



Pauline Mitchell: activist extraordinaire. She was born on 12 November 1930 in South Australia and left school in Form 1. Pauline became an ardent campaigner for peace very early in her life. She left home aged 17 years and went to Alice Springs where she worked in the Native Affairs Department and the *Centralian Advocate* newspaper.

It was here in the 1950s that her political awakening began. She questioned why there was a large US contingent on the outskirts of Alice Springs and couldn’t get an answer. (They were surveying for the establishment of the Pine Gap spy base.)

Pauline came to Melbourne in 1958 and there she joined a small group of clergy who were establishing the peace movement in Victoria. They built what we now know as the Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament (CICD).

Pauline eventually became the leading figure in this organisation and until she died ran a weekly radio program on 3CR. Pauline gave her whole life, her energy and her commitment to the struggle for peace and socialism. We are proud that she was a member of the Melbourne Unitarian Church that shares her commitment to world peace and we pledge to continue her work of exposing the profit-driven war machine.

Pauline never faltered in challenging US imperialism and its indefensible involvement in illegal wars for profit. Despite failing health she continued her radio program exposing the war machine both in the US and in the country she loved so much, Australia.

Pauline was an inspiration to us all. Let us use this inspiration to continue her work. ■

from our readers



The Editor

There are many responses to the new form of mining called coal seam gas mining, but the NSW Government's move of just banning it for houses up to 2 kilometres distance from a town centre in no way answers the growing concerns of citizens opposing its dangerous effect on their daily lives, particularly farmers.

So the Government's decision to just ban under a few houses is really only a weak public relations exercise that they are doing something, confronted with the widespread damage, and threats of more of this insidious process, with wide areas of agricultural lands already being mined or targeted by this process and the growing opposition to it all.

Sincerely

K O'Hara, NSW

The Editor

Illawarra Mercury

The NSW Government's move on coal stream gas mining – stopping it under houses up to 2 kilometres distance from a town centre, in no way answers the growing number of citizens who have come to oppose this damaging input to their daily lives, particularly farmers.

The Government's decision to just ban mining under a few houses is so limited, in the face of the wide areas of agricultural lands already being mined or targeted in this way, and the growing opposition to it all.

And some time back in late 2011 our Council decided its policy on this vital issue as no coal seam gas mining on our prime agricultural land, and no coal seam gas mining on lands above where our water comes from and I understand that a similar stand was taken by all our South Coast Councils.

So in knowledge of Councils' decision in this matter, residents should be able to get on with their daily lives without worrying about any negative impact from coal seam gas mining in our area.

Sincerely

Ken O'Hara

The Editor

A few interesting articles in recent publications about the problems with the democratic system under which we in 'the West' live reminded me of something which was brought to my attention almost a decade ago but seems to have faded away, regrettably.

I refer to the Simultaneous Policy Campaign (Simpol for short).

Simpol describes itself as 'a growing association of citizens world-wide who aim to use their votes in a co-ordinated and effective way to drive all nations to co-operate in solving our planetary crisis'. It believes that transnational citizen action is vital because global markets and multinational corporations so comprehensively overpower individual nations that no politician dares make the first move to solve global problems for fear of competitive disadvantage.

I wonder if any other *Beacon* reader is aware of Simpol and know it has gained much traction?

Fay Waddington, Woolloowin, QLD

Dear Friends

Find enclosed my subscription for 2013. The rest of the money – use it where it's most needed.

Keep up the good work!

E Bron, NSW

Dear Editor

Please find here renewed subscription for 2 copies of *Beacon*.

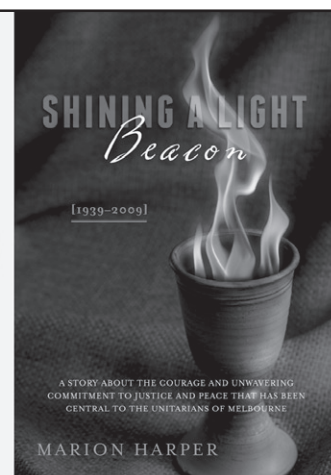
Thanks for a wonderful magazine.

T Chandler, NSW

“ A remarkable little book that tells the life and times of the Beacon. Marion Harper's book is carefully written and thought provoking. ”

Reverend Peter Ferguson
ANZUUA President

Available
from the
church -
just \$15



MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

‘SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY’

Tel: 03 9417 4178 (10 am to 3 pm weekdays) Fax and Answering machine: 03 9417 4178
110 Grey Street, East Melbourne (opposite the Mercy Hospital)
Services, Sunday 11 am

IN THIS ISSUE:

Editorial

President Chavez: A 21st-century renaissance man

The work that you can't sell

Rising to the challenge of the Asian century

The new propaganda is liberal – The new slavery is digital

Evo Morales looks at December 21 – the ‘Mayan apocalypse’ – As a new beginning

Beacon Editorial Board

Peter Abrehart

Marion Harper

Donna Sensi

Julie Stafford

The Editorial opinions expressed are those of the Editorial Board.

Opinions expressed in the editorial, articles, letters, etc., in the *Beacon* are those of the writers themselves and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the Melbourne Unitarian Church or any other organisation to which a particular writer is affiliated. Titles and affiliations are used for individual identification purposes only.

MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

110 Grey Street, East Melbourne 3002

Email: admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au

Website: www.melbourneunitarian.org.au

Monthly Journal of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church
Est. 1852

Registered by Australia Post

Post Print Approved
100003043

SURFACE
MAIL

POSTAGE
PAID
E. Melbourne
Victoria
Australia
3002

Simply cut out this form, fill in the details, and forward it along with your subscription. Why not do it now? If you are already a subscriber, send one to a friend.

To: The Editor, **The Beacon**, Melbourne Unitarian Church
110 Grey Street, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002 Australia

Please forward a copy of **The Beacon** every month. Enclosed is \$20.00 for twelve months subscription. (A\$20 Overseas and \$10 concession)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Also send a copy to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

A GIFT THAT SAYS YOU CARE

A Gift Subscription to **The Beacon**, the ideal gift that lasts a whole year.
Please enter my gift subscription to the following:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Donor's Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Enter payment of \$20.00 (A\$20 Overseas, \$10 Concession) for one year's subscription to the Editor, **Beacon**, Melbourne Unitarian Church, 110 Grey Street, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002 Australia.