



SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY the Beacon

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THE ENEMY IS AT THE GATE

EDITORIAL

The Morrison government's latest repressive legislation to target the trade unions is called the Ensuring Integrity Bill. This is a government that more than half the population view with disgust and the other half with indifference. Ensuring integrity? What would this government know about integrity? This is a government without morals, without principles, with a burning hatred of unions, and of the ABC that can fight and expose their immoral, anti-worker policies.

We live in a global world dominated by transnationals that have massive economic and political clout. These transnationals serve private interests and they buy governments. This was graphically illustrated during the recent federal elections when a politically inept government, devoid of integrity, and with no real policies was returned to office, aided by the media monopoly, the mining industry and other vested interests. This was an election bought and paid for by these players to ensure their future prosperity.

As well we have an Opposition tailoring their policies not to promote clear and urgently needed programs for genuine social reform but tied to placating the powerful while purporting to represent the majority. It's called 'falling between two stools' and fall they did, leaving us with what should have been an unelectable, disunited rabble but who now have three years to do irreparable damage to our lives. This damage has already begun with the invasion and ransacking of a journalist's home, raiding the ABC and criminalising a union leader representing the union the building trade bosses want destroyed.



This government came to office at a very troubling time for capital. The economy is faltering. The world is witnessing the worst displacement of people and destruction of national infrastructure since the 2nd World War, arising from immoral wars for profit and power: wars to acquire the natural resources of others, wars to feed the burgeoning armaments industry, and wars to increase the already immoral wealth and power of a very few.

Votes in the 2019 election had barely been counted when the government began its offensive: the new union-busting legislation, the raid on the ABC and the home of a News Corp journalist followed by an attack on John Setka of the

CFMMEU. These were not random acts. They were carefully thought out and designed to disarm the public. There is no relationship between the raids on our ABC staff and national security. There is no justification for these attacks except to scare the public media and the union movement into inaction.

The enemy is at the gate. Its aim is to disarm the people. At a time when we so urgently need a strong and united union movement, and a free public media, these actions make sense for the government. What we don't need is the craven capitulation of the ACTU and the leadership of the Labor Party to strengthen the hand of the powerful and weaken the resources of the people.

If we allow the forces of reaction to flourish, we allow the repeat of history and we consign ourselves to the misery of extended racism and exploitation. It happened in the 1930s ... we cannot afford a repeat of that dark time.





I would like to begin with a big thank you. The Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church is an extraordinary organisation and I feel very privileged to have been welcomed so warmly and generously by the community here. It's a great organisation because of all the excellent people involved. Thank you to everyone who has included me and a special thank you to the management committee who invited me here today.

I would also like to acknowledge that this has been a dark week in the USA for women and gender diverse people's reproductive rights and healthcare. An incredibly restrictive bill was signed into law in Alabama, banning abortions at any stage of pregnancy, except if the pregnant person's life is in danger, and Missouri passed a bill banning abortion after eight weeks' gestation, unless in the case of medical emergency. At this stage, neither of these (or the heartbeat bills from earlier in the year) are in effect, but the sponsors of the restrictions are aiming to use these to try and overturn the Supreme Court's Roe vs Wade ruling.

- One in five Australian women have experienced sexual violence.
- Eighty-five per cent of Australian women have been sexually harassed.
- One in four Australian women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace.

In February, the Australian Council of Trade Unions joined with over 100 diverse organisations, unions, researchers, peak bodies, health professionals and lawyers to issue a joint statement to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's National Inquiry into Workplace Sexual Harassment. Margaret Williamson shared this resource with me, and I'll quote from it now.

Sexual harassment is about more than just individual behaviour. It is a problem that is deeply entrenched within our society and occurs because gender inequality is ingrained in our social and cultural norms, structures and practices.

In late 2017 it was reported in *The New York Times* and the *New Yorker*, and subsequently picked up internationally, that dozens of women had accused Harvey Weinstein, a notable Hollywood film producer, of rape, sexual abuse and sexual assault over a period spanning more than 30 years. Following the breaking news, more than eighty other women came forward to also accuse Weinstein.

In response to this, actress Alyssa Milano tweeted an image that read: 'Me too. Suggested by a friend: if all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote "me too" as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.'

Milano's accompanying call to action was, 'If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write "me too" as a reply to this tweet.' Within 24 hours, the #MeToo hashtag had been used 12 million times around the world, as individual women and gender-diverse people posted stories of their harassment, abuse and assault at the hands of men on their personal Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts.

However the Me Too movement began well before Milano's tweet. It was actually founded in 2006 by African-American civil rights activist Tarana Burke, a sexual violence survivor herself. While working at Be Inc., a not-for-profit organisation that she founded in 2003 with a focus on the overall wellbeing of young women of colour, she had a conversation with a young woman who revealed that she was being sexually abused. In trying to find the right words to share with her, Burke coined the phrase 'Me Too'. As she told CNN in an interview:

On one side, it's a bold declarative statement that 'I'm not ashamed' and 'I'm not alone'. On the other side, it's a statement from survivor to survivor that says 'I see you, I hear you, I understand you and I'm here for you or I get it'.

I'll read now from the History and Vision page on Burke's Me Too website:

The 'me too.' movement was founded in 2006 to help survivors of sexual violence, particularly Black women and girls, and other young

women of color from low wealth communities, find pathways to healing. Our vision from the beginning was to address both the dearth in resources for survivors of sexual violence and to build a community of advocates, driven by survivors, who will be at the forefront of creating solutions to interrupt sexual violence in their communities.

In less than six months, because of the viral #metoo hashtag, a vital conversation about sexual violence has been thrust into the national dialogue. What started as local grassroots work has expanded to reach a global community of survivors from all walks of life and helped to de-stigmatize the act of surviving by highlighting the breadth and impact of sexual violence worldwide.

Our work continues to focus on helping those who need it to find entry points for individual healing and galvanizing a broad base of survivors to disrupt the systems that allow for the global proliferation of sexual violence.

That is an excerpt from the History and Vision 'About' page on the Me Too website. Once Alyssa Milano was made aware of the beginnings of the Me Too movement, she appropriately credited Tarana Burke, and they have subsequently become friends.

While the Me Too movement has shown millions of people around the world that they are not alone, it has been criticised for its capacity to potentially re-traumatise survivors. There is concern as to whether the individuals sharing their stories and those who are reading them (who are often unable to reveal their own stories of assault) are properly supported with physical, mental and emotional healthcare. For those who have been assaulted, reading others' stories can be a significant PTSD trigger. There is also the criticism that the movement places the onus back on the survivors to create change. The statistics, the interviews, the stories are already out there: women have been talking about this for hundreds of years. We really shouldn't need survivors making themselves vulnerable by using a hashtag to illustrate the magnitude of the problem.

In any movement, there is always the concern that the voices we hear the most are white, cisgender, able-bodied and heterosexual. Intersectional feminism looks at the overlapping systems of oppression and discrimination that women and gender-diverse people face, based not just on gender but on ethnicity, sexuality, economic background and disability. Intersectionality as a concept was introduced in the late 80s by African-American academic and civil rights advocate Kimberle Crenshaw.

With any feminist movement, those of us with any kind of privilege, be it white, able-bodied, cisgender or heterosexual, must ensure that we are listening to the experiences of those from marginalised and oppressed minorities, and signal boosting them so that their stories are heard by as many people as possible. As a white woman, this is why I felt it very important to include an excerpt from Tarana Burke's Me Too website today. An address about the MeToo movement is not complete without it.



THE ME TOO HASHTAG HAS ALLOWED WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD WITH A SHARED EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE ... USING TWO SMALL WORDS.

The Me Too hashtag has allowed women and gender diverse people around the world with a shared experience of sexual violence to articulate their trauma using two small words. Some people simply used those two words, some included a few details, and some told entire stories. For me, personally, it was like watching a wave. One person in my network posted, then two more, then three more. Interspersed with my friends sharing their stories were public figures coming forward with theirs.

And then male public figures I follow, and a handful of my male friends, started posting. Taking responsibility and apologising for having sat back silently in situations where their female and gender-diverse friends, family and colleagues were warding off unwanted sexual advances. For having laughed at sexist jokes. For not calling out sexist language and behaviour exhibited by their male friends, family and colleagues when it happened.

What women and gender-diverse people can take from Me Too is that they are not alone in their experiences. They can speak their truth, there will be someone listening and it will be acknowledged.

For men, hopefully, the movement has once and for all illustrated the magnitude of the problem. If you've ignored the statistics and the stories and the interviews, maybe the fact that so many of your female and gender-diverse friends, family and colleagues have experienced sexual violence and finally feel able to share it publicly will convince you that this is a bloody big problem.

Bloody big problems need bloody big solutions. The ACTU statement shared with me by Margaret Williamson calls on the state, territory and federal governments to take urgent and coordinated action.

Their solutions, which I feel could be implemented more widely than simply in workplaces, include, and I quote:

1. *Dedicated prevention efforts to address the underlying gendered drivers of sexual harassment, which should be part of a holistic strategy to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality.*
2. *Stronger and clearer legal duties on employers to take proactive steps to prevent sexual harassment at work.*
3. *Access to fair, effective and efficient complaints processes, including a new right of action under the Fair Work Act.*
4. *Appropriate advocacy and support for workers who experience sexual harassment.*
5. *Accessible reporting tools.*

Within this, it is still vitally important that individuals change their problematic behaviour. To the men listening today, I say stop excusing sexist behaviour. If a male friend, family member or colleague says or does something inappropriate, immediately call them out. Don't laugh at the sexist jokes. Think twice about how you interact with your female and gender-diverse friends, family and colleagues. Acknowledge and apologise when you have hurt someone. Believe your female friends, family members and colleagues when they tell you that they've been harassed, abused or assaulted and ask them, 'How can I help?'

If you would like to do any more reading or research based on what I have said here today, I recommend:

The statement I've referred to is on the ACTU website, on the 2019 media releases page.

Tarana Burke's Me Too movement website.

Time Magazine's 2017 Person of the Year story 'The Silence Breakers', featuring people who came forward to shed light on the sexual harassment and abuse rife in workplaces throughout the USA.

Kimberle Crenshaw's 1989 paper that introduced the concept of intersectionality: 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics'.

Following Clementine Ford, renowned Melbourne feminist and activist on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Following Celeste Liddle, who calls herself 'Black Feminist Ranter' on Facebook and Twitter.

*Following Mad F***ing Witches and Destroy the Joint on Facebook.*

I finish today with an excerpt from a 2017 article written by Clementine Ford:

I understand why some people have refused to participate in a campaign like #MeToo, because of everything from its capacity to retraumatise to the sense that we have been here with men so many times before, and none of this should be new to them. But for me, the potential of #MeToo is in the way it's helped women to reframe as significant the experiences we learnt at some time to absorb as meaningless or irrelevant.

It is powerful to be reminded of stories even we have forgotten, because at some point they just became part of a larger weather pattern that nobody else seemed interested in.

I don't know where we go from here. But maybe it's enough for now that while we figure that out, there are millions of women who will – at least – refuse to go back to feeling ashamed. ♀



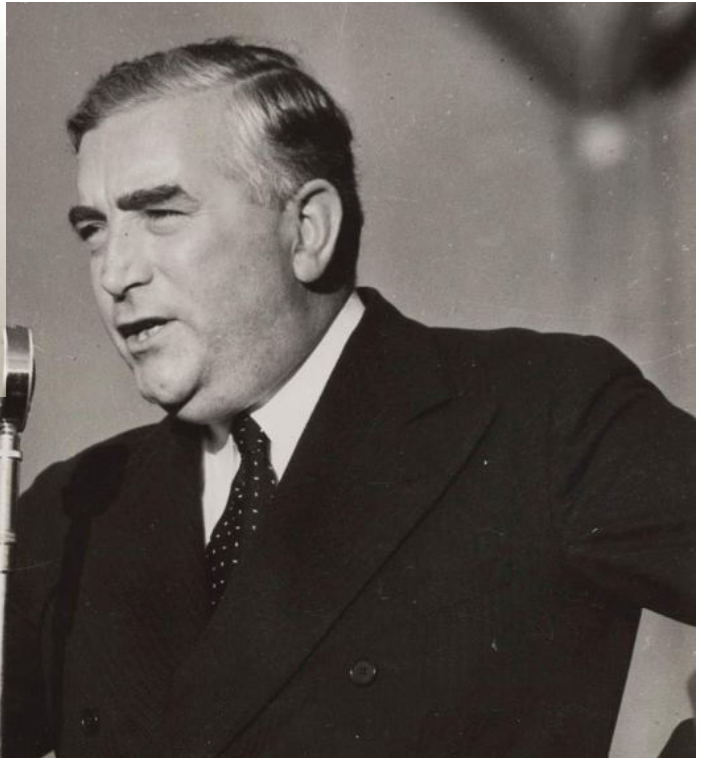
The world's major corporations continued to inflict enormous ongoing violence (in a myriad of ways) in their pursuit of endless profit at the expense of living beings (human and otherwise) and Earth's biosphere by producing and marketing a wide range of life-destroying products ranging from nuclear weapons and nuclear power to junk food, pharmaceutical drugs, synthetic poison and genetically mutilated organisms (GMOs).

These corporations include those involved in the following industries: weapons manufacturers, major banks and their 'industry groups' like the International Monetary Conference, asset management firms, investment companies, financial services companies, fossil fuel (coal, oil and gas) corporations, technology corporations, media corporations, major marketing and public relations corporations, agrochemical (pesticides, seeds, fertilisers) giants, pharmaceutical corporations, biotechnology (genetic mutilation) corporations, mining corporations, nuclear power corporations, food multinationals and water corporations.

You can see a list of the major corporations in this article: 'The Global Elite is Insane Revisited'.

The Roots of Menzies-Style Conservatism

The founding father of the Liberal Party of Australia, frequently quoted and praised, was Robert Gordon Menzies.



The ABC's 2016 documentary *Howard on Menzies: Building Modern Australia*, defended his legacy from its critics.

John Howard had no doubts as to his central significance, stating: 'Menzies ... created the great middle class that we still have in Australia and that we must hang on to for dear life if we are to preserve the stability and harmony and fairness that we prize as being a distinguishing characteristic of the Australian nation'.

That was certainly not the consensus amongst those I knew in the Western District town of Hamilton where I grew up.

Although my sectarian great aunts would never vote Labor as it was too 'Catholic', most of the rest of those I knew regarded Menzies as an enemy. The aunts only changed once the DLP split occurred and the Labor Party became less 'Roman'.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND CENSORSHIP

The Liberal Party and One Nation controversy over 18C of the anti-vilification legislation, carried on in the name of 'freedom of speech' under the Abbott government, was certainly a deviation from the old United Australia Party conservatives.

They loved censorship. Under the attorney general and then prime ministership of Menzies, in the 1930s some 5000 books were banned, including many left-wing works. Australia ranked as the most repressive English speaking nation. [http://www.workers.labor.net.au/94/c_historicalfeature_menzies.html]

The rise of European fascism and the aggression of the Japanese in China were causing concern in Australia and led to a growing anti-fascist movement

and the strengthening of left-wing organisations. The conservative government met this with harassment, including special legislation, extensive use of security services and police, prosecutions and imprisonment.

THE RISE OF FASCISM

Mr Menzies visited Germany in 1938 and his reaction to Nazism illustrates his worldview:

Nevertheless it must be said that this modern abandonment by the Germans of individual liberty and of the easy and pleasant things of life has something rather magnificent about it. The Germans may be pulling down the Churches, but they have erected the State, with Hitler as its head, in a sort of religion which produces spiritual exaltation that one cannot but admire and some small portion of which would do no harm among our somewhat irresponsible populations [R Menzies, London, to family (Belle), 6 August 1938, Robert Menzies Papers, MS4936/572. Bird, David S, Nazi Dreamtime. Australian Enthusiasts for Hitler's Germany. Australian Scholarly. 2012. p. 49].

On 6 November 1938 he told a Presbyterian church audience that a government 'founded on licence would destroy itself', and went on to call for more 'national powers' to help the development of a 'national spirit'. [This was just three days before Kristallnacht in Germany, the beginning of the violent pogrom against Jews.]

A fortnight earlier he had told a Melbourne audience that the enthusiasm for service to the state evident in Italy and Germany 'could well be emulated in Australia'.

Then eight days after the start of World War II, Prime Minister Robert Menzies wrote a letter to Australia's High Commissioner in Britain, former Prime Minister Stanley Bruce.

He confidently expressed his opinion to Bruce that Hitler 'had no desire for a first class war' and would offer peace talks after defeating Poland. In the words of Menzies, 'nobody cares a damn about Poland' [http://www.workers.labor.net.au/94/c_historicalfeature_menzies.html].

THE JAPANESE THREAT

In London, on 3 March 1941, as part of a four-month visit, Menzies told an international audience of business representatives, journalists and diplomats that Australia had no quarrel with Japan, and wanted to 'draw closer to Japan and appreciate its problems'.

In December 1937 the Japanese army had buried alive thousands of citizens in Nanjing, China. Known as the Rape of Nanjing, the world knew of the atrocity. The International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo estimated in 1946 that over 200,000 Chinese were killed in the incident. China's official estimate is more than 300,000 dead based on the evaluation of the Nanjing War Crimes Tribunal in 1947.

THE BRISBANE LINE

The Brisbane Line was the great accusation frequently thrown at Menzies. This appears to have been covered up very effectively after the war and is today usually described as 'mythical.' It was no myth to the Labor supporters of Hamilton in the 1940s and 1950s and certainly not to the very vocal left-wing Labor MP Eddie Ward.

Ward publicly alleged that the previous government (a United Australia Party-Country Party coalition under Robert Menzies and Arthur Fadden) had planned to abandon most of northern Australia to the Japanese.

'Ward continued to promote the idea during late 1942 and early 1943, and the idea that it was an actual defence strategy gained support after General Douglas MacArthur referred to it during a press conference in March 1943, where he also coined the term "Brisbane Line". Ward initially offered no evidence to support his claims, but later claimed that the relevant records had been removed from the official files.' The controversy helped Labor win the 1943 election [https://military.wikia.org/wiki/Brisbane_Line].

Many of us believe him.

Like all mainstream politicians of his era, Menzies was a strong supporter of the White Australia policy. So was the Labor Party at the time.

REDS UNDER THE BED

Menzies main rallying claim during the period prior to the 1949 election was anti-communism. He was not too concerned about fascism or Japanese imperialism but the socialists really had him in full battle-cry.

The Petrov Affair allowed him to taint Dr Evatt with Soviet sympathies, a great Australian statesman who had played a major role in the establishment of the United Nations Organisation.

Menzies had the *Communist Party Dissolution Act 1950* passed but then the next year, after a huge public campaign, the High Court declared it invalid.


Then Menzies held a referendum to allow the banning of the Communist Party but in 1951 it was defeated.

However, reds under the bed, assisted by the Industrial Groups organised by BA Santamaria, and then the split which created the Democratic Labour Party, assisted by sermons in the Catholic churches and the conservative media, proved a potent political scare tactic over many years.

The Labor Party, which had seen Australia through the war, was out of power from 1949 to 1972.

These were the years of relative stagnation when we even opened our interior to British atom bomb testing between 1952 and 1957. Any opposition to such lunacy was attacked as communist-inspired, as was any dissent from Liberal Party policy.

They have tried and are trying the old scare success with Islamists under the bed, but it seems to be faltering.

Those were the years that those of us with memories do not want to see repeated, despite the best efforts of the Murdoch media. 

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The agreement between the governments of the United States and Australia, which underpins the annual stationing of up to 2,500 US Marines in Darwin, is called the Force Posture Agreement (FPA). The concept was first announced by US President Obama in 2011 in a visit to Australia and was presented as part of the new US military strategy called the 'Pivot to Asia'. A clearer explanation of this strategy would be 'the relocation of a major part of the US military forces including naval forces to the Asia/Pacific area to confront and contain China'.

Our politicians in Canberra, including the then Prime Minister Gillard, enthusiastically applauded Obama when he made this announcement.

The FPA was signed in 2014 and operates for 25 years, unless terminated by either side giving a year's notice. Whilst the stationing of US troops in Darwin is the more visible expression of the FPA, it also includes:

- giving the United States Air Force unimpeded access to Australia's airfields and RAAF bases for their fighters and bombers, as well as seaports for their naval vessels
- giving the United States military and its contractors access to and use of, 'agreed facilities' for training, transit, support and related military activities such as refuelling of aircraft, bunkering of ships, temporary maintenance of vehicles, vessels and aircraft, temporary accommodation of personnel; pre-positioning of communications equipment, supplies, fuel, ordnance and materials and deploying forces and materials as the parties may agree.

It seems clear that in reality the FPA allows the United States military to use Australia as a forward base for operations in the Asian/Pacific area.

One could be forgiven for thinking that Australia must be in a state of war even though the last Defence White Paper made the point no less than three times that no military threat to Australia could be identified in the foreseeable future.

Yet we have this FPA with the US underpinning the stationing of its troops annually in Darwin, defence expenditures raised to 2% of the GDP (\$200 billion over the next five years) with pressure from some military/industry quarters to raise this percentage even higher.

Peace groups, including the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN), have questioned successive defence ministers regarding the purpose of the FPA and the US Marines in Darwin. The answers have always been vague and evasive, referring to the ANZUS Alliance, joint training exercises and improving the interoperability of the US and Australian Forces. But the FPA has nothing to do with the ANZUS Treaty, which simply requires both parties to consult if either party is threatened in the Pacific area. The FPA is a new and significant escalation of the military relationship between Australia and the US, making us even more firmly 'joined at the hip', as the political saying goes.

Public statements about the role of the US Marines include:

- 'Its primary role is to **provide force projection from the sea**, often in cooperation with the United States Navy.'
- 'It is responsible for **conducting expeditionary and amphibious operations with the United States Navy as well as the Army and Air Force.**'



US Marines in war exercise capturing Ie Shima



THE FPA IS A NEW AND SIGNIFICANT ESCALATION OF THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND THE US...

This throws no light on the reason for the stationing of the US Marines in Darwin unless it is in preparation for projection of US military power in the area to our north.

One indicator of current US military strategy in utilising their Marines was made evident this year when US Marines in a 'war exercise' landed, invaded and captured an island off the coast of Okinawa called 'Ie Shima'.

Alex Lockie of the Business Insider (29/1/19) said of their activity: 'The U.S. Marine Corps is developing a new concept of naval warfare to allow Marines to take South China Sea islands from Beijing in the context of a massive missile fight in the Pacific.'

Global Research (22/3/19) says: 'Last week, 31st MEU, backed by the 3rd Marine Division, 3rd Marine Logistics Group and 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, members of the Air Force 353rd Special Operations Group, and Army soldiers with 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group, conducted a series of simulated military exercises attacking and seizing Ie Shima Island located off the northwest coast of Okinawa Island in the East China Sea, reported Task Purpose.

The new military strategy, known as Expeditionary Advanced Base (EAB) Operations, will allow Marine units to seize, establish, and operate multiple small bases across the Pacific Ocean, a tactic that will be beneficial in a high-end fight with China.'

The Ie Shima island war exercise indicates why US Marines are now embedded in joint training exercises on Australian naval ships such as *HMAS Adelaide*, which has been fitted with amphibious landing gear.

Nick Deane, IPAN spokesperson for the IPAN campaign to end the stationing of US Marines in Darwin, responded in IPAN's monthly publication to this report by saying: 'This US Marine exercise affirms the US intent to prepare for war with China. It also reinforces the IPAN campaign to end the stationing of US Marines in Darwin. The *HMAS Adelaide* has been modified to support amphibious landing of troops on island territories and US Marines are now imbedded on *HMAS Adelaide* in training exercises. Clearly this

is preparation to draw Australia into the US plans for hostilities with China. Every effort should be made to keep Australia out of yet another US war overseas and especially against China our major trading partner. In such a war scenario the US Marines operating out of Darwin would also draw fire, perhaps missiles on the Northern Territory. We need, for our own peace and security, to see an end to the stationing of US Marines in Darwin and end these war exercises with the United States.'

If the US Marines in Darwin launch hostile acts against islands or countries to our north, a fair question to ask would be who actually controls the US Marines in Darwin? This question has been asked by IPAN of Australian Defence and Foreign Affairs ministers on several occasions. Chris Pyne, Minister for Defence at the time of writing (4/4/19), has finally answered saying that the US Marines 'remain within the US Marine's chain of command at all times.'


So these foreign troops on our soil are not under Australian government control. But he also claimed that the Australian government has full knowledge of and concurs with the US marines' activities. It is still not clear whether the Australian government can effectively veto US Marine activities operating from Darwin.

The US Marines' chain of command rests at the top with the recently formed US Indo-Pacific Command, established in June 2018. The area under its 'command' embraces Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, Japan, The Philippines, Guam, as well as seeking to cover China, and the South China Sea, India, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Against this background of the US Pivot to Asia, US confrontation with and containment of China, training to capture islands in the South China Sea and determination to maintain its hegemony in the Asia/Pacific area, the stationing of US Marines in Darwin and implementation of the Force Posture Agreement no longer appears as a benign inter-forces training operation designed 'to assist in humanitarian emergencies'.

Peter Hartcher, writing in *The Age* of 5 March this year reminded us that:

'North Korea publicly painted a nuclear target on Australia in April 2017. Kim Jong-un's government seized on the fact that a contingent of US Marines is now in a permanent, rotating deployment in the Northern Territory.'



IF THE US MARINES IN DARWIN LAUNCH HOSTILE ACTS AGAINST ISLANDS OR COUNTRIES TO OUR NORTH, A FAIR QUESTION TO ASK WOULD BE WHO ACTUALLY CONTROLS THE US MARINES IN DARWIN?

Australian involvement in a US-led 'coalition' in hostilities against China with US Marines operating from Darwin and imbedded on Australian naval vessels could well draw fire from China. And the new Chinese DF41 missiles can reach all parts of Australia including Pine Gap, the North West Cape and Darwin.

A reasonable conclusion would be that the US Marines stationed in Darwin and the FPA do indeed draw Australia into dangerous waters and place in jeopardy our peace and security.



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Chasing 'ASPIRATIONALS' is a mirage for progressive politics

To: A.Albanese.MP@aph.gov.au
Cc: Tim.Watts.mp@aph.gov.au
Subject: Chasing 'aspirationals'

The Hon. Anthony Albanese

Leader of the Opposition
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Mr Albanese,

According to press reports, your lesson from the recent awful federal election result was that Labor must become more 'business friendly' and must woo 'aspirational voters'. The fact that Mark 'King Rat' Latham was responsible for popularising that vapid term should give any progressive person pause for thought.

Some years ago, Melbourne academic Christopher Scanlon warned against basing progressive policy on the whims and fancies of the aspirationals (*The Age*, 17 April 2004). Aspirationals were, he wrote, creatures 'made in the image of neo-liberal economics: intensely individualistic, self-interested and materialistic'.

Around the same time, Mungo McCallum described the aspirational thus: 'This key inhabitant of marginal seats is assumed to have only one aspiration: to gain as much as possible as quickly as possible and to hell with everyone else. He [sic] is uninterested in community and contemptuous of altruism. Being uninterested in mutual cooperation or the common good, the aspirational voter is thoroughly anti-union; being utterly selfish, he is extremely susceptible to short-term electoral bribery. And although he likes to pretend he is a ruggedly independent individual, the aspirational is in fact a thorough-going conformist as far as social and political fashion is concerned'.

Scanlon adds that such 'noxious figures' do exist, but the point is that the **Conservatives have been able to create him/her 'as the kind of figure that parties must pander to**, not by articulating what they are for, but by setting them in opposition to the social type who stands for everything they're against: the [so-called] elite' [emphasis added].

Interestingly, an AC Neilsen poll published in *The Age* one week after Scanlon's article appeared reported that only twenty-two per cent of voters would rather have tax cuts than better public health, welfare and education services. Seventy-five per cent, according to the same poll, wanted more of these services, with only three per cent saying they didn't know. Somehow I doubt those figures have changed all that much even with the idiocies circulated on social media. Polls, as we know, can be wrong, but not all that often.

So permit me to say, Mr Albanese, that unless your party is prepared to go against the neo-liberal consensus and break out of the so-called 'sensible centre' beloved of Blairites and others of that ilk, it will never rise beyond the level of 'Liberal Light'.

I am an aspirational, Mr Albanese, in that I aspire to a better world in which the social and ecological good of the many – and of the planet – is put before the narrow self-interest of a few. I would hazard a guess that your core constituency – and that of the Greens – would agree.

Kind regards,

John

Professor John Tully
Honorary Professor/Educator, PhD
College of Arts and Education, Victoria University
Melbourne, Australia

from our readers



I look forward to the *Beacon*. I feel uplifted when I read it.

Thank you all.

J Fleming, Vic

DEAR DONNA

Many thanks to all editorial members and contributors of articles to the *Beacon*! I thought the April copy was most interesting and many old memories were stirred by Joan Coxsedg's contribution.

The enclosed cheque is to cover my \$10 concession subscription and is sent with my best wishes for all your good works and your endeavours regarding a Charter of Human Rights. I believe this Charter to be an essential response to the whittling away of democracy and common decency in this country together with the appallingly inhumane treatment of our refugees on Manus and Nauru together with those in Australia on bridging visa by the hypo-critical 'devout Christian' Morrison, Peter Dutton and all the rest of this disgusting LNP government.

I recommend *No friend but the mountain* by Behrouz Boochani to all who wish to know the real conditions on Manus.

B Stevens, Vic

THE EDITOR - THE BEACON,

Enclosed is a cheque for \$20 for my subscription to the *Beacon*.

I would like to add that the new format, which has lighter print, has made it difficult for me to read. Unfortunately my vision has deteriorated due to age.

I find the front editorial page very informative and interesting. I am the coordinator of a Friday College for retirees and we are considering initiating a series where we read an appropriate editorial for response and discussion. Should be interesting.

Best wishes

C Whatmough, NSW

Compassion literally means to feel with, to suffer with. Everyone is capable of compassion, and yet everyone tends to avoid it because it's uncomfortable. And the avoidance produces psychic numbing – resistance to experiencing our pain for the world and other beings. – Source: Information Clearing House

Joanna Macy

WE ACKNOWLEDGE

Traditional owners of the Kulin Nation, past Warriors, Elders past and present.

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