

# Vanguard

For an Independent Australia and Socialism

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## Big fights ahead!

by Alice M.

The recent parliamentary elections again proved to be a sideshow of illusions and distractions from the truth that the real power lays not in parliament, but in the boardrooms of the biggest local and overseas corporations.

The election spin and vacuous performances have now been put back into the ruling class magicians' box of tricks until the next time the circus of state and federal elections comes to town.

The ruling class of monopoly capital uses all means, including parliament, to weaken and dissipate the people's organised resistance to its attacks on workers' and union rights, jobs and people's livelihoods, with their policies on privatisation, destruction of the environment and cuts to public education, public health and community services.

Monopoly owned parliament, the legal system and the media are the chosen apparatuses which the ruling class uses to divert, rein in and suppress peoples' resistance.

### Big business controls Australia

It is no coincidence that the demands and instructions issued by the core of the Australian ruling class, the Business Council of Australia, the Australian Mining and Minerals Council and the Murdoch press, throughout the election period, come at a time of an impending new wave of global capitalist crisis.

Foreign and local big business is making preparations to escalate its attacks on the working people even more.

Plans are afoot to slash even more jobs, to cut wages and conditions, to implement harsher cuts to public spending on community services, and to divert additional public funds to big business demands for more roads and ports.

Business Council demands to expand and increase the GST and shift even



### Relying on Labor will only take 'fighting' away again

more of the burden of the economic crisis on to the people have not gone away.

### Fight back

They understand that the only obstacle standing in the way of their plans is people's mass resistance, especially the fight back by the organised, united working class.

Never satisfied, the ruling class of monopoly capital want to make the broader union movement more compliant to big business demands.

Preparations are being made to smash militant unions that have the capacity to inspire and mobilise the entire working class movement. That's why attacks on the most militant unions, like the CFMEU, are so ruthless.

That's why the organised working class and its allies must make preparations of our own, independently of parliamentary parties, building grass roots organisations and activism that unites and instils confidence in the fighting capacity of the working people, not just to resist monopoly capital attacks, but to fight for a better world.

### Labor not the answer

For unions and organised workers to direct energy and enthusiasm into re-building and re-electing the Labor

Party will only leave the working class disarmed, disorganised and unprepared.

It is full of danger and will only make it easier for monopoly capital's onslaught on the working people.

It will dissipate and weaken the organised labour movement and destroy the unity of the working class and the people.

History has shown that tying the organised labour movement and the working class to the parliamentary interests of the Labor Party has often resulted in the gutting of the working class and the union movement.

We only have to recall the Hawke-Crean-Kelty Accord, Fair Work/Workchoices Lite and most of the

continuing oppressive laws of the ABCC – all delivered on behalf of the multinational corporations and international capital.

Labor is a party of capitalism and has always bowed before the demands of big business.

### Beyond the two party circus

We must have our own independent fighting agenda that defends and advances the rights and interests of working people and builds a powerful mass movement that goes beyond the cretinism of parliamentary elections and parties, an agenda that offers a vision for a democratic, independent and socialist Australia.

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# The “Saudi of the South”, but for whom?

by Nick G.

**The South Australian government recently announced approval for the Four Mile uranium mine on the Lake Frome side of the northern Flinders Ranges to move to operational status.**

This brings to five the number of operating uranium mines in Australia. A sixth is also progressing at Wiluna in Western Australia.

As recently as December 2012, the SA government was persisting with former Labor premier Mike Rann’s hyperbole about SA being the “Saudi Arabia of uranium”.

There is no doubting the significance of the SA deposits: SA has 25% of the world’s identified resources of uranium, but most of the investment, and hence,

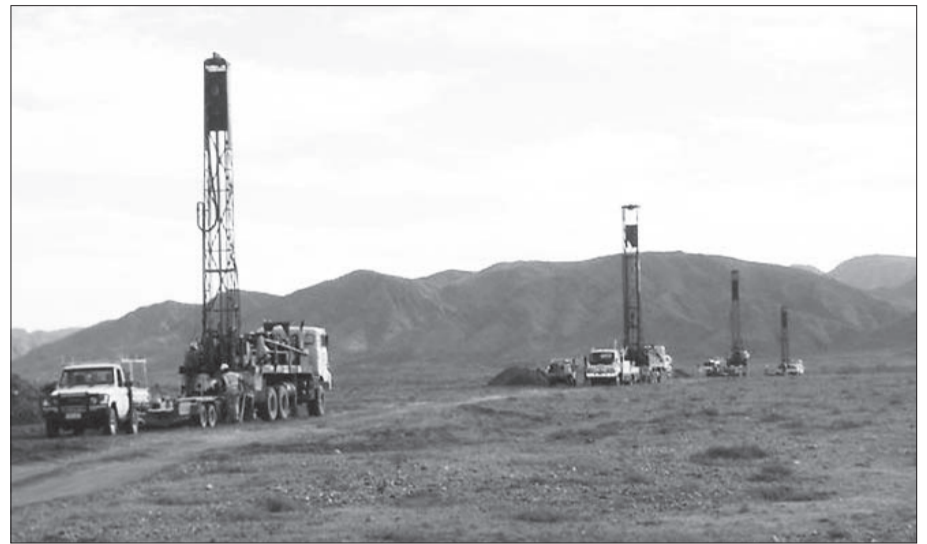
most of the rewards, will go to foreign corporations, not the SA and Australian people.

By contrast, major uranium consumers have in total only 9% (Russia), 4% (USA) 3% (China) and 0% (Japan) of total world uranium deposits.

Four of the five mines currently operating in Australia are in SA (the exception is the Ranger mine in the NT).

## Capitalist law of private property excludes real owners

According to capitalist law, Four Mile is 75% owned by Quasar Resources, a subsidiary of the US General Atomics, and 25% by Australia’s Alliance Resources.



*Exploration drilling at Four Mile*

According to Aboriginal law, it is owned by the Adnyamathanha people.

In August 2009 they were deprived of access to sacred sites and songlines by fences and locked gates erected even before state and federal government approvals for exploratory drilling had been finalised.

Their appeals to then Aboriginal Affairs Minister and now premier Jay Weatherill fell on deaf ears.

Only a few kilometres away, also on Adnyamathanha land are the Beverley and Beverley North mines, both owned by Heathgate Resources, another subsidiary of General Atomics.

Several hundred kilometres south is the Honeymoon Mine which has just passed into 100% ownership by the Russian State Corporation for Nuclear Energy, Rosatom which was a 49% shareholder in previous owner, Canada’s Uranium One company.

Several hundred kilometres to the west is Olympic Dam, owned by US-British giant BHP Billiton.

Also at the pre-operational “advanced stage” is Crocker Well, south west of the Honeymoon Mine.

It is 60% owned by one of China’s largest state-owned enterprises Sinosteel Midwest Corp in association with Australian PepinNini Minerals with its 40% stake.

## Imperialists move in once profits are assured

In total, there are 27 active uranium explorations throughout the state.

The pattern of investment is for local companies to do the groundwork with surveying, drilling and assaying – often financed by the taxpayer through PACE (Plan for Accelerating Exploration) launched in 2004.

Once there is sufficient information about inferred deposits, the big overseas corporations begin to move in, dangling the carrot of massive capitalisation

before the star struck eyes of local investors.

The big imperialist mining companies not only push aside the traditional owners and custodians of uranium bearing lands, and not only buy out and reduce to junior partner status those local capitalists who thought to profit by the contemporary dispossession of the traditional owners, but they also use their weight to prevent local capitalists from establishing themselves as exploiters of Third World peoples.

Thus, in the last three years both the Russians and the Chinese have been buying up uranium projects around the world including those pioneered by Australian capital.

For example, the Husab deposit in Namibia was bought by the Guangdong Nuclear Power Company from Australian miner Extract Resources

A subsidiary of the Russian Rosatom purchased the Mkuju River project in Tanzania from another Australian company, Mantra.

## Our future depends on working class leadership

Both domestically and internationally, Australian capitalists prove themselves incapable of succeeding in the face of opposition from imperialist capital.

Our future cannot rely on such a weak and indecisive class.

The Australian working class must stand with the traditional owners and custodians of the land and build the movement to win anti-imperialist national independence and socialism.

A future working class state will own and operate all mining in Australia and will take the advice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on what is permissible and appropriate both in terms of Indigenous heritage and environmental sustainability.

## Vanguard

**Vanguard is a national monthly newspaper which expresses the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist - Leninist), the CPA (M-L).** Readers are encouraged to comment on, criticise or contribute material to *Vanguard*. Articles, digital graphics, cartoons, clippings, comments or a few lines are all very welcome. All material should be sent to:

**Vanguard Editorial Staff  
PO Box 196, Fitzroy, Vic. 3065**

*Vanguard* strives to provide a Marxist analysis of Australian society, economy and politics. An important aspect of developing this analysis is an intimate knowledge of and close involvement in all aspects of Australian struggle.

The cost of producing a national newspaper is considerable. Readers are encouraged to contribute whatever they can by sending donations to the above address.

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# Elections, “democratic” process a farce

by Jack D.

Recently we have seen the ‘smoke and mirrors’, the clowns, story-tellers and ‘court jesters’ in one of the regular circuses our capitalist ruling class hold every three years or so. It’s called “an election”.

This one was to allegedly “democratically choose a new national government by popular vote”.

## Nothing changes

But what is this alleged choice? Is it a choice between this system of government and that? Is it a choice that can bring about any fundamental change?

No, of course it’s not, nothing changes but the bums on the seats in Bullshit Castle.

The only choice given is to opt for or against several groups who will continue to serve the same ruling class as always. Some groups of parliamentary politicians are more subservient to the ruling class than are others.

Effectively we have the choice between tweedle-dee and tweedle-dumb or, if you count the Nationals, tweedle-dumber.

There are a few very minor small parties and independents who cannot act on their own as they haven’t the numbers. Their influence wavers from one election to another depending on how close to each other the two major groups are in numbers of seats held. They are very close in policies, identical in whom they serve.

Effectively, there has only been one election in Australia where a government was voted IN. That was the first one in 1901. Since then, people have essentially only voted OUT those they have become disillusioned with. That is true of the election just gone as well.

What changes with this imaginary ‘democratic’ process?

The only change is the likely degree of severity of oppression the people will face under the administration of one group or another.

We saw the events of the Howard years, the attacks on workers, their organisations (unions) and their right to organise, and their right to take action over safety and other matters on the job.

We saw privatisation of all manner of things, Telstra being one of the most notable.

Under the “Phoney Tony” regime

he is soon to legislate against people from the general community supporting workers. We will soon be subject to large fines and even gaol for supporting workers being badly treated by their bosses.

In Queensland at state level we saw a very similar process of privatisation under the ALP government of Anna Bligh. She implemented very similar actions to that of the conservatives in the days of Kennett of Victoria, and she paralleled to some extent the Howard regime.

If we go back a few years, we see that the ALP brought out the Australian Army against the striking coal miners in 1949 and the Air Force against the striking pilots in the 1980’s.

We also saw Rudd back down under pressure from the mining lobby when he wanted to implement a measly 40% tax on the massive windfall super-profits of the mining industry.

There are a multitude of examples of oppression of workers by the parliamentary parties acting on behalf of big business.

## Dictatorship the reality

This voting lark is just that, a bit of malarkey, a bit of bullshit to con people into imagining they have a say.

It is big business who dictates the terms. It is big business, especially the multinationals that own and control this parliamentary process in Australia.

We live under the heel of the dictatorship of big business. They will toss out this pretence of democratic processes of parliament and rule by direct force the moment it suits them to do so.

We who are old enough saw that in the 1949 miners’ strike when the ALP used the army against the miners.

We live in a class structured society, a capitalist class owned and driven society.

Threaten the rulers a bit seriously in the slightest way at all and there are the police, the courts, the gaols, the army, the air force and the navy... all of these have been used against workers in the past and are certain to be used again to protect the minority capitalist ruling class in the future.

Just watch ‘Phoney Tony’ Abbott sharpen all these tools of oppression of workers in the coming few months and years.

As always, democracy is a question of democracy for whom? It can only be democracy for working class people or democracy for the capitalist class.

## Editorial

# Scorched earth policies

**In deference to the multinational corporations that own and control the fossil fuel, coal and energy resources of Australia, the Abbott government has embarked on a slash and burn campaign to stifle information about climate warming and wipe out renewable energy projects.**

The chief commissioner of the Climate Institute, Professor Tim Flannery, has been sacked and the Climate Commission abolished. This highly respected institution took great pride in collecting the very latest information on climate warming and presenting its findings and conclusions to the Australian people in a thoroughly objective and well explained manner.

Flannery and some members of his team will try to continue their work, relying on public support and their personal commitment to science and humanity. In the end, truth and science always assert themselves.

Legislation is being drafted to dump the carbon tax and the Climate Change Authority, which was established to advise the government on the carbon pricing and emissions reductions targets. This was expected, as the big polluters who paid hardly any tax anyway, objected to the very idea that maybe they should.

More significant is the intention to dismantle the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. This body was set up with \$10 billion to subsidise private investment in renewable energy projects such as solar, wave, geothermal, wind farms, etc.

Shutting it down will be messy, as investment commitments and decisions have already been made, some projects are under way and many thousands of jobs are at stake. This time, not only workers, but a whole bunch of local capitalists and professional and technical people will suffer for the interests of multinational profit-making.

Similar policies of slashing funding and support for environmental initiatives are being implemented by the reactionary and conservative state governments.

## IPCC Report due

The fifth major report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was released in Stockholm on September 27. While *Vanguard* will look at this report in detail later, it indicates that there is even more overwhelming evidence that human activity has triggered climate change through greenhouse gas emissions, especially from burning fossil fuels.

Along with melting ice sheets and glaciers, rising sea levels, ocean warming and acidification and thawing of the permafrost, the immediate future will bring more heatwaves, droughts, floods and extreme weather for many parts of the globe. Millions will suffer while the polluting corporations rake in their profits.

Abbott is only a pathetic puppet. Standing in the way of any concerted move to clean renewable energy is the global system of corporate imperialism headed by US monopoly capitalism. Vested interests in finance, banking, industry and the military depend on fossil fuels for their power and profits.

This hideous system must be torn down and replaced with the humane system of socialism that will guarantee protection of the planet and allow humanity to flourish.

Democracy for both at the same time is impossible.

Till now, and now more than ever, we will experience that dictatorship of big business. Democracy for workers is a myth.

It is up to us as true Australian workers, regardless of country of origin, to organise and fight to further our collective interests and to aim for us, the working people and our allies, to become the ruling class sometime in the foreseeable future.

## Vale Alec Greenberg

*Vanguard* has learnt of the sad passing of our much loved comrade Alec, who devoted many years to assisting with the production and distribution of this paper.

He will be fondly remembered for his good humour and his great passion for promoting Karl Marx’s theory of Surplus Value.

## Marxism Today

# From study and discussion of Mao Zedong's work, *On Practice*

by *Bill F.*

**Written in 1937, *On Practice* was delivered as a lecture by Mao to combat subjectivist methods of thinking such as dogmatism and empiricism, which were hindering the struggle of the Chinese people against the Japanese invaders.**

The work explains the process of development of ideas and concepts, and the process of testing and validating ideas and concepts through practical application. It is sub-titled "On the relation between knowledge and practice, between knowing and doing".

The word 'practice' was used by Mao to embrace all the varied forms of human practical activity – the struggle for material production, the class struggle, scientific experiment and the struggle for knowledge, and both personal and collective direct experiences in social and cultural life.

Of the struggle for material production to meet the human need for food and shelter, Mao said, "...Marxists regard man's activity in production as the most fundamental practical activity, the determinant of all his other activities... through which he comes gradually to understand the phenomena, the properties and the laws of nature, and the relations between himself and nature; and through his activity in production he also gradually comes to understand, in varying degrees, certain relations that exist between man and man."

Mao makes the point that, "Man's social practice is not confined to activity in production, but takes many other forms – class struggle, political life, scientific and artistic pursuits; in short, as a social being, man participates in all spheres of the practical life of society... class struggle in particular, exerts a profound influence on the development of man's knowledge. In class society everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class."

This process of understanding the physical and natural laws and social relations develops as "human social activity in production develops step by step from a lower to a higher level and that consequently man's knowledge,

whether of nature or of society, also develops step by step from a lower to a higher level, that is, from the shallower to the deeper, from the one-sided to the many-sided."

### Marxism

As history unfolds, human knowledge expands and gradually leaves behind the darkness of ignorance, prejudice and superstition. The development of large scale industry, social production, science and global trade meant that, "man was able to acquire a comprehensive, historical understanding of the development of society and turn this knowledge into a science, the science of Marxism."

Marxism could only arise in this modern era, when the era of small scale production characteristic of earlier feudalism and aristocratic privilege had been overthrown by capitalism and its relations of production. This was the essence of the revolutionary wars in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and later.

The new and unique features of capitalism were studied exhaustively by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels and formed the basis of their dialectical materialist theory of human knowledge.

As Mao puts it, "... dialectical materialism has two outstanding characteristics. One is its class nature: it openly avows that dialectical materialism is in the service of the proletariat. The other is its practicality: it emphasizes that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice."

From this overview, Mao then proceeds to examine the process of acquiring knowledge, testing it in practice, refining it through thought, and then re-applying and re-testing it at a higher level.

### Perceptual stage of knowledge

At birth we have no knowledge, only instincts and our five senses. In almost no time, we experience warmth and cold, light and shadows, noise and the sound of voices, the sensations of touch, discomfort and sometimes hunger. Everything is impressions, perceptions, unprocessed by thought because there is as yet no knowledge or



experience to form conclusions.

In life, when we encounter new phenomena, new things, new events and circumstances, the process of understanding and acquiring knowledge is the same – it starts with our sensations and perceptions, through which we acquire some minimal or even partial knowledge. "In the process of practice, man at first sees only the phenomenal side, the separate aspects, the external relations of things... This is called the perceptual stage of knowledge, namely, the stage of sense perceptions and impressions."

These perceptions and impressions then build on the practice, on the life experiences and knowledge already acquired.

### Rational stage of knowledge

Mao continues, "As social practice continues, things that give rise to man's sense perceptions and impressions in the course of his practice are repeated many times; then a sudden change (leap) takes place in the brain in the process of cognition, and concepts are formed."

As the brain processes the data coming in from the senses, it searches for patterns and associations, trying to make sense of it all. As more data, experience, practice takes place, quantitative change gives rise to qualitative change and a breakthrough occurs. These are "Now I get it!" moments when there is clarity, whether it's learning to count, learning a language, or understanding the class interests of potential allies and foes in the course of class struggle.

Sifting the various concepts leads to the higher stage of making conclusions, of drafting theories and plans, as Mao says, "Proceeding further, by means of judgement and inference one is able to draw logical conclusions... This stage of conception, judgement and inference is the more important stage in the entire process of knowing a thing; it is the stage of rational knowledge."

### Revolutionary practice

But Marxists are not content with just "understanding the laws of the objective world and thus being able to explain it". Marxists seek to apply "the knowledge of these laws actively to change the world."

Therefore, conclusions, theories and plans must be tested in the real world of class struggle, in the practice of revolutionary struggle, to see if they are valid. "The active function of knowledge ... must manifest itself in the leap from rational knowledge to revolutionary practice... This is the process of testing and developing theory, the continuation of the whole process of cognition."

Mao notes that, "whether in the practice of changing nature or of changing society, men's original ideas, theories, plans or programmes are seldom realised without any alteration." This may be because objective conditions have not developed sufficiently, or our knowledge is incomplete or not accurate, or often because of wishful thinking that "lags behind reality." And, even when there is apparent success, he warns, "... man's knowledge of a particular process at any given stage of development is only relative truth."

Political errors occur when proper social investigation is neglected and actions are based on superficial knowledge (empiricism) or a theoretical formula is dogmatically applied.

"Idealism and mechanical materialism, opportunism and adventurism, are all characterised by the breach between the subjective and the objective, by the separation of knowledge from practice."

This only leads to isolation of the revolutionary forces, as they either trail behind the masses or run ahead only to disappear over the horizon.

### In summary

"Discover the truth through practice, and again through practice verify and develop the truth. Start from perceptual knowledge and actively develop it into rational knowledge; then start from rational knowledge and actively guide revolutionary practice to change both the subjective and the objective world. Practice, knowledge, again practice, and again knowledge. This form repeats itself in endless cycles, and with each cycle the content of practice and knowledge rises to a higher level. Such is the whole of the dialectical-materialist theory of knowledge, and such is the dialectical-materialist theory of the unity of knowing and doing."

# The Coalition's Australian Building Construction Commission mark II - Police State over workers!

by Max O.

**The Abbott led Coalition government has boasted that it will re-establish the Australian Building and Construction Commission within 100 days after their federal election victory.**

Just before the federal election the Liberal Party established a 'Working Group' to plan Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) mark II once they won government.

The 'Working Group' comprised Liberal politicians Josh Frydenberg, Nola Marina and Jane Prentice with Mr Paul Fletcher as the chair.

They were tasked with examining Labor's Fair Work Building and Construction inspectorate (A slightly modified ABCC, which was introduced in July 2012) and so-called practical problems of malfeasance and misconduct by workers in the construction industry.

This Liberal Party 'Working Group' argues that union militancy and a weak regulator were combining to hurt productivity in the construction industry.

Just what the capitalist construction corporations wanted to hear.

They assert that the ABCC under the Howard Government achieved: a productivity gain in the construction industry of 10%; an economic increase of \$6 billion dollars per year for the construction corporations; a reduction in consumer prices of 1.2%; gross domestic product 1.5% higher; and significant reduction in days lost through industrial action.

## Policing workers

Uppermost in their minds is to ensure that the ABCC boosts productivity and that 'law and order' is maintained for the benefit of the construction corporations.

To achieve this, the government plans to recruit ex-federal police to play a key role in a revived Australian Building and Construction Commission to help root out so-called 'law-breaking unionists, bikies and thugs on building sites'.

This allegation is pure invention and police recruitment for the ABCC is a smokescreen for attacking workers' rights in areas of work safety, wages and working hours.

In fact it was Grocon, a construction corporation, who enlisted not only the police to undertake military style attacks but also the Hell's Angels to intimidate workers striking in September last year over OH&S issues.

Grocon employed an ex-night club bouncer Peter Hewitt, who had never before worked in the construction industry, to be a health and safety rep.

The Australian Construction manager's son Daniel Van Camp (who was seen associating with members of the Hell's Angels) was also employed to be a health and safety rep on the Melbourne Grocon site.

Will they be investigated by the ABCC ex-police recruits? We won't hold our breath, because we know who they are really working for!

## Productivity - extracting surplus value from workers

What the construction corporations and the Abbott Government mean by productivity is profitability for the capitalist class.

Workers sell their labour-power to capitalists who pay for the socially necessary costs of reproducing their labour power, the so-called 'fair day's pay'. Above the socially necessary cost of reproducing themselves, workers create surplus value which the capitalists battle to keep, control and expand.

This is where the ABCC, WorkChoices and Fair Work Australia come in. Their role is to assist capital to discipline workers' labour-time.

Because capitalists buy labour-power in units of labour-time it is essential for capital to measure productivity by how much value they can extract from each of those units. Therefore capitalists endeavour to drive up the rate of output per unit of labour-time.

Capital tries to extract as much surplus value as possible during workers' hours of work: through piece-rates, speed-ups, and bullying; and by compromising on occupational health and safety. Speed-ups are often the cause of worker injury and death, a cost not borne by capitalists.

The ABCC was notorious in never penalising construction firms for putting workers into unsafe building sites. Marx described it aptly: "killing is not murder when done for profit".

Businesses never cease to attempt intensifying discipline over labour-time.

For example, workers are readily stood down if there is a break in production; workers are made to do casual and broken shifts; do unpaid overtime and abolish their work breaks; avoid paying superannuation and penalty rates; workers now are put on call 24/7 through the use of mobiles, computer tablets and home computers.

All these measures capital uses to

increase its take of surplus value that workers create by extending the number of hours they work.

Marx explained how money-capital enters into the production of commodities, which are then sold to acquire a greater sum of money-capital.

The principal feature in the creation of new commodities is that they pass on more value than went into their production.

Almost all of that extra value comes from workers' labour.

This is what capitalists prize and will do anything to keep, the surplus value they extract from workers, even to the extent of paying below the socially necessary average cost of workers maintaining themselves.

Consequently corporations use the capitalist state apparatus to implement laws to exploit workers (extraction of surplus value), so their profits can achieve the expansion of capital.

Grocon is taking the lead in championing their right to exploit. They take legal action against unions for damages (the tort laws), when workers take industrial action to protect their industrial rights. The aim is to bully unions into submission or bankruptcy if they dare defend their members.

## Corporatisation of sport wipes out community with the stroke of a pen

-Contributed-

**On Sunday 1 September, the local football team, the Magpies, of the working class area of Port Adelaide played its last game at its home ground Alberton Oval.**

The team played its first game in 1870, but like Fitzroy football team in Melbourne, it became a victim of the corporatisation of sport. With the stroke of a pen, in August this year the powers that be decided that the only Port Adelaide team that could be in the local South Australian league would be the reserves team of the AFL Port Power team.

This team would not even be allowed to play any games at Alberton Oval and it must sever all ties with the local area and the traditional country zone on Eyre Peninsula, the recruitment and development zones of the traditional local Port Adelaide Magpies team.

The local active supporters and members of the Port Adelaide Magpies number about 4,000 people. To many of them, their local football club is



like a second family. Weekend games are a social outing, more than a game and compared with the prices of AFL games, affordable. Children admitted free. Now all that is gone.

No wonder it caused such emotional scenes at that last game at the home ground.

### Enough to make a grown man cry

On the following Monday, 2 September, the *Adelaide Advertiser* had a picture of a Magpie supporter in tears as the reality of a big part of his

community being destroyed hit home.

As I was reading this paper at a local cafe on the way to work, some 'well heeled' people in the shop were also reading it and laughing that a 'grown man could be crying over the winding up of a football team'.

I turned around and asked him how he would feel if the central part of his community that had existed for over one hundred years was destroyed with the stroke of a pen.

His laughter turned to a frown and silence. His body language told me that he now understood.

# Gonski school funding campaign breaks through

by Louisa L.

**In *Some Questions Concerning Methods of Leadership*, Mao writes of combining a general call with detailed work to make “a breakthrough at some single point.”**

Neither the NSW Teachers Federation nor the Australian Education Union quote Mao. Trade unions are reformist and don't fundamentally challenge capitalism. But for the people, reforms are important.

In NSW the Teachers Federation focused on education funding during the election. The call was simple: implement Gonski, but it grew from decades of campaigning against a system starving state schools of funding.

Federation President Maurie Mulheron stated, “Our campaigning forced the federal Coalition to commit to the Gonski funding for four years.”

He called the increase in overall investment an historic achievement at a time when worldwide “austerity measures, government debt reduction and public sector cutbacks dominate the political landscape.”

## A sea of Gonski Green

The Gonski campaign was a key factor holding back a Coalition landslide in NSW. 100,000 people registered their support on the [www.igiveagonski.com.au](http://www.igiveagonski.com.au) website.

Thousands of teachers, parents, students and supporters in every corner of the state staffed stalls, leafleted, hammered questions to politicians and handed out Gonski green apples.

Gonski vans criss-crossed the state. Just one covered 10,000 kilometres in eight weeks, from the Big Banana to the Big Prawn to back o' Bourke.

The Salvation Army shop in Parkes had Gonski signs in their window, while in Leeton all employees in the sandwich shop wore Gonski T-shirts in election week.

Abbott's proclamation that he was ‘on the same page’ as Labor on Gonski was challenged, with information about how much would be stripped from each school in each electorate by his failure to guarantee six years' funding.

Abbott tried to re-open another front, on the usually bitterly contested breakup of state systems into ‘independent’ public schools, but didn't get a bite. The Gonski message held firm.

## People's politics

In one Sydney coalition stronghold, reticent candidates were finally cornered



Abbott and Pyne take school kids for a ride

by principals, who ear-bashed one till 10 pm.

He later rang back, saying Pyne would support Gonski for six years. Scott Morrison told the same group that they would honour the agreement in NSW.

Meanwhile, the Education Department demanded schools' Gonski signs be removed. Many principals refused, saying Gonski had bipartisan agreement, so was not political. Nothing is further from the truth, but the ruling

class promotes parliamentary politics as the only politics so what could they say?

In Sydney's eastern suburbs, the Federation rep at Matraville Public School informed the P&C when the principal was leant on. Outside school every morning for four weeks parents held the signs, while teachers did it after school.

In another school, a polling booth, a group ringed the top of the hall with Gonski signs the night before

## Abbott and the privatisation of education

by Jim H.

**With the new Tony Abbott led federal government, teachers face hard times ahead in defending any recent gains that have been made in terms of education funding and changes that might make for a better deal for students.**

The heart of the minimal improvements contained in the Gonski reforms of the recent Labor government is essentially out the door.

According to the government the new education policy is based on “extensive consultation with parents, teachers, principals, state governments and communities.”

But it is no secret that there is an intention to maintain and strengthen the formulas that see the bulk of government education funding going to the private school sector, with the wealthiest of them getting by far the best deal.

According to Education Minister Christopher Pyne, the first priority of his government is to return to “more traditional” teaching and remove the “left bias.”

This most likely means sticking to maths and science and sidelining such subjects as history and the study of society and imposing a more prescriptive and conservative content on them.

The Coalition's policy for schools also endorses Direct Instruction; the US-developed system provides scripted

lessons that teachers must recite word-for-word, thus giving giant corporations control of content and removing creativity, curiosity and any opportunity for a socially critical approach to learning from classrooms.

Murdoch's *Australian* welcomed the news that Abbott had appointed Noel Pearson to “review the education of all disadvantaged and impoverished children and explore rolling out the direct instruction teaching model in schools across the nation”.

There is also an intention to turn many government schools into private schools. A \$70 million fund has been set up to assist with this. As many as 6,700 public schools are to become “independent”.

The model is based on the experience in Western Australia where it has led to a two-tier system of state schooling with no measurable improvement in student achievement.

Even the NSW Coalition government has seen through this scam, saying it will not go along with the plan because there is “no evidence that it improves student outcomes” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20/7/13).

Existing pressures to directly connect individual schools with business interests, on the grounds that there needs to be greater “community input” into education, will accelerate under the Coalition.

Education departments will be downscaled and the role of principals

the election, and the extension ladder disappeared so the signs couldn't be removed.

The campaign was so successful that public schools will receive more money from Abbott than from Whitlam. But electoral intervention was not the key. There are no delusions of salvation from the ALP.

Maurie Mulheron put it this way, “A social movement has been galvanised into action and it is crucial that this continues to grow.”

As a letter to Federation's journal said, “Democracy done and dusted for another four years? Not in my books. Whoever's in, the fight continues. Service to giant multinational corporations who run Australia is the default position of the major political parties, so we had to fight like fury for every concession won on Gonski.

“Parliamentary elections can register victories in campaigns Australians have united and fought for. Likewise they can add obstacles. But if we don't continue to organise and fight, both we and our students will lose.”

as business managers will be strengthened.

This will push schools into charging fees, or increasing them if they already have them, and looking for new sources of funding. Private business interests can then seize control.

Those that cannot keep up in the race will undoubtedly be left behind. Schools catering for working class and country kids will be left high and dry.

It is a scenario outlined by Abbott and his mates over recent times.

Big business spokespeople have demanded this.

It is an important part in the trend towards integrating education more solidly into the operation of the capitalist system, especially at a time when it is in an extended economic crisis, when Australia continues to be de-industrialised and there is no need, from a capitalist point of view, to spend too much in training the future workforce.

Of course there is little support for it in the wider Australian community. Teachers and parents will fight it. Nevertheless it is going to be a tough period ahead.

The recent Labor Gonski reforms do have things that are worthwhile supporting. They were never enough though. They did not counter the drift towards privatisation. Labor, despite the wishes of the many who supported the changes, helped to pave the way for what is now on the cards.

# Book Review: *The Swan Book*

by Nick G.

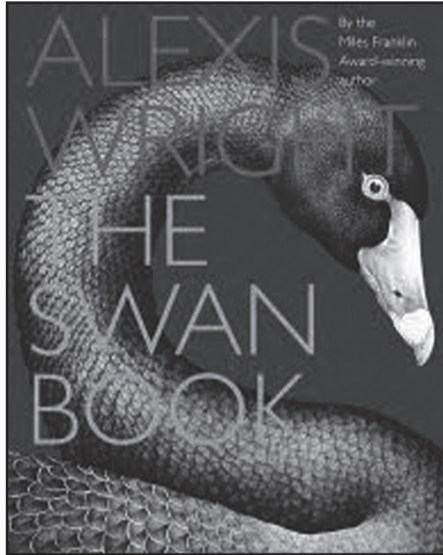
**Imagine the AAMI black swans TV ad took place in Bob Dylan's *Desolation Row*. Imagine that the swans were not on the attack, but were the spiritual brothers and sisters of a mute Aboriginal girl living half a century into the future under an even more punishing and widespread Intervention regime.**

Indigenous author Alexis Wright, whose previous insight into Aboriginal Australia was set in a mythical Queensland community appropriately named Desperance, has delivered another powerful statement about the State's denial of black self-determination in *The Swan Book*.

The protagonist is Oblivia Ethylene, who pursues, but is unable to articulate, a "quest to regain sovereignty over my own brain".

She lives on a contaminated lake controlled by the Army and filled with the detritus of war machinery and naval craft. Her homeland has become a secret locality for Defence Force scheduled training manoeuvres and bombing runs.

Into this incarcerated community, and others like it, are shipped all Aboriginal persons deemed unable or unwilling to



adapt to life in capitalist Australia.

These "growth centres" of "truck people" are the outcome of the National Aboriginal Relocation Policy which is set up to deal with the old people who, having done "nothing to change things by themselves for the future... had given up the right of sovereignty over their lives".

Not all Aboriginal people are trucked to such camps. There are those who are exempt from the coercive policies imposed upon their compatriots by virtue of "presenting themselves as being well and truly yes people who were against arguing the toss about

Aboriginal rights".

They were "anti about whatever there was to be anti about if white people say so" and were thus granted an Aboriginal Nation Government.

From their ranks emerges young Warren Finch, and where have we heard before of a "Warren" in Aboriginal Australian political life?

Wright says of Finch: "He had become the only public Aboriginal voice of the era. The only one Australians would listen to, and reported in the newspapers, or had given their airways to whenever he spoke publicly. It certainly seemed as though there was national deafness to hearing what other Aboriginal people had to say of themselves."

And so she disposes of the black *Judenrats* promoted by the Murdoch media!

Finch claims Oblivia as his promise-wife and orders the Army to bomb her community out of existence so she has nothing to which to return.

Like *Desolation Row*, Wright's novel has its cast of strange characters.

There is Oblivia's protector, Bella Donna of the Champions, who arrives in the swamp community as a refugee from the climate change wars of the global north, an old white lady with

a swan-bone flute. She and others like her were the "new gypsies of the world... millions of white people... drifting among the other countless stateless millions of sea gypsies looking for somewhere to live."

Bella Donna spends much of her time arguing with the Harbourmaster, an "Aboriginal man with an Asian heritage... a healer for the country... he just flies where he wants to" although we are not talking aeroplanes here.

He and his monkey Rigoletto appear and disappear at will, as one would expect of a healer of great power; however, he is in reality a delusional character who "only had a big mouth and that was not going to move the sand mountain" that kept building up like a pile of unsolved social problems at the mouth of the lake's entrance to the sea.

Wright's acknowledgements include a nod in the direction of the late Tom Trevorrow, a Ngarrindjeri Elder from the Coorong which, like the Lake, had its entrance to the sea silted up as a result of climate change.

These two powerful themes, failure to respect Indigenous self-determination and failure to respond to climate change, make *The Swan Book* a powerful weapon for dissecting the problems of contemporary Australian reality.

## Israel steps up apartheid policies

by Bill F.

**Under the cover of on-again-off-again endless talks on the comatose 'two-state solution', Israel has continued its ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land.**

No sooner had the last lot of talks been arranged than Israel announced the building of more housing units on Palestinian land in East Jerusalem.

As part of the deal to re-start talks between Netanyahu and Abbas, even the agreed release of a few Palestinian prisoners was conditional on them not returning to their homes in the West Bank, but to Gaza.

Only massive protests by the Palestinian population forced Abbas to call off further collaboration with US imperialism and the reactionary Israeli government.

Then in June the Israeli Knesset narrowly passed the Prawer-Begin Bill, which calls for the forced expulsion of up to 70,000 Palestinian Bedouin from the Negev desert region in southern Israel.

The intention of the bill is to destroy 35 villages which pre-date the establishment of Israel in 1948 and are deemed 'unrecognised' by the Jewish state.



In the period 1971-73 Bedouin filed more than 3,000 land claims covering 10% of the Negev region.

Only in 2004 were these rejected by the Israeli state which maintained that they had not been properly registered, even under Ottoman laws in 1858, or British Mandate laws in 1921.

Because the inhabitants are deemed to be 'trespassers on state land' they have been denied water, electricity, sewage, education and healthcare.

They are the poorest and most vulnerable citizens of Israel.

Of course, it's just another land grab to establish new Jewish settlements and military bases closer to Egypt, as well as mining and other industries.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay issued a statement of criticism. "If this bill becomes law, it will accelerate the demolition of entire Bedouin communities, forcing them to give up their homes, denying them their rights to land ownership, and decimating their traditional cultural and social life in the name of development."

On July 15, large demonstrations were held across Palestine in opposition to the Israeli land grab.

A statement issued by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine noted that "This scheme targeting our people in the Naqab (Negev) is part of the continuous aggression

against our people in the '48 lands, and the implementation of a policy of displacing them from their villages and towns on the road to creating "a Jewish state."

The policy reveals the criminal and racist nature of this illegitimate entity which seeks to liquidate the Palestinian national cause."

Under the sponsorship of US imperialism, the Israeli settler state is becoming even more arrogant and aggressive and is sowing the seeds of its own destruction.

Ethnic cleansing is seen as a crime against humanity, but Israel has not been called to account for its apartheid wall, its creeping settlements and land grabs, its daily humiliation and terrorising of Palestinians trying to survive in their own country.

The struggles of the Bedouin will be relegated to a footnote by the western media establishments.

And while the monopoly media coverage of the conflict in Syria has been full of righteous indignation at the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government, hardly a word has been reported about Israel's actual use of outlawed white phosphorus bombs in Gaza or its own stash of nuclear and probably chemical weapons.

# Shoddy boss put under the hammer

by Nick G.

**On the first Tuesday after the federal election, and knowing that a revitalised ABCC would be breathing down their necks, Adelaide construction workers defiantly and happily made a nuisance of themselves by disrupting an auction of building plant and equipment.**

“What am I bid for this. . .”

“A week’s wages to feed the kids!”

“Two week’s annual leave!”

“Three week’s long service leave!”

By putting in claims against a shonky boss trying to sell off plant and equipment they highlighted the ease with which building bosses use bankruptcy to evade legal obligations to the workers.

Bankruptcy and the secret salting away of assets to steal tens of thousands of dollars from workers and their dependents.

A total of 32 workers are owed an average of \$18,000 each in varying

amounts ranging from \$440 to over \$49,000.

This is one grubby little boss alright. His Ferro Con company folded after one of its workers, Brett Fitsch, was crushed to death by a falling steel beam at the Adelaide Desalination site.

Paul Maione, Director of Ferro Con, was charged in the Industrial Court with breaching workplace safety laws on the second to last day of a two year investigative period.

He declared that he would plead guilty, but in the meantime had taken Ferro Con into voluntary liquidation, thus reducing his liability, and started another company, using many of the same workers, putting them under the same pressures, to do similar work.

The new company, Q Structures Pty Ltd, is also in trouble, hence Maione’s fire-sale. He wants to get some cash in hand and stash it away beyond the reach of his worker-creditors.

On the day of the auction, Maione was in WA overseeing



the delivery of steel to his part of the Perth Airport job.

The disruption of the auction was a magnificent sight with a sea of Eureka flags replacing the traditional bidders’ cards.

After a while, the coppers turned up and, to no-one’s surprise, acted to protect the thief rather than the victims of theft. Obviously aware of the irony of the situation, one cop pleaded with a worker, “You understand, don’t you mate?”

A very firm working class negative was the reply.

Court action will be taken to try and force Maione and Q Constructions to make good the monetary value of wages and other entitlements owed to workers.

But workers won’t make the mistake of relaying on court action alone.

Shaking up a shoddy boss by their own direct action is setting a fine example to all workers in the post-election era.

## Build an “ever expanding union of workers”

by Ned K.

**Karl Marx wrote in his essay, *Wages Prices and Profit*, that “Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of workers”.**

With the decline in numbers of workers in mass organisations and trade unions, due in large part to imperialism’s destruction of Australia’s

industrial base, the appearance is that workers are losing the battle of building an ‘ever expanding union of workers.’”

Trade union membership in the private sector is about 13% and in the government sector declining steadily due to privatisation and job cuts by all three levels of government in Australia – federal, state and local.

However these trends hide other trends within the working class movement that imperialism is worried about. Unionisation, and more importantly, collective action and

activism by women in service industries has been on the increase in the first 13 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Collective action and campaigning by women in nursing, child care, disabilities and aged care has seen improved wages and conditions, but more importantly in the context of the quote from Marx above, these campaigns have expanded the union of workers in areas that the Business Council of Australia and other big business organisations want to keep ‘union free’ for two reasons.

First is that the more organised are these workers, the harder it is for governments of either Labor or Liberal variety to divert more tax payers’ money away from services like health and education and into areas such as road building for mining projects or defence ‘joint ventures’ with the US military.

One tactic used by imperialism and local big business in Australia to prevent the new seeds of collectivism in the service industries is to ‘flood’ these industries with migrant workers in the hope that their more precarious situations will help employers divide and conquer their workforces.

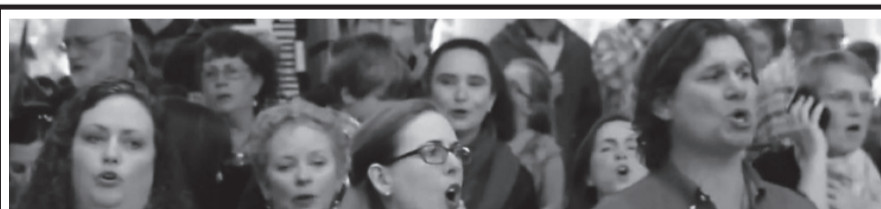
While this has some temporary success for some captains of industry, migrant workers, including overseas students, have their own needs like all workers, and in industries like aged care and disabilities their active participation in unions and assertion of their rights at work is on the increase.

In one industry, contract cleaning, it was in fact non English speaking

background (mainly women) workers who joined together in their union to win in a three year protracted struggle substantial pay increases and improved conditions in collective agreements covering most capital cities across Australia. Their success through united struggle even won significant changes in the cleaners’ base award pay and conditions, including a 15% allowance for part time workers and an increase in minimum engagement from two to four hours.

With the parliamentary election win of an Abbott government, no doubt the most reactionary elements within the big business community will be out to prevent this “ever expanding union of workers” in industries where workers have made the significant gains mentioned above.

They tried under Howard and failed. They will fail again as the workers’ movement strengthens independent of the outcome of parliamentary elections!



### Do you hear the people sing?

**Residents of the village of Tecoma in the Dandenong Hills outside of Melbourne are continuing their battle with the McDonalds octopus, despite the police smashing of their picket line and threats of physical intimidation and lawsuits.**

In a marvellous and imaginative action on August 31, they organised a ‘flash mob’ to converge outside McDonalds’ outlet in the Knox City Shopping Centre food court. In fine voice, they belted out their adapted version of the rousing song from *Les Miserables*. They well and truly told McDonalds to ‘burgeroff’ and the event went viral on YouTube across the world.

With the generous help of supporters, a delegation of four travelled to Chicago to present their petition (97,340 signatures) to the bosses at McDonalds’ headquarters. They were escorted by 30 inflatable kangaroos decked out with Australian flags – it created great interest and support across America. McDonalds’ flunkeys took away the petition with little argument and less grace.

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