

Vanguard

For an Independent Australia and Socialism

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Vanguard expresses the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist - Leninist)

Parliament is a committee that manages the affairs of the wealthy and powerful

by Nick G.

The momentous trivia comprising the fallout from the September Federal election continues to unravel.

There is the unexpected success in the Senate of Clive Palmer's private political party.

There is the unexpected emergence of the various right-wing grouplets who have formed an alliance with Palmer's people.

Nonsense and rorts

There was the will-he-won't-he win a seat shenanigans focussing on Palmer in the House of Representatives.

There was the long drawn out count in Western Australia and the disappearance of 1375 Senate ballot papers – "never to be recovered" according to special investigator Mick Keelty.

There was the cynical resignation, just six weeks after his re-election to a six-year term, of Senator Bob Carr.

Three weeks later, Kevin Rudd walks from the Parliament to which he was so recently elected.

There were the various travel claim rorts.

Such nonsense as this helps to explain the disenchantment with politicians.



Disenchantment

Something like 500,000 or so people aged between 18 and 24 did not register to vote; almost 740,000 Australians voted informal.

That's over 1 million eligible voters who did not feel sufficiently committed to vote for the major parliamentary parties.

Enough people voted for non-mainstream grouplets which, with their sophisticated interlocking preference deals, gave them a voice outside the two major parties, reflecting one aspect of the disenchantment that many feel with the mainstream choice that was on offer.

Another was the frequently heard complaint: "I just don't know who to vote for... I don't like Abbott, but I can't vote for Labor".

While the disenchantment with the main parties and their candidates runs strong, so too does belief in parliamentary democracy.

Independent working class agenda

Focus on individuals and grouplets is a fog through which the profound truth that governments are but "a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" (Marx) struggles to

make itself seen.

Unless the disenchantment is linked to that truth, it exists as a vacuum that can be preyed upon by populist right-wing and neo-Nazi types.

But it also offers us opportunities for our work in developing an independent working class agenda.

That agenda is not merely to seek certain democratic assurances, certain temporary concessions and short-term gains, but must also serve to tear away from the naked class rule of the exploiters the fig leaf of their parliamentary system.

It promotes working class demands that are expressed in the struggles that go on every day in real life well beyond the musty halls of parliament – struggles for decent, secure jobs, affordable housing, quality healthcare and education, fair and compassionate social services, efficient and reliable public transport, fairly-priced utilities, clean and sustainable energy and agriculture, etc.

All these struggles of the people are part of building a movement that will move beyond the musical chair game of parliament and challenge the power of the corporate monopolies and multinationals that really call the shots.

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Next Issue February 2014

The Vanguard team is taking a short break over the New Year. The next issue will be published early in February 2014.

Important news comment and analysis of local and international events will continue to be posted on www.vanguard.net.au for the information of subscribers and supporters.

Our thanks to all those who have supported Vanguard throughout the year with their subscriptions, contributed articles, comments, suggestions and donations. Your encouragement is greatly appreciated.

We wish all our comrades and friends a safe and happy New Year.

Phryne Fisher surprisingly raises an issue...

by Nick G.

Some weeks ago the highly improbable “lady detective” Phryne Fisher was called upon to investigate the murder of the lead actor and the director of a local silent film.

Framed for Murder was set, as is the entire series of murder mysteries, in 1929 in Melbourne.

This was the time when the octopus of US film corporations was extending its tentacles throughout the globe.

Australian film-makers had been pioneers of the silent film era.

The Tait brothers produced *The Story of the Kelly Gang* in 1906. It lays claim to having been the world’s first full-length feature film. It was a popular

success in large part because of its subject matter.

Despite Kelly having been hanged a quarter of a century earlier, the bourgeoisie would not allow the celebration in the new medium of the lives of those who stood against respectable society and the law.

“While Australians took to bushranger stories, the censorship boards of the day did not. South Australia banned the screening of bushranger films in 1911, Victoria followed in 1912.

“The NSW police department banned the production of bushranger films in 1912,” records an Australian government website.

Despite these prohibitions, the demand for films that expressed an



identity that asserted our separateness from the “British people” that the ruling class insisted us to be resulted in productions like *For the Term of His Natural Life* (based on the convict novel of Marcus Clarke) and vernacular poet C.J. Dennis’ *The Sentimental Bloke*.

In *Framed for Murder* the film being shot has none of these positive attributes.

It is, frankly, a piece of rubbish, a sad reflection of the fact that by 1929 much of the filmmaking was an attempt to replicate what the imperialist-controlled market deemed to be successful and suitable as subject matter.

However, it represents a corner of that market in which the Hollywood octopus faced some competition, so the plot revolves around the attempts of US film distributors to trick local cinemas into a deal that would guarantee exclusive screen rights to the US product, thus putting the Australian filmmakers out of business.

The same Australian government

website quoted from above concludes:

“In spite of the fact that Australian audiences were interested in seeing their own stories on the screen the industry went into decline in the 1920s.

“The ever expanding U.S. and British production companies took over the Australian distribution and exhibition chains and Australian features were often excluded from cinemas.

“The state of the industry was so dire that a Royal Commission was held into the film industry in 1928, but it did little to stop the decline.”

This is summed up in *Framed for Murder* as “invasion”. However, it is an invasion that has never entirely succeeded.

Cultural independence

While proletarian class content cannot be expected to feature in cultural productions created under conditions of capitalist financing and distribution, there is an occasional reminder of the resilience of Australian national identity and its survival under the conditions of our cultural domination by US imperialism.

If for the time being that has to be through a vehicle for the celebration of the wit and charm of bourgeois femininity, such as the Phryne Fisher series, then so be it.

Genuine cultural independence will come with anti-imperialist independence and progressive working class content, with the elevation of the workers to power in and over society.

GMH workers have a go

by Bill F.

General Motors Holden workers at the engine plant in Fisherman’s Bend in Melbourne have dared to show a bit of fighting solidarity as some faced the prospect of losing their jobs at the end of the year.

More than 150 workers walked off the job on Thursday 14 November when the GMH bosses announced that they would get a maximum of 52 weeks redundancy pay, regardless of years of service.

This was an unexpected kick in the guts for some 30 workers who had seen 70 of their mates take a voluntary package which paid 4 weeks for each year of service, plus another 3.5 weeks.

Having earlier voted to support a three year wage freeze along with cuts to sick leave, overtime and work breaks, the workers had reached their limit.

They were hopping mad and just walked off, disgusted at the greed and cunning of General Motors, which had stock-piled engines at Elizabeth plant in South Australia in case of trouble at Fisherman’s Bend.

Of course, GMH scurried off to the Unfair Work Commission to scream “wildcat”, “illegal”, “outside the EBA bargaining period” and so on.

And of course, the Commission duly ordered the workers back to work. But, unfazed, the workers took a few more days off before returning the following week.

At the time of writing, negotiations are continuing between GMH and the Australian Metal Workers Union and some sort of deal will be worked out.

Regardless of this, GMH workers everywhere know what to expect if and when the company decides to cease manufacturing motor vehicles in Australia.

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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Email: cpaml@vanguard.net.au

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Who owns and controls Australia's Banks?

by Max O.

Once again the Big Four 'Australian' banks' profitability is doing quite handsomely.

A key measure of bank profitability is the net interest margin, the difference between the cost of borrowing and income from lending. The net interest margin is 213 basis points (2.13%), down from 217 basis points from last year. It is the lowest number on record.

However, the Australian Bank Full Year Profits for 2013 are the following:

- Westpac \$6.8b - 14% up
- CBA \$7.7b - 8% up
- ANZ \$6.3b - 11% up
- NAB \$5.5b - 34% up

That's a total of \$26.2b with an average 16% increase from last year

What are they worth you might ask? Well they have a market value of approximately \$100 billion each.

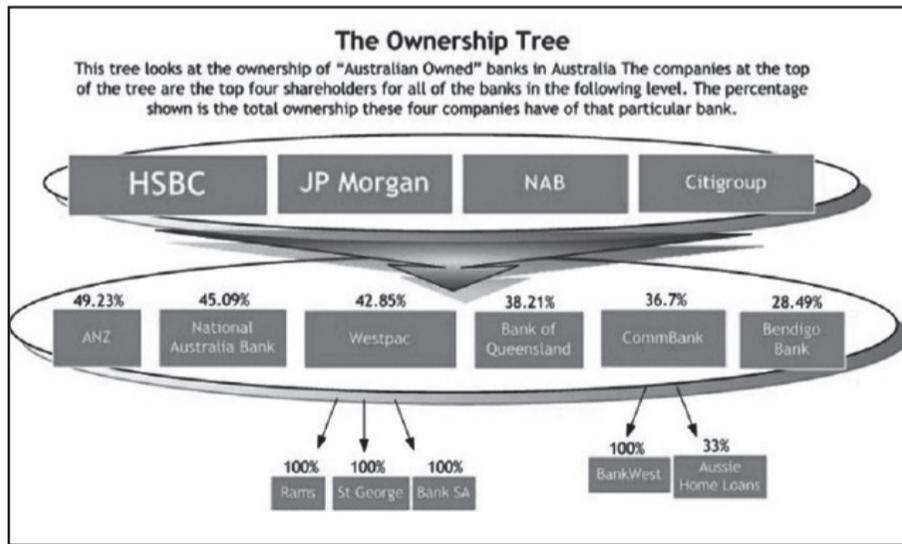
As well as holding \$1.3 trillion in deposits, the big four banks are owed \$1.5 trillion in loans, more than 80% of the loan market. They hold 20% (297) of all managed funds. Off-the-shelf products sold by them make up almost 1/3 of the market. Nearly 40% (6,600) of all financial planners are on the big banks' payrolls.

What is very interesting and concerning is the concentration of ownership and control.

Whilst Australia's big four feign competitiveness amongst themselves, they are essentially owned by the same (mostly foreign) financial interests; namely HSBC Custody Nominees, J P Morgan Nominees Aus Ltd, National Nominees Ltd and Citicorp Nominees Pty Ltd.

Unexpectedly, smaller competitors like St. George and Aussie Home Loans – who declare they offer consumers a 'fair go', are subsidiaries of the same corporate giants. The chart below was sighted at the following website address:

<http://topinfopost.com/2013/08/25/australias-big-4%E2%80%B3-banks-are-all-owned-by-the-same-financial-interest>



The Australian Institute's study called, "The rise and rise of the big banks" provides another set of interesting and concerning statistics of the concentration of bank ownership and control in Australia.

Table 5: Big four banks and their top four owners, 2012

| Owners | ANZ | CBA | FIAB | WBC | Average |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| | % | % | % | % | % |
| HSBC Custody Nominees | 18.88 | 14.10 | 17.25 | 16.68 | 16.73 |
| JP Morgan Nominees Australia Limited | 15.65 | 11.13 | 14.47 | 13.06 | 13.58 |
| National Nominees Pty Limited | 13.09 | 8.53 | 11.25 | 10.03 | 10.73 |
| Citicorp Nominees Pty Limited | 1.79 | 4.18 | 4.91 | 4.31 | 3.80 |
| Other top 20 owners | 10.27 | 7.19 | 7.04 | 8.74 | 8.31 |
| All other shareholders | 40.52 | 54.87 | 45.08 | 47.18 | 46.86 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Annual reports.

Editorial

The legacy of Ted Hill

Twenty-five years have passed since the death of Comrade E. F. Hill, founding Chairperson of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). His contributions to the development of revolutionary theory and its application to the particular circumstances of Australia continue to guide us through changing times and the intensification of the struggle against imperialist domination.

Comrade Hill analysed the history of Australia from the British invasion and conquest of indigenous lands, through the colonial era and into the era of modern imperialism. His celebrated book *Looking Forward, Looking Backward*, which was published in 1964, looked at the role of the Communist Party in Australia, the role of parliamentary politics and the state apparatus, and the struggle for a proper application of Marxism to Australian conditions.

In the years following Khrushchev's 1956 speech to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the struggle in the international movement against modern revisionism, Comrade Hill played a leading role in standing firm to the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

From his research, from extensive discussions with close comrades and contacts with all sections of the working class, Comrade Hill was able to formulate a radically different assessment of Australian society and a new analysis of the path to socialism.

In 1964, he led the way in forming the CPA (M-L) with a programme of revolution by stages: An anti-imperialist democratic revolutionary stage directed at the dominant imperialist power in Australia, US imperialism, setting the conditions for continuing into the second stage of revolutionary struggle to win and implement socialism.

This two stage revolution would be led by the working class, but would develop from a popular united front against imperialism which would embrace other struggling classes such as the small farmers and producers also oppressed by imperialism. His legacy continues to inspire us.

Table 6: Top four owners; big four and regional banks, 2012

| Owners | Big four average | Bendigo | Suncorp | Bank of Queensland |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|--------------------|
| | % | % | % | % |
| HSBC Custody Nominees | 16.73 | 11.56 | 21.69 | 9.16 |
| JP Morgan Nominees Australia Limited | 13.58 | 9.38 | 19.60 | 11.51 |
| National Nominees Pty Limited | 10.73 | 7.45 | 15.20 | 13.99 |
| Citicorp Nominees Pty Limited | 3.80 | 3.39 | 7.23 | 2.97 |

Source: Company annual reports.

The Australian Institute makes the following observation about the pattern of bank ownership in Australia.

"An inspection of the top 20 shareholders in the big four banks reveals a very interesting pattern. On average, over 53% of each big bank is owned by shareholders that are among the top 20 shareholders in all the big banks. Most of the owners, and certainly the top four shareholders, are nominee companies. Nominee companies hold shares on behalf of other entities that for some reason want to hide their identity. They tend to be both foreign investors and fund managers; increasingly they are investors acting on behalf of superannuation funds.

"The common ownership of the big four banks seriously challenges the idea that there are four separate big banks in Australia. Given the common ownership of the big banks, it is to be expected that the owners will put pressure on the banks to act as one and reap the monopoly profits. That seems to have been the motive of the investors who encouraged the NAB to move back in line with its competitors. Moreover, ownership figures for the second tier banks, the big three regionals, show they are also owned by the same organisations that own the big four."

Never forget the great October Revolution of 1917!

A comrade from the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) delivered this talk at a meeting held in Melbourne to commemorate the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. The meeting was organised by the Communist Party of Australia and hosted by the Democritus Club.



“I’d like to thank the organisers and the hosts for this opportunity to say a few words about the Great Russian Revolution of 1917.

“Throughout history oppressed classes have launched revolts and revolutions against their rulers and against the economic and political systems that supported them.

“The Bolshevik revolution in 1917 was the first where class conscious proletarian workers were the leading force, supported by allies in the peasant class and more far-sighted elements of the petty-bourgeoisie and intellectuals. The core of revolutionary organisation was the Bolshevik Party, led by Vladimir Lenin.

“This revolutionary core was able to mobilise the working class and build the

necessary alliances with the peasants, with the soldiers and sailors, with other progressive forces that carried the revolution to victory. What started earlier as a popular demand for “bread, peace and land” became a political-scientific demand; “All power to the Soviets!”

“After the seizure of state power, Lenin and his comrades worked tirelessly to consolidate the new working class state – to meet the expectations of the people in a country devastated by feudalism, autocracy, war, famine and social unrest. At the same time, they had to resist and defeat organised

counter-revolution and the intervention of foreign armies.

“Yet, against all odds, the Soviet people were able to build an advanced industrial base and establish an efficient system of collective agriculture and mechanised farming. Education, art and culture flourished, and were accessible to every citizen. Even then, the Soviet state faced sabotage and slander from the imperialist powers and various attempts to derail the revolution from within.

“The hatred of the reactionary forces culminated in the massive Nazi invasion of June 1941. The Soviet Union was

alert, and able to conserve enough strength and resources to frustrate the German advance and to stall it on the approaches to Leningrad and Moscow. When the heroic defenders of Stalingrad broke the siege and counter-attacked, the Red Army routed the fascists. The die was cast, and the Red Army moved forward to liberate half of Europe.

“Quite rightly, the Soviet Union was an inspiration to all oppressed and struggling working people. It showed that a revolution led by the working class could not only destroy the old power structures of a bankrupt ruling class, but also build and defend a socialist system where working people could enjoy a better life. It raised the vision of a future world based on the dignity of collective work and freeing the potential of humanity.

“Of course, the Soviet Union made mistakes, and there are still different opinions among communists and progressives about the ideological and political role of leading persons such as Stalin, Khrushchev, Gorbachev and others, and the way socialism can be won and consolidated.

“But that’s enough history for now. I will finish with a few words about our country.

“Revolutionary change in Australia will take a much different path. The core of capitalism in Australia is dominated by imperialism – the economic and finance/banking sectors service the needs of the largest US, European and Asian corporations, while the parliamentary leaders and military hierarchy sell themselves to US imperialism.

“The CPA (M-L), which celebrates its 50th year in March next year, has long had a program of revolution by stages; the first stage being the struggle for anti-imperialist national independence and the expulsion of imperialist economic, political, military and cultural domination, the nationalisation of the key industries and resources, and the establishment of participatory democracy led by the working class.

“We see these as the necessary steps to create the material and social conditions for the revolution to continue on to the stage of socialism. Defeating US imperialist domination of Australia is the most effective contribution the Australian working class can make to internationalism.

“We believe there is great potential for unity around these objectives and in facing the reactionary onslaught being rolled out by the Abbott government. The great Russian revolution showed that fundamental change for the working people is indeed possible.”

Rural Round-Up

The battle for Warrnambool Cheese and Butter

by *Duncan B.*

Warrnambool Cheese and Butter has been in existence since 1888. This old-established company whose products include well-known brands such as Cracker Barrel and Coon, is currently the subject of a three-way take-over battle

Two of the three contenders are Australian owned. Bega Cheese and farmer-owned co-operative Murray Goulburn are taking on the third contender, Canadian food giant Saputo, which is one of the ten largest dairy processors in the world.

Saputo is seeking a shareholding of at least 50.1% in WCB. The situation is complicated for Saputo by the fact that its rivals are already shareholders in WCB.

Bega has an 18% share in WCB. Murray Goulburn owns 17% of WCB, and Lion (owned by Japanese firm Kirin) owns 10% of WCB. Further to this, New Zealand dairy giant Fonterra recently bought a 6% share in Bega, and is trying to bump this up to 10%.

The stakes are high in this take-over battle. WCB produces basic dairy products, but it is also one of only two Australian dairy

companies that produce milk extracts.

These are the main elements in products such as baby formulas and bone supplements. Milk extracts are part of the nutraceutical market which is set to be worth \$80 billion in the Asia-Pacific region by 2017. It is easy to see why the dairy giants are all after WCB.

Dairy farmers are divided in their opinions about the proposed take-over of WCB. Some support Saputo, but many want to see WCB remain in Australian hands, a desire shared by all *Vanguard* readers. Many farmers and dairy industry leaders are advocating the strengthening of farmer-run co-operatives.

Treasurer Joe Hockey has announced that the Saputo bid for WCB can go ahead without any conditions imposed by the Government. This is in contrast to Murray Goulburn which still has to convince the ACCC that a take-over of WCB by Murray Goulburn would not be anti-competitive.

Despite this, Murray Goulburn announced in mid-November a fresh offer which is higher than Saputo’s offer. Saputo immediately followed MG’s offer with a higher offer.

Who will be victorious in this struggle for Warrnambool Cheese and Butter,

and what will be the final outcome for all of the players in this dairy industry drama remains to be seen.

Coming on top of the job losses at Simplot and McCain is the news that Golden Circle (owned by Heinz) is to cut 123 jobs from its Victorian juice plant in Mill Park, with the work going to the company’s plant in Brisbane. The company claimed that the plant is too costly to continue to operate.

Treasurer Joe Hockey has until December 17 to make a decision whether or not to allow the take-over of grain handler GrainCorp by US grain giant Archer Daniel Midland. The National Party is opposed to the take-over, as are many country-based Liberal MPs. Opinion among grain growers is divided.

Following Hockey’s approval of Saputo’s bid for Warrnambool Cheese and Butter, *Vanguard* readers will be most surprised if he puts a stop to ADM’s take-over bid for GrainCorp. If successful, a major Australian grain handling company would pass into foreign hands along with control of grain-handling infrastructure and grain export ports on the east coast of Australia.

Business Council commands the agenda

by Max O.

The Coalition Government's recently announced "Commission of Audit" will herald wide ranging changes to public sector operations and government expenditure.

It will stipulate the need for massive transfer of public property and services to corporations and call for huge government spending cut-backs and sackings of public service workers.

In effect this audit will be the Business Council of Australia's (BCA) 'Austerity Commission' for the nation and the Coalition Government will dutifully carry out its orders!

The audit commission is stacked with pro-business warriors: The BCA's president, Tony Shepherd will be its chairman; BCA's chief economist and policy director Peter Crone will head the commission's secretariat; a former public service official who oversaw the contentious WorkChoices policy, Peter Boxall; former Howard government minister, Amanda Vanstone; past Treasury Secretary, Tony Cole; and one time Western Australian public service head, Robert Fisher.

Capitalism in crisis

The backdrop for this austerity is the continuing Global Financial Crisis which is the result of capitalism's own doing!

This economic crisis, brought on by capitalism's crisis of over-production, and exacerbated by financial speculators syphoning off billions of dollars from the productive economy to make rapid profits in the stock market and the derivatives casino, caused government budgets around the world to go into debt, to either save the predatory financial system or help stimulate economic activity and assist consumption of surplus production.

Now this massive government debt must be paid back to the banks, the beasts that created the crisis, and consequently austerity measures are now being put in place.

The ideological preparation for this austerity onslaught has been in train for some time.

Joe Hockey, the Coalition's Treasurer, sprouted forth the notion "end of the age of entitlement", a neo-liberal concept where 'Big Government' is replaced by 'Big Society' and the transference of public services to either the private sector or for people to provide for themselves.

The reverse side of this "end of the age of entitlement" coin is the massive tax cuts for corporations and for those



Big business CEOs meet with Treasurer Joe Hockey to lay down their agenda

on higher personal marginal rates that the audit commission will no doubt call for.

The BCA had earlier flagged its demands through its "Action Plan for Enduring Prosperity" for a company tax cut from 30% to 25% and to increase the GST – to now include education, medical and fresh food – which will hurt people on low incomes.

Austerity is good for business – Utilities up for privatisation

Out of this government indebtedness is the potential for business to do very good business through privatisation of government utilities and assets.

For starters, the corporate sector will have a bonanza with the forecast audit commission's recommendations for the sale of Medibank Private, Australian Post, Australian Rail Track Corporation, Snowy Hydro and selling the students' HECS debt (Higher Education Contribution Scheme) as securities to investors.

Obviously for these to be attractive they will be sold for less than their true value, if not a fire sale.

The 'Big Society' mantra is "government should do for people what they cannot do, or cannot do efficiently, for themselves, but no more....", "that government should be run like a business" and that "government should live within its means". Now social security and public services will be replaced by charities and self-provision.

Abbott's Coalition Government is preparing to hand-ball even more government responsibility to private and church institutions to carry out such tasks as family services and housing.

This will be achieved through the model of increasing contestability of services; which means outsourcing services to private charities/institutions and churches that will do it cheaper than the public sector.

This will be justified by the audit commission, that to address "the rising

cost of social and other spending" government welfare programs should be eliminated and that the user pay, co-payments approach should be extended across health, education and other services.

For example, it is touted that the government will introduce a Medicare "co-payments" for GP doctor visits.

The inescapable result of such an action is that working class people will start to forgo necessary healthcare, while the wealthy will continue to receive the best medical treatment.

The term "self-provision" will be the method of replacing unemployment or sickness benefits in times of need, where people will pay insurance to cover such payments.

The government will cease to fund these out of central revenue and jettison its social responsibility for society's well-being.

The size of the cutbacks and sell-offs

The listed measures below reveal the size of some of the cutbacks and sell offs that the BCA and Abbott's Coalition Government wish to achieve and will carry out through the imprimatur of the audit commission:

- 20,000 public services jobs to go. The running cost of the federal public service is 15% in a \$400 billion budget

- The sale of Medibank Private could bring in about \$4.5bn

- The sale of the Australian Rail Track Corporation could earn the government \$5bn

Below is what the Abbott Coalition Government already intends to slash from the working class and the favours they will pass onto capital and the rich:

- Have abolished the Low Income Superannuation Contribution, which reduces tax on superannuation contributions from workers on less than

\$37,000 per year. This is an effective tax increase on 3.6 million workers, including 2.1 million women. It means that these workers will be paying more tax on their superannuation than on their take home pay and will have less money in retirement.

- However, the government has announced that it would scrap the proposed 15% tax on superannuation pension earnings over \$100,000. This change will apply to those with more than \$2 million in superannuation assets, around 16,000 people. The 1% 'filthy rich' will be very appreciative and save themselves \$313m in taxes.

- The Schoolkids Bonus has been scrapped which helped millions of families with the cost of sending children to school.

- The Income Support Bonus has been stopped, which will hurt people on a range of income support programs, including Newstart and Parenting Payments, which are already too low.

- The Mineral Resource Rent Tax for big mining companies will be abolished, not that it collected much revenue. The mining industry sends 80% of its profits offshore.

These measures are to ostensibly reduce government debt, which is currently around \$400bn mark or 27.1% of Australia's GDP, and eventually create a government surplus.

However the touted cutbacks and sell-offs are not only to assist achieving a surplus budget of 1% of GDP by 2023-24, but to restructure the budget over the long term so that the 'welfare state' will cease to exist, and the state will redirect revenue towards capital.

This 'Austerity Commission' has the objective to snatch back gains that the working class had won in the past and make them wear the burden of capital's economic crisis.

Prepare for monumental struggle!

Poor workers are the victims of Melbourne's planning chaos

by Bill F.

All sections of the working class are being hit by the rising costs of food, healthcare, transport, utility bills, education expenses and transport. Whether renting or paying off a housing loan, the biggest financial burden for most working families is housing.

This is especially so for the poorest section: those on pensions, the unemployed, the vast army of part-time and casual workers eking out an existence on the fringes of society.

These are the workers in low paid and insecure work who are hanging out until the next payday, juggling bills and skimping on decent food and clothes, doing without heating during winter, stuffing newspaper in their kid's shoes when the soles wear through.

Living on the edge, the threat of homelessness hangs over them – all it takes is a lost job or cut back hours, sickness, or an accident, the car breaks down, etc.

There are no savings to fall back on, and banks and landlords are not known for their compassion.

Evictions

In outer fringe Melbourne and the inner city high-rise blocks, where the

EVICTIIONS TOP 10

Total evictions from July 2010 to June 2013.

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Frankston | 277 |
| Tarneit | 177 |
| Dandenong | 168 |
| Werribee | 152 |
| St Albans | 150 |
| Pakenham | 135 |
| Melton | 129 |
| Reservoir | 123 |
| Noble Park | 119 |
| Hoppers Crossing | 111 |

poor working class have sought cheaper rental housing, rental arrears for public housing have increased by 22% in the past financial year, amounting to a record \$15.1 million.

Police evictions are running at an average of 7 per day, with 2600 recorded last financial year.

Suburbs that were listed include Broadmeadows, Craigieburn and Sunbury to the north, Werribee, Laverton and Melton to the west, and Cranbourne and Dandenong to the south-east. These are all areas with high unemployment and poor infrastructure and community resources.

Home buyers unable to meet their repayments have also lost the roof over their head, with 318 repossession warrants issued last financial year.



Budget cuts hit the poor

One immediate impact on the poorest section was the callous slashing of the single parent payment by the Gillard Labor government, forcing thousands of families onto the lesser Newstart allowance, virtually taking food off the table.

In addition, the Victorian Coalition government had cut \$2.7 million from the Social Housing Advocacy and Support Program, which was set up to assist public housing tenants work through their financial difficulties to avoid eviction.

Emma King, chief executive of the Victorian Council of Social Service also noted that "Affordable housing is not affordable if it is offset by other costs, such as distance from jobs, education, health-care and community

services, and with few transport options. This is further evidence of the social problems resulting from decades of poor planning... We are creating two different Melbournes ... one where there are opportunities and jobs and one where there is entrenched and growing disadvantage".

Plan Melbourne

In October, the Victorian government released their Plan Melbourne, designed to guide the city's growth until the year 2050. (As if the capitalist economic system embraces the concept of such long-term planning!)

Apart from unfunded promises to improve public transport and the very expensive East-West road tunnel, it proposes to chop up Melbourne's remaining green belts to allow commercial development, accommodation units and tourism activities to take over the best agricultural and recreational land close to the city.

As for the CBD area, it will increasingly be turned over to foreign investors, developers and speculators, if we are to believe Andrew Tongue, Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

According to the *Melbourne Age*, he announced that the Victorian state government could not control the number or type of apartment towers in Melbourne because of a need for foreign capital. Asian investment capital "felt comfortable" with high-rise development and the government could not fight it.

Michael Buxton, Professor of Environment and Planning at RMIT University, condemned the 'plan'.

"The interests of big retailers, road builders and developers are not necessarily ours. That's why we need government. This government has no idea about how to promote affordable housing.

"Melbourne will continue to grow as two city types that entrench unequal access to the best a city can offer.

"Well-serviced inner and middle-ring areas will become more exclusive, while sprawling new suburbs will condemn many outer residents to the worst standards of infrastructure and facilities.

"Cities fail when powerful private interests are allowed to determine the future, advantaging a few in the short term at the long-term expense of the many. This new plan, regrettably, has set Melbourne on the path to failure."

US investment plans for Australia suit US interests

by Ned K.

In *The Australian* on Friday 1 November 2013, departing General Motors boss Mike Devereux is quoted as saying that Australians, through the federal government, should pay yearly 'rent' to General Motors for the privilege of General Motors manufacturing cars in Australia!

The implication being that if General Motors don't receive the 'rent' they want, they would close up shop completely in Australia.

Investment in Australian manufacturing by this 'icon' of US imperialism is not a high priority after years and decades of export of profits to the US from the exploitation of thousands of workers in Australia.

It is indicative of US imperialism's overall plan for Australia, which is as a military base to keep watch over Asia, and as a source of profits from natural resources and large scale agriculture.

Grain farmers are under attack

Its interest in controlling Australian agriculture is there for all to see in the take-over bid by US agricultural giant Archer Daniels Midland for grain handler GrainCorp.

GrainCorp was originally part of the NSW Government Grain Handling Authority and was privatised in the mid-1980s, assuming the name GrainCorp.

The slippery slide of privatisation has led to the current situation of Archer Daniels Midland's takeover bid already being approved by the toothless tiger, the Australian Foreign Investment Review Board.

The voice of grain farmers in opposing the sale and control of more of Australia's grain handling and production to overseas corporations is reflected in the divisions within the Liberal-National Party Coalition government.

Grain farmers want the potential of Australia becoming the 'food bowl' of

Australia to benefit the ordinary people of Australia, not US corporations.

Car workers at General Motors' Victorian and South Australian plants want car manufacturing to benefit the Australian people, not US corporations.

Common ground

Car workers and grain farmers have interests in common here which are very different to the plans of US corporations.

Their common interest in opposing the domination of their respective industries is part of the developing people's desire for an independent Australia.

This desire is completely lost on both major parliamentary parties, with Tony Abbott declaring Australia "open for business" and Labor shadow Trade Minister Wong championing foreign investment in agriculture at a speech to the Chifley Research Centre.

Statement issued by the Communist Party of the Philippines

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP-CC) hereby formally issues this ceasefire declaration to all concerned commands of the New People's Army (NPA) and people's militias in areas devastated by the recent super-typhoon Yolanda.

Concerned NPA units have, as a matter of course, ceased offensive operations since November 9. This ceasefire declaration will remain in effect up to 2359 hours of 24 November 2013. This ceasefire declaration covers the following regional commands of the NPA:

Eastern Visayas Regional Command
Panay Regional Command
Central Visayas Regional Command
Negros Island Command

Respective regional commands are also to transmit this ceasefire declaration to the concerned provincial commands of the NPA, namely:

Masbate Island Command
Palawan Island Command
Mindoro Island Committee

Based on their assessment of the extent of the devastation of the recent super-typhoon in their areas of responsibility, the respective regional commands can extend the effectivity of this ceasefire declaration in their areas of concern, while other regional commands of the NPA can issue similar or limited ceasefire declarations in areas within the scope of their operations.

In line with standing policy and with the CPP's call for calamity-related



mobilization, the abovementioned NPA units have in fact already shifted their mode of operations even before super-typhoon Yolanda hit land on November 8. This ceasefire declaration, thus, is a positive declaration of the practical mode shift already in effect.

Until the aforementioned expiration of this declaration, all NPA units and people's militias shall cease and desist from carrying out offensive military operations against the armed units and personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other paramilitary and armed groups attached to the Government of the Republic of the Philippines.

While this ceasefire declaration is in effect, all units of the NPA and people's militias shall remain in active defense mode. They will, however, remain ever militant and vigilant to the encroachment and hostile movements of the AFP within the territory of the people's democratic government.

The people demand that the AFP

cease its offensive operations under its Oplan Bayanihan war of suppression.

The CPP denounces the AFP for using the calamity relief operations as cover for its combat and surveillance operations within and outside the areas of devastation. The Filipino people urges the AFP to withdraw its combat units from within the guerrilla zones and demand that relief operations be carried out by civilian agencies.

With this ceasefire declaration, all local and international relief organizations are assured of safe passage through and into the calamity-affected guerrilla zones. The masses and their revolutionary organizations and governmental committees within the guerrilla zones are ever ready to help facilitate the distribution of emergency supplies to the people, giving priority to the injured, children, nursing mothers, single parents, pregnant women, the elderly, the handicapped and other vulnerable individuals.

This ceasefire declaration seeks to underscore the need to focus the

attention of concerned NPA units and its Red fighters, as well as all units of the people's militias to the immediate task of assisting the hundreds of thousands of people, especially small and landless peasants, farm workers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples and the unemployed masses in the poor coastal and mountainous areas whose homes and sources of livelihood have been severely ravaged by super-typhoon Yolanda and who suffered deaths in their families and vast losses in property. Except for the small urban area in Tacloban City, the majority of the areas devastated by the super-typhoon are poor agricultural and fishing communities.

Since Nov. 8, all NPA companies in the concerned areas have trained their efforts at helping the people rebuild their houses, recover farm animals, help harvest root crops for food, rebuild infrastructure for sourcing drinking water and facilitate the distribution of emergency supplies.

The people in the guerrilla zones have carried out organized efforts to carry on with economic and commercial activity through their mass organizations, barrio revolutionary committees, local CPP branches, people's militias and their people's army.

The CPP calls on all its forces, all progressive and democratic organizations, relief agencies, doctors and health workers, agricultural experts and others who are willing to lend their expertise to coordinate with the revolutionary organizations in the guerrilla zones to help the people recover swiftly from the devastation and resume their normal lives.

Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement stalled, but still a threat

by Alice M.

US imperialism is having a hard time ramming through its Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement on the nations of the Pacific region.

Despite all its efforts to keep the detail of negotiations secret, Wikileaks has published a draft text of the Intellectual Property Rights chapter, which deals with issues such as medicines, biological patents, internet services, publishing and civil liberties.

The leak exposes continuing differences as the various nations including Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Canada, Vietnam, Chile, Brunei and Mexico resist the pressure of US imperialism to comply with its demands.

Shamefully, Australia is the most subservient, raising only a few quibbles and endorsing Obama's demand to sign off by the end of the year.

A key issue in dispute is the extension of patents for medications, which cuts across the production of cheaper generic medications, resulting in higher costs for healthcare.

There is also the threat to Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme which subsidises many costs.

"The Obama administration's shameful bullying on behalf of the giant drug companies would lead to preventable suffering and death in Asia-Pacific countries," Peter Maybarduk, director of Public Citizen's global access to medicines program, said in a statement.

Of great concern in the TPP is the

proposal for Investor-State Rights which allow multinational companies to sue governments to compensate for any restriction or limitations placed on their business due to national laws or regulations – such protections as pollution control, labour laws, health and safety, quarantine, food standards, food labelling, etc.

What this amounts to is control and monopolisation by US corporate monopolies of markets and production.

While the differences have stalled the negotiations somewhat, a big factor in the reluctance of the different countries to toe the line is the enormous popular opposition to the TPP which has arisen as more details come out.

All participating countries now have active protest groups among unions, small manufacturers, local councils,

health workers, farmers, etc. that hound their politicians and warn them not to sell out their national interest..

The Australian people will be shocked to learn that the text of this far-reaching agreement is only available to three un-named people and will not be debated by parliament.

On the other hand, 600 'trade advisers' from US corporations such as Chevron, Halliburton, Monsanto and Walmart get to see their parts of the text.

Julian Assange has referred to Australia's "cringingly obsequious" role in endorsing the position of the US negotiators. In this, Labor before, and the Abbott government now, are united.

We must be vigilant and oppose and defeat any attempts to force this evil treaty on the Australian people.

People demand action on climate change!

by *Bill F.*

On November 17th more than 60,000 people in cities and towns across Australia demonstrated their continuing demand for more concerted action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The rallies were held just days after the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) released data showing that the volume of atmospheric CO₂ grew faster in 2012 than in the previous decade, reaching 393.1 parts per million (ppm), 41% above the pre-industrial level and well above the nominal 'safe' level of 350ppm.

Another report from the Warsaw conference on Climate Change pointed to a 26% increase in ocean acidification due to the absorption of atmospheric CO₂. This will threaten the viability of many shell species – corals, clams, crabs, prawns, scallops and mussels, and further reduce the stocks of tuna and anchovies.

According to the UN Environment Programme, by the year 2020 greenhouse gas emissions are predicted to reach 8-12 billion tonnes over the level required to keep global warming below 2 degrees, and could reach that



point in just 40 years.

These most recent reports are bracketed by the massive bushfires in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales and the devastating Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (where it is known as Typhoon Yolanda) - more evidence of extreme weather events hitting our part of the world, more evidence of global warming.

The only way to make a significant reduction in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions is to phase out coal mining and export, together with the use of coal and gas for electricity generation.

These industries are largely owned

or controlled by US, European and Asian multinational corporations and are financed by foreign banks and shareholders.

They are motivated by greed and vehemently oppose any restrictions on their ability to increase their rate of profit. They want to expand their monopoly business into even more polluting ventures such as coal seam gas and brown coal exports.

These champions of capitalism hate competition. In fact, they bankroll selected politicians (and pseudo-scientists) to discredit and de-fund alternative sources of power generation,

such as solar, wind and geothermal.

They will not be stopped by timid irritations such as an emission trading scheme (where they can pass on the costs) or a carbon tax (where they can claim generous offsets). Certainly, Abbott's so-called 'direct action' scheme of handing over tax-payers' dollars to favoured enterprises isn't going to worry them.

A different kind of 'direct action'

A government that truly represented the interests of the people would regulate greenhouse gas emissions like any other toxic or polluting substance, issuing licences with set limits and heavy penalties for violations, including "three strikes and you go to jail".

In the end, however, the only guarantee of making a transition to clean energy is to nationalise the mining and power generation industries and place them under the supervision of the working people.

Instead of shipping profits and dividends overseas, these could be channelled into funding the construction of large scale base-load solar power stations for the cities and smaller clean energy power sources for regional and remote areas.

Now, how revolutionary is that?!

"... stand truly by each other to defend our rights and liberties"

by *Alice M.*

There's a growing public concern about the relentless erosion of democratic rights and civil liberties in Australia.

The main target of the new wave of anti-democratic, anti-worker state and federal laws are unions, civil rights and community groups, farming and rural communities, resisting big business attacks on their working conditions, livelihoods, living standards and the environment.

Muslim communities, migrant workers and motor bike clubs are marginalised and demonised by the ruling class whipping up fear, and used as a pretext to push through the anti-democratic laws directed against all.

The new wave of draconian anti-democratic, anti-worker laws and regulations are a part of the big business' ruling class preparations to suppress the people's resistance and struggle against the deeper austerity agenda and crushing of wages and conditions demanded by monopoly capital.

On 13 November, 180 people attended a public forum in Melbourne on the erosion of human and democratic rights in Australia.

The forum pulled together the seemingly separate laws, developments

and actions against the people in struggle. A picture emerged of systematic attacks on people's rights.

Speakers included Rob Stary, well known democratic rights lawyer; ACTU President Ged Kearney; Ann O'Rourke, Vice-President of Liberty Victoria and Humphrey McQueen, well known Australian historian and activist in the working class movement.

The meeting focused on the wide sweeping attacks on workers' and union rights to organise, take industrial action, strike, the unions' right of entry and disappearing job security.

Speakers and representatives from unions pointed out that the ABCC is intended against all organised sections of the working class and unions who refuse to submit to the big business agenda of intensified exploitation of workers, lower pay and loss of many hard won workplace conditions.

The recently legislated anti-bike club laws in Queensland, the anti-terror laws and the draconian laws against community and environmental protests are another layer of the capitalist state's legal apparatus created in preparation for the suppression of people's struggle and resistance.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement under negotiation, is a tool of US imperialism to remove any impediments that stand in the

way of profit maximisation by the multinationals.

Many of these government regulations and standards on health and safety, protection of the environment, protection of local jobs which are threatened by the TPP, have been forced on Australian governments by people's mass actions.

Democratic rights do not sit above classes. In real life workers have few democratic rights. Thousands of workers are regularly sacked and lose their livelihood, whilst the rights and prerogatives of big business to maximise their profits and exploit the working class mercilessly are upheld as sacred and unchallengeable.

Multi-nationals like GMH and Ford, have unrestricted and unfettered rights to close down factories, throw tens of thousands of workers and their families on the scrapheap, so they can maximise their profits in the cheap labour markets in the developing countries, where workers have even fewer rights, if at all.

In his book *Revolution and the Australian State*, written in 1974, Ted Hill, the founding Chairman of CPA (M-L) sharply exposes the Australian capitalist state in all its functions, including the entire legal apparatus, as fundamentally dictatorship of the foreign and local monopoly capitalist

class.

"In its essence, the (bourgeois) dictatorship is unrestricted by any laws other than the economic laws that govern capitalism. Those economic laws were elucidated by Marx... Suffice it to say that no amount of liberty, freedom of the press, habeas corpus, legal rights is of much use to the man (or woman) who is dismissed in exercise of the monopoly capitalist's dictatorship or who is unable to get a job because of the monopoly capitalists' unrestricted right to hire and fire."

"The legal apparatus in Australia is simply the system of repression built up in the course of British imperialist occupation and domination of Australia, then US imperialist extension to Australia and the collaboration of certain Australian monopolies with those imperialists."

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