

SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

## ABBOTT'S WISH LIST

EDITORIAL

Many of our readers would have seen the recent report in the mainstream media about a meeting of the right-wing think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA).

The keynote speakers were Tony Abbott, Rupert Murdoch, and Gina Rinehart, and the MC was Andrew Bolt. Cardinal George Pell was amongst a number of 'distinguished' guests. We trust they thoroughly enjoyed each other's company, which they evidently did if the amount of head nodding and similar affirmations observed are correct.

It was reported that those at the meeting/dinner were in 'broad philosophical agreement' with the IPA, although differences did exist, mainly in the 'means' to a particular end rather than the desired end itself.

We don't have to guess what sort of end these 'distinguished' people have in mind for us ordinary folk. In August of last year the IPA published a 75-point manifesto to reform Australia (refer page 9 of this issue of *Beacon*/IPA website). The 'wish list' is sobering reading that, in essence, represents a further more accelerated massive transfer of wealth to the rich, destruction of public infrastructure and any semblance of a just, equitable, compassionate and fair society.

We can see many of the points in the manifesto being pushed by the media with a combination of fear, misinformation and an exponential rise in the use of outright lies.

You would have noticed that politicians, particularly those in the conservative ranks, seem to be reading from the same script – simple messages repeated ad nauseam to the public via a largely complicit media. Think 'nanny state', 'queue jumpers', 'dole bludgers' and add many more yourself.

All this is not new, of course.

A well-known propagandist once wrote:

*Propaganda must always address itself to the broad masses of the people. (...) All propaganda must be presented in a popular form and must fix its intellectual level so as not to be above the heads of the least intellectual of those to whom it is directed. (...) The art of propaganda consists precisely in being able to awaken the imagination of the public through an appeal to their feelings, in finding the appropriate psychological form that will arrest the attention and appeal to the hearts of the national masses. The broad masses of the people are not made*



*up of diplomats or professors of public jurisprudence nor simply of persons who are able to form reasoned judgement in given cases, but a vacillating crowd of human children who are constantly wavering between one idea and another. (...)*

As to the methods to be employed, he explains:

*Propaganda must not investigate the truth objectively and, in so far as it is favourable to the other side, present it according to the theoretical rules of justice; yet it must present only that aspect of the truth which is favourable to its own side. (...) The receptive powers of the masses are very restricted, and their understanding is feeble. On the other hand, they quickly forget. Such being the case, all effective propaganda must be confined to a few bare essentials and those must be expressed as far as possible in stereotyped formulas. These slogans should be persistently repeated until the very last individual has come to grasp the idea that has been put forward. (...) Every change that is made in the subject of a propagandist message must always emphasise the same conclusion. The leading slogan must of course be illustrated in many ways and from several angles, but in the end one must always return to the assertion of the same formula.*

The above words could well be described as the current lesson plan for our politicians and the mass media. They were not quoted directly at the IPA meeting – a smart move – as their origin is from Chapter VI of a book called *Mein Kampf* by one Adolf Hitler. ■

## PART TWO

# President Chavez: A 21st-Century Renaissance Man

*By James Petras*

Chavez' deep-seated aversion and effective opposition to US and European imperialism and brutal Israeli colonialism were profoundly rooted in his reading of the writings and history of Simon Bolivar, the founding father of the Venezuelan nation. Bolivarian ideas on national liberation long preceded any exposure to Marx, Lenin or more contemporary leftist writings on imperialism. His powerful and unwavering support for regional integration and internationalism was deeply influenced by Simon Bolivar's proposed 'United States of Latin America' and his internationalist activity in support of anti-colonial movements.

Chavez' incorporation of Marxist ideas into his world-view was adapted to his longstanding popular Christian and Bolivarian internationalist philosophy. Chavez' option for the poor was deepened by his recognition of the centrality of the class struggle and the reconstruction of the Bolivarian nation through the socialisation of the 'commanding heights of the economy'. The socialist concept of self-managed factories and popular empowerment via community councils was given moral legitimacy by Chavez' Christian faith in an egalitarian moral order.

While Chavez was respectful and carefully listened to the views of visiting leftist academics and frequently praised their writings, many failed to recognize or, worse, deliberately ignored the President's own more original synthesis of history, religion and Marxism. Unfortunately, as is frequently the case, some leftist academics have, in their self-indulgent posturing, presumed to be Chavez' 'teacher' and advisor on all matters of 'Marxist theory': This represents a style of leftist cultural colonialism, which snidely criticized Chavez for not following their ready-made prescriptions, published in their political literary journals in London, New York and Paris.

Fortunately, Chavez took what was useful from the overseas academics and NGO-funded political strategists while discarding ideas that failed to take account of the cultural-historical, class and rentier specificities of Venezuela.

Chavez has bequeathed to the intellectuals and activists of the world a method of thinking which is global and specific, historical and theoretical, material and ethical and which encompasses class analysis, democracy and a spiritual transcendence resonating with the great mass of humanity in a language every person can understand. Chavez' philosophy and practice (more than any 'discourse' narrated by the social forum-hopping experts) demonstrated that the art of formulating complex ideas in simple language can move millions of people to 'make history, and not only to study it'.

## Toward Practical Alternatives to Neoliberalism and Imperialism

Perhaps Chavez' greatest contribution in the contemporary period was to demonstrate, through practical measures and political initiatives, that many of the most challenging contemporary political and economic problems can be successfully resolved.

### Radical Reform of a Rentier State

Nothing is more difficult than changing the social structure, institutions, and attitudes of a rentier petro-state, with deeply entrenched clientelistic politics, endemic party-state corruption, and a deeply rooted mass psychology based on consumerism. Yet Chavez largely succeeded where other petro-regimes failed. The Chavez Administration first began with constitutional and institutional changes to create a new political framework; then he implemented social impact programs, which deepened political commitments among an active majority, which, in turn, bravely defended the regime from a violent US backed business-military coup d'état. Mass mobilization and popular support, in turn, radicalized the Chavez government and made way for a deeper socialization of the economy and the implementation of radical agrarian reform. The petrol industry was socialized; royalty and tax payments were raised to provide funds for massively expanded social expenditures benefiting the majority of Venezuelans.

Almost every day Chavez prepared clearly understandable educational speeches on social, ethical and political topics related to his regime's redistributive policies by emphasizing social solidarity over individualistic acquisitive consumerism. Mass organizations and community and trade union movements flourished – a new social consciousness emerged ready and willing to advance social change and confront the wealthy and powerful. Chavez' defeat of the US-backed coup and bosses' lockout and his affirmation of the Bolivarian tradition and sovereign identity of Venezuela created a powerful nationalist consciousness which eroded the rentier mentality and strengthened the pursuit of a diversified 'balanced economy'. This new political will and national productive consciousness was a great leap forward, even as the main features of a rentier-oil dependent economy persist. This extremely difficult transition has begun and is an ongoing process. Overseas leftist theorists who criticize Venezuela ('corruption', 'bureaucracy') have profoundly ignored the enormous difficulties of transitioning from a rentier state to a socialized economy and the enormous progress achieved by Chavez.

### Economic Crisis Without Capitalist Austerity

Throughout the crisis-racked capitalist world, ruling labor, social democratic, liberal and conservative regimes have imposed regressive 'austerity programs' involving brutal reductions of social welfare, health and education expenditures and mass layoffs of workers and employees while handing out generous state subsidies and bailouts to failing banks and capitalist enterprises. Chanting their Thatcherite slogan, 'there is no alternative', capitalist economists justify imposing the burden of 'capitalist recovery' onto the working class while allowing capital to recover its profits in order to invest.

Chavez' policy was the direct opposite: In the midst of crisis, he retained all the social programs, rejected mass firings and increased social spending. The Venezuelan economy rode out of the worldwide crisis and recovered

with a healthy 5.8% growth rate in 2012. In other words, Chavez demonstrated that mass impoverishment was a product of the specific capitalist 'formula' for recovery. He showed another, positive alternative approach to economic crisis, which taxed the rich, promoted public investments and maintained social expenditures.

### **Social Transformation in a 'Globalized Economy'**

Many commentators, left, right and centre, have argued that the advent of a 'globalized economy' ruled out a radical social transformation. Yet Venezuela, which is profoundly globalized and integrated into the world market via trade and investments, has made major advances in social reform. What really matters in relation to a globalized economy is the nature of the political economic regime and its policies, which dictate how the gains and costs of international trade and investment are distributed. In a word, what is decisive is the 'class character of the regime' managing its place in the world economy. Chavez certainly did not 'de-link' from the world economy; rather he has re-linked Venezuela in a new way. He shifted Venezuelan trade and investment toward Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East — especially to countries that do not intervene or impose reactionary conditions on economic transactions.

### **Anti-Imperialism in a Time of an Imperialist Offensive**

In a time of a virulent US-EU imperialist offensive involving 'pre-emptive' military invasions, mercenary interventions, torture, assassinations and drone warfare in Iraq, Mali, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Afghanistan, and brutal economic sanctions and sabotage against Iran; Israeli colonial expulsions of thousands of Palestinians financed by the US; US-backed military coups in Honduras and Paraguay and aborted revolutions via puppets in Egypt and Tunisia, President Chavez, alone, stood as the principled defender of anti-imperialist politics. Chavez' deep commitment to anti-imperialism stands in marked contrast to the capitulation of Western self-styled 'Marxist' intellectuals who mouthed crude justifications for their support of NATO bombing Yugoslavia and Libya, the French invasion of Mali and the Saudi-French ('Monarcho-Socialist') funding and arming of Islamist mercenaries against Syria. These same London, New York and Paris-based 'intellectuals' who patronized Chavez as a mere 'populist' or 'nationalist' and claimed he should have listened to their lectures and read their books, had crassly capitulated under the pressure of the capitalist state and mass media into supporting 'humanitarian interventions' (aka NATO bombing) ... and justified their opportunism in the language of obscure leftists sects. Chavez confronted NATO pressures and threats, as well as the destabilizing subversion of his domestic opponents and courageously articulated the most profound and significant principles of 20th- and 21st-century Marxism: the inviolate

right to self-determination of oppressed nations and unconditional opposition to imperial wars. While Chavez spoke and acted in defense of anti-imperialist principles, many in the European and US left acquiesced in imperial wars: there were virtually no mass protests, the 'anti-war' movements were co-opted or moribund, the British 'Socialist' Workers Party defended the massive NATO bombing of Libya, the French 'Socialists' invaded Mali – with the support of the 'Anti-Capitalist' Party. Meanwhile, the 'populist' Chavez had articulated a far more profound and principled understanding of Marxist practice, certainly than his self-appointed overseas Marxist 'tutors'.

No other political leader or for that matter, leftist academic, developed, deepened and extended the central tenets of anti-imperialist politics in the era of global imperialist warfare with greater acuity than Hugo Chavez.

### **Transition from a Failed Neo-Liberal to a Dynamic Welfare State**

Chavez' programmatic and comprehensive reconfiguration of Venezuela from a disastrous and failed neo-liberal regime to a dynamic welfare state stands as a landmark in 20th- and 21st-century political economy. Chavez' successful reversal of neo-liberal institutions and policies, as well as his re-nationalization of the 'commanding heights of the economy' demolished the reigning neo-liberal dogma derived from the Thatcher-Reagan era enshrined in the slogan: 'There is no alternative' to brutal neo-liberal policies, or TINA.

Chavez rejected privatization – he re-nationalized key oil-related industries, socialized hundreds of capitalist firms and carried out a vast agrarian reform program, including land distribution to 300,000 families. He encouraged trade union organizations and worker control of factories – even bucking public managers and even his own cabinet ministers. In Latin America, Chavez led the way in defining with greater depth and with more comprehensive social changes, the post neo-liberal era. Chavez envisioned the transition from neo-liberalism to a new socialized welfare state as an international process and provided financing and political support for new regional organizations like ALBA, PetroCaribe, and UNASUR. He rejected the idea of building a welfare state in one country and formulated a theory of post-neo-liberal transitions based on international solidarity. Chavez' original ideas and policies regarding the post-neo-liberal transition escaped the armchair Marxists and the globetrotting Social Forum NGO pundits whose inconsequential 'global alternatives' succeeded primarily in securing imperial foundation funding.

Chavez demonstrated through theory and practice that neo-liberalism was indeed reversible – a major political breakthrough of the 21st century. ■

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# Entrapment – The Australian Conundrum

by Peter Barrack

## The US is a country very comfortable with war.

According to the US Congressional Research Centre, it tells us that in the 297 years since the Declaration of Independence the US has regime changed, destabilised, invaded, conducted coups, assassinated leaders, etc., on 200 occasions for various political, ideological and/or economic reasons.

The delusional justification for these crimes against humanity is zealously propagated as the pursuit of democracy, peace, happiness, and stability, in spite of the masses of invalidating evidence to the contrary.

Stephen Kinzer, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and New York Times correspondent makes a telling point in his book, *Overthrow: American Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*: 'Defending corporate power is hardly the only reason the US overthrows foreign government. They do so for the most elemental reasons, which is to acquire more of whatever is good to have. In the modern world, corporations are the institutions that countries use to capture wealth. They become the vanguard of American power, defying them is tantamount to defying the United States'.

Australia's obsequious servility to the US, bound by two unrequited linkages of US convenience, more commonly known as the 'ANZUS' Treaty and the 'Alliance', have dragged Australia into three indefensible wars: Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, at an unacceptable cost of life and suffering.

American foreign policy objectives currently function within the foreign policy doctrine 'global spectrum dominance'. The following limited statistics seek to expose the extent to which the US has progressed with its doctrinal strategy:

- (1) The Pentagon outlays about US\$700 billion pa. This accounts for 41% of all global defence spending. Couple that with its allies defence spending, it comes to a total of 71% of global spending. China's defence expenditure as part of GDP is 8% of global spending.
- (2) The US has approximately 300,000 troops stationed abroad, more than the rest of the developing countries combined. That does not include the 90,000 sailors and marines at sea nor is it precisely known how many are in Iraq and Afghanistan. The troops occupy or use some 761 sites in 39 foreign countries.
- (3) The engaged countries are: Azerbaijan, Arabia, Australia, Argentina, Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Bahrain, Cuba, Curacao, Columbia, El Salvador, Ecuador, Emirates, Greenland, Germany, Guam, Paraguay,

Honduras, Italy, Iraq, Japan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Pakistan, Oman, Puerto Rico, Romania, South Korea, Spain, Saudi Arabia Tajikistan, Turkey, UK, Uzbekistan, Paraguay, Quater, Diego Garcia, and Antarctica.

- (4) The Pentagon has divided the planet into unified commands, each under the control of a four-star general or an admiral. They are Pacific Command responsible for Asia-Pacific region; Central Command responsible for greater Middle East; European Command responsible for EU; African command responsible for 53 nations; Southern Command covers Central & South America and Caribbean; Northern Command is responsible for North America; Strategic Command is responsible for sea- and land-based missiles and long-range bombers; and Space Command covers joint space operations.

President Obama, within his first term of office, very quickly moved to shut down the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The real purpose was that the US could not sustain the cost and needed the revenues to fund his Asian re-alignment strategy and the containment of China. Australia, along with other accomplices, namely, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, South Korea, and India are pressured to join this spurious strategic objective.

Rarely, if ever, has Australia been the centre of such slavish attention with visits from presidents, senior foreign ministers, secretary of state (twice), secretary of defence (3 times), army generals, and admirals.

The first visitor was Robert Gates, Secretary of Defence, and Hilary Clinton, Secretary of State. Then after avoiding Australia to visit India and Indonesia, President Obama, then Hilary Clinton again and a new Defence Secretary, Leon Panetta, the British Home Secretary, William Haig, and the British Defence Secretary, EU Secretary General Fogh Rasmussen, then Admiral Samuel Lochlear and then, twice Richard Armitage – a passionate hawk from the Bush administration.

They were all here, the lackeys of the crumbling colonial powers and declining imperialist power, all with the intent of badgering for Australia's commitment to the grand Western powers one-dimensional strategy of strategic containment of China.

All were singing from the same spreadsheet. The topics were defence expenditure (or lack of it), joint defence cooperation, joint defence manoeuvres, joint defence ventures, joint strategic ocean tactics, joint strategic planning, and so on. Forgive my cynicism for thinking the spreadsheet may have been crafted in Washington or the Pentagon.

Let us examine the nature of the tactical pressure being applied to the Australian Government, by the US, to achieve their objectives.

A statement from President Obama's office, 19/7/12: 'Australia has used the regular deployment of US Marines to Darwin for half of each year as a shield for slackening its defence expenditures'.

In 2011, President Obama lectured the Australian Parliament on America's intent of an escalated presence in South East Asia and the expectations of Australia's role in that process. He said, in part: 'Partnerships can't be just about one nation extracting other nation's resources', while not naming the 'nation', it was patently obvious it was China.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* took the President to task over his overbearing comments by raising questions of the negative implications contained with his assumptions; it raised the following questions:

1. 'Firstly, it was audacious that the President should try to warn Australia off its relationship with its biggest trading partner' (China 25.5% of Australia exports, US 4%).
2. 'It is hypocritical that a president of another country should redefine a free trade relationship between two consenting sovereign states as exploitive'.
3. 'In 2003, the US was Australia's second biggest export market behind Japan. It received about 12% of our exports; however, in 2004 Australia signed a free trade agreement, hence, and in 2012, our exports had fallen to 4%'.

The next put-down on Australia's right to determine how it handles its economic responsibilities came from Admiral Locklear, Head of the US Pacific Command and Richard Armitage, who publicly launched a tirade of offensive statements: 'It threatens the country's credibility as an ally', 'Australia is freeloading on the American taxpayer', 'Australia defence spending has fallen below what the US expects', 'Australia's defence budget is inadequate', and so on.

These statements were appallingly insensitive and arrogant and showed an authoritarian disrespect to Australian sovereignty within the context of:

- the loss of Australian lives in the superfluous commitment to the three contrived wars that were Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan
- the US commitment to substantial defence cuts. The first cut will be \$US487 billion followed by a cut of \$600 billion. These cuts are to alleviate the stress on the US economy created by a \$US16.5 trillion foreign debt. China is America's largest debtor.

Further, the European debt crisis has forced defence expenditure reductions by major NATO countries.

However, US reductions of defence expenditures have not impacted on weapons sales. In 2011/12, US arms

sales tripled. Overseas arms sales were \$66.3 billion; this was 78% of all global arms sales. The principle recipients from the US were the remaining conspiratorial Middle East dictators, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Bahrain. The despicable former Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, once said: 'Do nothing to offend the dictators for they are the only ones you can trust'.

One of the most extensive pressure strategies is a proposal commissioned by the US Defence Department and constructed by the US Centre for Strategic Studies was a proposal for the enhancement of the US force posture in the Pacific-Asia region.

The final report recommended in part that (1) the US increase Special Forces in the region, and (2) move a US carrier strike force to *HMAS Stirling* base in Perth. Such a strike force would consist of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, an air wing of nine squadrons (66 aircraft and 13 helicopters), 1 or 2 guided missile cruisers, 2 or 3 guided missile destroyers, 1 or 2 nuclear submarines and a supply ship.

The report was submitted to the US Congress for consideration, not the Australian Government. What the US wants the US will get.

In dealing with the most disputatious pressure being imposed on the Australian Government are drones, and within that context I must acknowledge the impeccable articles by Hannah Middleton and Brian Tyrell on their drone coverage and John Pilger on Diego Garcia, that may well reflect the future of the Cocos Islands.

Brian and Hannah's revelations as to the extent that Australia is so seduced by drones must become a matter of broad public debate.

There are three tiers of contradictory information on the scope of killing, both terrorists (suspects) and civilians. They are the country responsible for the killings, the country that has been attacked, and the independent organisations such as Amnesty and others. I will use statistics provided by the independents.

The process by which a decision will be made as to where and who the next assassination will occur is the sole responsibility of President Obama, based on information given to him by John Brennan, his Intelligence Officer.

Brennan prepares a list of suspects; they are likely to reside in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, or Somalia (but not exclusively). The list is known as the 'kill list Tuesdays'. It will be given to the President to determine who will and who won't be assassinated. The President is the judge, jury and executioner.

In Pakistan, according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, over the first term of President Obama there have been 362 strikes, 3,461 deaths, of which 891 were civilians.

The most recent was in Yemen: a truck carrying 14 civilians: men, women and children, was hit by a drone,

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*.....it was audacious that the President should try to warn Australia off its relationship with its biggest trading partner.*”

# Sisterhood and Socialism

*By Joan Coxsedge, artist, writer, political activist*

Author: *Thank God for the Revolution* and *Cold Tea for Brandy*; co-author *Rooted in Secrecy*



**I've called my talk *Sisterhood and Socialism* because I believe you can't have one without the other. A fair go for women and a socialist society are interlinked.**

**C**uba is a fine example – like Venezuela under Hugo Chavez – where women were in the forefront of the struggle and took full advantage of government initiatives in every aspect of Cuban life. Cuban women had a powerful advocate in Fidel. Right from the start he defined women's liberation as a 'revolution within the revolution'.

My political understanding didn't come out of textbooks or from academia – although I hasten to add I'm an avid

reader – but is based on more than 50 years' work in the hustings. So I'll start at the beginning. I was born in Ballarat into a working-class family in the worst year of the Great Depression. We had relocated to Ballarat because my father worked in the railways, a proud career job back then. After a couple of years, we sped back to Melbourne for a variety of reasons and went to live in Kensington with Mum's family, when it was a solid working-class suburb, with not a yuppie in sight. My grandfather Joe Gordon worked for Kitchens, lugging huge baskets of fat to local butchers shops and had a heart attack on Caulfield Cup Day when I was about 9 months old and he was only 52, no doubt brought about by his tough job.

My political life began in the mid-1960s when I was flat out being a wife, mother of three, doing occasional jobs

for a drafting agency and painting in oils on an easel in our open living area, infecting our meals with the stench of turps and linseed oil. At the end of the decade I spent a few years designing textiles for a fashion house in Collins Street, a madhouse, but that's another story. Like thousands of others I became so enraged at Washington's brutal intervention in Vietnam, with hideous images of napalm, bombs and defoliants raining down on poor defenceless people struggling for independence and Australia's grovelling role in the whole sorry saga, that I joined the anti-war/anti-conscription movement and the Labor Party and went on a fast learning curve.

In the ALP, I immersed myself in policy-making – civil rights, anti-uranium and was the founding president of the Status of Women Committee, which got off to a rocky start but survived for many years. Socialism wasn't a dirty word back then, and the majority of women on the committee made the link, which was reflected in our policies on women's health, adoption, domestic violence, prostitution, contraception and abortion, a hot potato that has never gone away, when it should have been resolved decades ago. Presenting our reports to state conferences standing in front of 350 delegates was fraught. Male delegates would lick their macho chops waiting for the sheilas to come on. Anything even vaguely sexual meant a full house.

I also immersed myself in a variety of anti-war actions and helped young men avoid going to Vietnam by legal and illegal means and learned that if you wanted to change unjust laws you had to break them and that frequently meant gaol. In a few short years, my status changed from being a relatively conventional female Australian to being a law-breaking ex-gaol-bird. And there's nothing like a stretch in gaol to sharpen the political wits. It's the capitalist system unadorned without the bells and whistles.

I saw no well-heeled crims from Toorak or Brighton in Fairlea Women's prison, just the powerless poor, most of them young prostitutes in the nick for non-payment of fines who, on release went back on the game because they couldn't get any other job and were then sent back to gaol in an endless cycle. Some didn't even get a whiff of freedom because the cops were waiting for them at the prison gate with fresh charges.

About 50 years ago, Women's Liberation came to town and many women fed up with being labelled as an appendage to a male or as an underpaid worker joined its ranks. But even in its heyday, it failed to attract significant numbers of working-class women, probably too exhausted working and caring for families to attend the meetings. Nevertheless, Women's Lib contained radical elements that believed in nothing less than a revolutionary restructuring of society and a breakdown of hierarchical structures.

In the longer term, it was outsmarted by the more conservative, middle-class WEL, the Women's Electoral Lobby, that wanted change from within the existing system and didn't appear to see any connection with the class struggle. Equal opportunity became affirmative action and was co-opted by the well-heeled, better educated women with the know-how to use the system to advance themselves. A few climbed the top-heavy, male-dominated corporate ladder and then proceeded to behave in exactly the same self-seeking, competitive, ruthless way as their male colleagues.

And this is the crunch question with no easy answers. The extent to which women – and men seeking social change – can work within our existing hierarchical, right-wing, corrupt economic system and not be compromised and swallowed up whole. This question was seriously raised almost 40 years ago at the 1975 Women and Politics conference in Canberra only a few weeks before Gough got the chop in a CIA-run coup, which highlighted the fragility of our institutions. The conference was attended

by 700 women with varying views from across the nation, one that I wouldn't have missed for quids. Back then we debated issues with passion, so sadly lacking today.

A socialist Canadian MP said this: *'Power is a competitive destructive force that thrives on the exploitation of the weak by the strong. If women exercise power as men do, betrayal is added to oppression'*. Which gives us the Hilary Clintons, the Margaret Thatchers, and the Julie Bishops, who are about as feminist in outlook as al-Qaida. Flo Kennedy, a black lawyer from the US, believed our real enemies were working in the Pentagon and the one thing we should avoid is 'Pentagonorrhoea'. She outlined her theory of

power-sharing. A woman lying in a dentist's chair decided after a few agonising minutes that he was inflicting more pain than seemed necessary. She grabbed his testicles and hung on. He moaned, 'What the hell is going on'. She replied sweetly, 'We're not going to hurt each other, are we doctor?' Perhaps they were both naïve to believe it's possible to reform our society from within, when the real power lies elsewhere in unelected bodies far away from Canberra ... as Gough learned to his cost.

In 1973, I stood as a Labor candidate in Victoria's safest Liberal seat and ran a socialist/feminist campaign, focusing on public transport, health and education and got national coverage because of my pro-abortion stance, getting up the nostrils of the Right to Life whose members set up stalls outside all the polling booths and gave me 0 out of 10 in their highly loaded assessments. In the late 1970s, I was asked to stand for a safe Labor seat in the state parliament, with the idea of shutting me up.



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***Power is a competitive destructive force that thrives on the exploitation of the weak by the strong. If women exercise power as men do, betrayal is added to oppression.***”

My internal pre-selection vote took place in the Trades Hall and was a real doozie. I didn't lobby anyone and didn't expect to win, but scraped in by one or two votes, when all hell erupted. I faced an incredibly dirty campaign and was attacked from within and without the Labor Party, and was naturally labelled a 'maddie' for my 'extreme' views. Years later, I became a friend of British left-wing MP Tony Benn and found the same labels were used against him, which suggests an internationalisation of insults.

Our grandmothers and great-grandmothers weren't all happy homemakers. I'm talking about the great suffragette battles that lasted from 1903 to 1914, which I like to raise whenever I can because they've been almost completely obliterated from our history books. The movement started off in a genteel way with huge rallies and marches, but as their politics of confrontation developed with the slogan 'deeds not words' – implementing the Marxist theory of writing and action – it escalated into acts of arson and bombing and they faced police brutality, imprisonment, beatings, repeated forced feeding, exile and death. More than a thousand Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) members were imprisoned during that time.

The political climate didn't come out of thin air, but directly resulted from violent struggles during the 19th century by generations of men when only 4.5 million males out of 27.5 million were able to vote. WWI broke out and there was an inevitable split between Sylvia Pankhurst's revolutionary socialists, who believed in a complete restructuring of society, with her mother Emmeline and sister Christabel and their group of conservative feminists who supported the status quo as long as they got the vote. At the end of the war, the vote was granted, but only to women over 30 who fulfilled certain property requirements.

We were ahead of our English sisters, but the vote didn't come without a fight. Organised campaigns by local suffragettes had been gaining momentum since the 1860s and debated in colonial parliaments since the 1870s. The Australian Parliament under our first prime minister, Edmund Barton, passed the Franchise Bill in 1902, giving white Australian women 21 and over the right to vote and stand for parliament, but winning a seat was something else again.

Pioneer feminist Vida Goldstein stood in 1903 on a platform of equal pay and equal rights with four other candidates and had another four attempts, but was unsuccessful each time. She had more luck in the legal arena and was instrumental in drafting the Children's Court Act (1908) and playing a part in the basic wage judgement. New Zealand beat us to the gun by enfranchising women in 1893 but they had to wait until 1919 before being allowed to stand for parliament, whereas US women had to wait until 1920 before even gaining the right to vote.

The superficial permissiveness of 1920s society hid the grinding poverty of working-class people and disguised the fundamental lack of progress towards true freedom and equality for women. After the terrible depression that lasted until the outbreak of WW2, when jobs were as scarce as hen's teeth, women once again took on all manner of male jobs, but when the boys came home, the women went back into the home and many stayed there until a new wave of feminism broke through in the sixties.

The media play a key role in keeping us in our place and keeping us abysmally ignorant. Women who don't conform have always got the short end of the stick and whatever you think of Julia Gillard, the way she's been treated by our media is nothing short of scandalous. Years ago I wrote that world media watchers predicted that we could be moving into a new Dark Age of global media control, a prediction not too far-fetched when you realise that control of almost all information and entertainment – including books, magazines, film, TV, radio and more recent forms of hi-tech communication systems – are in the hands of five or six corporate giants.

News Corp, with Rupert Murdoch as its head, has played a pivotal role in dumbing us down with his mind-numbing, pro-war, corporatised crap and I laughed myself silly when I heard that he's coming to town to lecture us about 'free speech'. Murdoch, in particular, uses opinion polls not as a reflection of voting intentions but to manipulate public opinion. Only the internet keeps us relatively sane. Even then, government agencies can keep track of what we ferret out, part of a nether world that operates under the radar that few seem to know about.

Fifty years on, many women feel that we haven't come very far in the intervening years. There's the unresolved problem of childcare and unequal pay, and even more complex problems, involving women from different cultures who are bound by religious laws and traditions. There's also what's been described as the 'lookism' issue, the men's and women's magazines that sexualise and objectify females, even girls as young as ten, creating enormous emotional and social problems. In the 60s and 70s, sisterhood meant supporting each other and trying to help all pockets of society. There was a sense of unity and a lot of hope. Today it's been turned on its head where you have binge-drinking groups of young women trying to feel powerful by aping their drunken male mates and rushing to plastic surgery for breast enhancement and face changes. Domestic violence remains a scourge, leaving women to get solace from little groups of friends. Instead of the collective, our society promotes the individual.

So where to now? It's going to be a hell of a job to turn things around, to reverse the endemic corruption and crimes of the corporate sector, the arms industry, the industrial/military complex and weak, rotten governments. In the unlikely event that Australia would try to re-regulate our economy, curb foreign corporations, and re-establish our manufacturing base, I reckon our overseas bosses would send in the Marines. But I would still rather fight for a worthwhile future, no matter how tough, than lie down and cop what is being dished up to us. If we fail to reverse the current trend, our future is bleak, environmentally, socially and politically.

I will conclude with the theme of my talk. There has always been sexism, regardless of the economic system, but sexism like corruption has no chance of being eliminated under capitalism, where divide and conquer and putting your hand in the till is the rule. So please get active in whatever way you can, because if you're waiting for change from on high, you'll be waiting for a hell of a long time. Be aware of entrenched power structures and make the connections between the various issues. And keep your sense of humour. It's a fight for our survival. ■

# The Wish List

AUGUST 2012 – INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS (IPA) THINK TANK –  
RADICALLY REFORM AUSTRALIA

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: TONY ABBOTT, RUPERT MURDOCH,  
GINA RINEHART, MC ANDREW BOLT



1. Repeal the carbon tax, and don't replace it. It will be one thing to remove the burden of the carbon tax from the Australian economy. But if it is just replaced by another costly scheme, most of the benefits will be undone.
2. Abolish the Department of Climate Change
3. Abolish the Clean Energy Fund
4. Repeal Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act
5. Abandon Australia's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council
6. Repeal the renewable energy target
7. Return income taxing powers to the states
8. Abolish the Commonwealth Grants Commission
9. Abolish the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
10. Withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol
11. Introduce fee competition to Australian universities
12. Repeal the National Curriculum
13. Introduce competing private secondary school curriculums
14. Abolish the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)
15. Eliminate laws that require radio and television broadcasters to be 'balanced'
16. Abolish television spectrum licensing and devolve spectrum management to the common law
17. End local content requirements for Australian television stations
18. Eliminate family tax benefits
19. Abandon the paid parental leave scheme
20. Means-test Medicare
21. End all corporate welfare and subsidies by closing the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
22. Introduce voluntary voting
23. End mandatory disclosures on political donations
24. End media blackout in final days of election campaigns
25. End public funding to political parties
26. Remove anti-dumping laws
27. Eliminate media ownership restrictions
28. Abolish the Foreign Investment Review Board
29. Eliminate the National Preventative Health Agency
30. Cease subsidising the car industry
31. Formalise a one-in, one-out approach to regulatory reduction
32. Rule out federal funding for 2018 Commonwealth Games
33. Deregulate the parallel importation of books
34. End preferences for Industry Super Funds in workplace relations laws
35. Legislate a cap on government spending and tax as a percentage of GDP
36. Legislate a balanced budget amendment which strictly limits the size of budget deficits and the period the federal government can be in deficit
37. Force government agencies to put all of their spending online in a searchable database
38. Repeal plain packaging for cigarettes and rule it out for all other products, including alcohol and fast food
39. Reintroduce voluntary student unionism at universities
40. Introduce a voucher scheme for secondary schools
41. Repeal the alcopops tax
42. Introduce a special economic zone in the north of Australia including:
  - a) Lower personal income tax for residents
  - b) Significantly expanded 457 Visa programs for workers
  - c) Encourage the construction of dams
43. Repeal the mining tax
44. Devolve environmental approvals for major projects to the states
45. Introduce a single rate of income tax with a generous tax-free threshold
46. Cut company tax to an internationally competitive rate of 25 per cent
47. Cease funding the Australia Network
48. Privatise Australia Post
49. Privatise Medibank
50. Break up the ABC and put out to tender each individual function
51. Privatise SBS
52. Reduce the size of the public service from current levels of more than 260,000 to at least the 2001 low of 212,784
53. Repeal the Fair Work Act
54. Allow individuals and employers to negotiate directly terms of employment that suit them
55. Encourage independent contracting by overturning new regulations designed to punish contractors
56. Abolish the Baby Bonus
57. Abolish the First Home Owners' Grant
58. Allow the Northern Territory to become a state
59. Halve the size of the Coalition front bench from 32 to 16
60. Remove all remaining tariff and non-tariff barriers to international trade
61. Slash top public servant salaries to much lower international standards, like in the United States
62. End all public subsidies to sport and the arts
63. Privatise the Australian Institute of Sport
64. End all hidden protectionist measures, such as preferences for local manufacturers in government tendering
65. Abolish the Office for Film and Literature Classification
66. Rule out any government-supported or mandated internet censorship
67. Means test tertiary student loans
68. Allow people to opt out of superannuation in exchange for promising to forgo any government income support in retirement
69. Immediately halt construction of the National Broadband Network and privatise any sections that have already been built
70. End all government funded Nanny State advertising
71. Reject proposals for compulsory food and alcohol labelling
72. Privatise the CSIRO
73. Defund Harmony Day
74. Close the Office for Youth
75. Privatise the Snowy-Hydro Scheme

**Entrapment – The Australian Conundrum**

tipping the truck over. It was then hit by a second missile. All 14 were killed, including a 7-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy. They were all innocents.

According to the *New York Times*, ‘The US has more drone pilots in training (those who sit in front of a computer are considered pilots) than for fighter and bomber aircraft combined’.

Secretary of Defence, Leon Panelta, recently announced that ‘US troops who launch and direct cyber attacks may be recognised with a new medal. The new blue, red and white ribboned “Distinguished Warfare Medal” will be rewarded to individuals for “extraordinary achievement” related to military operations. Unlike the combat medal, it does not require risk to his or her life’. (I assume ‘extraordinary achievement’ means high body count, but it won’t be given for bravery).

America wants occupation of the Cocos Islands to expand the airbase to accommodate drones, Global Hawkes and Poseidon aircraft; apart from being offensive to our northern neighbours, it would not be inconceivable to draw a correlation between the future of the Cocos and that of Diego Garcia.

Under pressure from other countries, including Russia and China, and relevant independent organisations, the United Nations has established a dedicated investigations

unit based in Geneva. Its investigative brief is to examine the legitimacy or illegitimacy of drone attacks as to whether they breach international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity.

On entrapment, the Australian Government entrapment comes as a consequence of its own servility. Its commitment to the unrequited, ageing ANZUS Treaty and the illusory Alliance, consequentially derives a perception that Australia not only gives credence to the ‘global spectrum dominance’ ideology it is itself entrapped by it.

The ANZUS Treaty is a document of weasel words and the Alliance is an imaginary US tool of convenience. Neither guarantees any reciprocal responses to Australia should the need arise.

The Australian Government has, on the issue of troop rotation, treated the Australian people with deceit. To suggest that Australia was doing anything but aiding and abetting the US in a pre-arranged agreement to assist in the challenge of China beggars belief.

The claims that it was the US that made the approach was rebuked by Admiral Willard when he said, ‘It has been very much a part of public record that Australia made overtures to the US’. ■

**DID YOU KNOW...**

**How Foreign is Foreign Aid?**

Australia spends just 1.4% of its federal budget on foreign aid.

**So, who receives it?**



**This makes Australia the 3rd biggest recipient of its own foreign aid.**

SOURCE: DFAT (2012) Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2012-13 - Foreign Affairs and Trade Portfolio Commonwealth of Australia (2012) Budget: Budget Strategy and Outlook, Budget Paper No. 1, 2012-13

# from our readers



## **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 knows it has gained much traction.

**Fay Waddington, QLD**

## **The Beacon**

The current shemozzle of coal-seam gas mining shows the limitations of established political parties dealing with the fundamental issues of our society.

For no mining company can drill a single borehole without Government licence, so instead of this government-induced plunder, shouldn't we be opting for big solar-capturing plants throughout our vast sunburnt country, as projected in a University of Melbourne 172-page book entitled *Sustainable Energy*, by 24 of our leading scientific people, which means, in addition to solar panels on every single roof in the country, including all factories, businesses, schools and universities – and here is the key – HUGE SOLAR-CAPTURING plants throughout our vast sunburnt land, like are now being built in some other forward-thinking countries.

When, oh when, will our governing politicians connect more closely with these forward-thinking scientists, for the good of our land, and people?

**Ken O'Hara, NSW**

## **Dear Sir**

What an excellent issue you published in April.

Please accept this \$20 donation.

Sincerely

**G Barrett, Vic**

## **Dear Sir/Madam**

Please find attached an article (for consideration) on the US expansion on and in Australia as part of its overall containment strategy.

I have a feeling that the peace movement is in recession, the actions of our Government, in conjunction with the US is proceeding unchallenged when it needs a protest movement like we have never previously had.

I am the former Secretary of Newcastle Trades Hall Council (21 yrs); preceding that was secretary/convenor of the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign.

I welcome the *Beacon* as being one of the most progressive and challenging journals currently available.

I thank you for your consideration.

Fraternal greetings

**Peter Barrack, NSW**

## **The Editor**

Excellent journalism. You tell it how it is. John Pilger would be proud of you. Keep it up.

Sincerely

**D Locke, Vic**

## **Dear Editor**

Please accept my apologies for the lateness of this sub.

I am including a small donation of \$30 to atone for my sins.

Keep up the good work with your wonderful publication.

Sincerely

**S Bains, NSW**

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