

# Solidarity

Issue No. 22/ March 2010

\$3/\$5



**CPRS WILL  
GIVE GREEN  
LIGHT TO NEW  
COAL POWER**

**INSIDE**

**SHOULD WE SUPPORT A CARBON TAX? ● OBAMA AND AFGHANISTAN ● GANDHI**

# SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

Solidarity is a socialist group with branches across Australia. We are opposed to the madness of capitalism, which is plunging us into global recession and misery at the same time as wrecking the planet's future. We are taking the first steps towards building an organisation that can help lead the fight for an alternative system based on mass democratic planning.

As a crucial part of this, we are committed to building social movements and the wider left, through throwing ourselves into struggles for social justice, to overturn the legacy of the Howard government and to strengthen the confidence of rank and file unionists. Solidarity is a member of the International Socialist Tendency.

# SOLIDARITY. NET.AU

full content from the magazine / online-only updates / up to date details of demonstrations and meetings

## SUBSCRIBE

*Solidarity* is published monthly. Make sure you don't miss an issue—send in this form along with cheque or money order and we will mail you *Solidarity* each month.

- 5 issues—\$15
- One year (12 issues)—\$36
- Two years (24 issues)—\$65
- I would like \_\_\_ copies to sell

Name.....

Address .....

.....

.....

Phone .....

E-mail .....

Cheques/MOs payable to ISO Publishing.  
Send to PO Box A338 Sydney South NSW 1235 or  
phone 02 9211 2600 for credit card orders.

# SOLIDARITY MEETINGS

## Sydney

7pm Thursday March 18  
Labor and neo-liberalism:  
Hawke, Keating and the Accord

7pm Thursday April 1  
After Obama's election to presidency:  
Racism in the US today

Sydney Solidarity meets 7pm every Thursday at the Brown st Hall, above Newtown library on King Street, Newtown. For more information contact: Jean on 0449 646 593 [sydney@solidarity.net.au](mailto:sydney@solidarity.net.au)

## Melbourne

6.30pm Tuesday March 16  
Haiti—the humanitarian myth

6.30pm Tuesday March 23  
Labor in power: how Hawke and Keating introduced neo-liberalism

Melbourne Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Tuesday at the New International Bookshop, Trades Hall, corner of Victoria Parade and Lygon Street, Carlton. For more information contact: David on 0418 316 310 [melbourne@solidarity.net.au](mailto:melbourne@solidarity.net.au)

## Brisbane

Brisbane Solidarity meets fortnightly. For more information contact: Rob on 0424 265 730 [brisbane@solidarity.net.au](mailto:brisbane@solidarity.net.au)

## Perth

For more information contact: Trish on 0405 597 598 or 08 9339 7128 or [perth@solidarity.net.au](mailto:perth@solidarity.net.au)

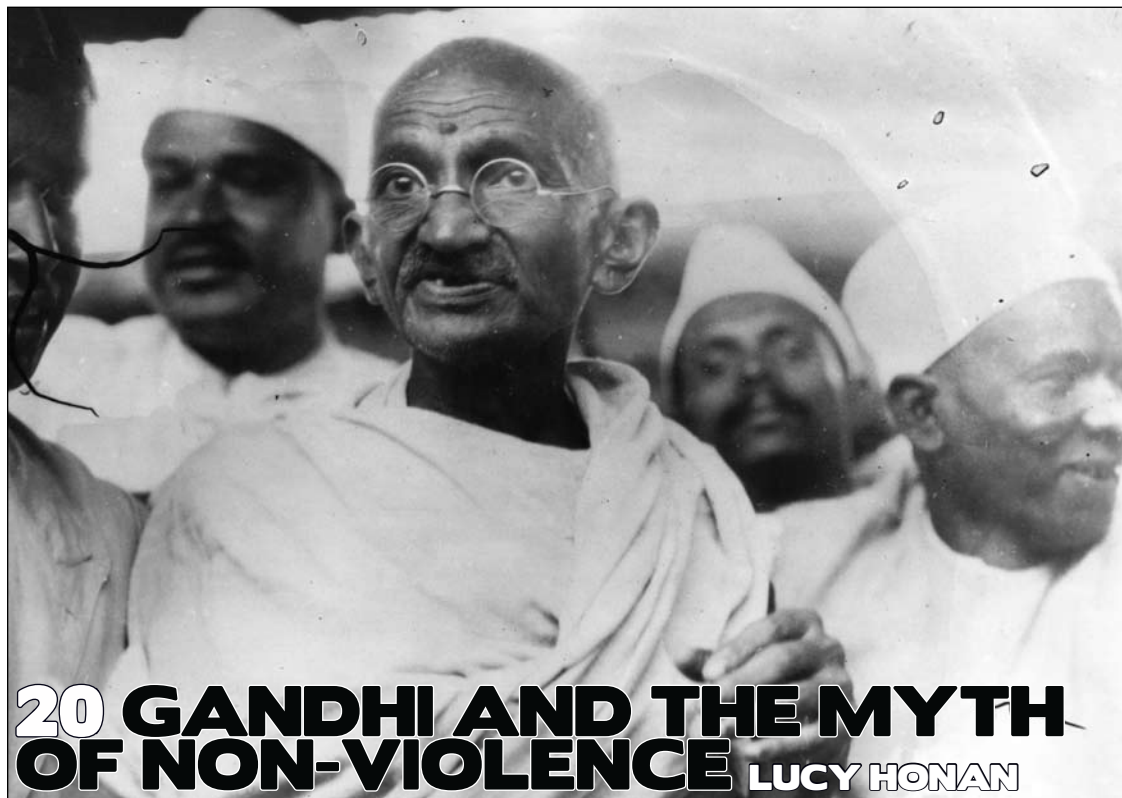
## Magazine office

Phone 02 9211 2600  
Fax 02 9211 6155  
[solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

**Solidarity No.22**  
**March 2010**  
**ISSN 1835-6834**  
**Responsibility for**  
**election comment is**  
**taken by James Supple,**  
**410 Elizabeth St, Surry**  
**Hills NSW 2010.**  
**Printed by El Faro,**  
**Newtown NSW.**

# CONTENTS

## ISSUE 22, MARCH 2010



### 20 **GANDHI AND THE MYTH OF NON-VIOLENCE** LUCY HONAN

## CLIMATE CHANGE

- 6 **STOPPING NEW COAL-FIRED POWER**
- 6 **WE CAN GET TO ZERO EMISSIONS IN TEN YEARS**
- 7 **WHY A CARBON TAX IS NOT THE ANSWER**
- 17 **CORPORATIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**
- 27 **JAMES HANSEN REVIEWED**

## ANTIRACIST INTERVENTION

- 8 **THE MYTH OF ABORIGINAL HOME OWNERSHIP**
- 9 **NEW LAWS WON'T REINSTATE RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT**
- 9 **UNIONS ORGANISE BASICSCARD WORKERS**

## OBAMA AND AFGHANISTAN

- 13 **OBAMA'S POLICIES ARE A BANKERS' BEST FRIEND**
- 14 **WHEN THE RUSSIANS INVADED AFGHANISTAN**
- 16 **TROOP SURGE BRINGS MORE DEVASTATION**

## REPORTS

Labor's Northern Territory waste dump 4

Editorial: Labor's business as usual boosts Abbott 5

Rudd's austerity package a danger to us all 10

Queensland surrogacy vote shows Bligh's hypocrisy on abortion 11

Rudd, Abbott and stopping the refugee boats 11

Fighting for LGBTI rights: no pride in Rudd's homophobia 28

## INTERNATIONAL

Greek workers fight cutbacks and crisis 12

## INDUSTRIAL

Stike at Herron 23

Star City casino 23

Woodside dispute shows the way 24

NSW TAFE campaign revived 24

## REVIEWS

*Precious* 25

*In the Loop* 25

*The Road* 26

## Things they say

**“The only one of the Ten Commandments that I am confident that I have not broken is the one about killing, and that’s because I haven’t had the opportunity yet.”**

Tony Abbott gives us yet another reason not to vote him into office

**“You’re dealing with a crazy man. You’re asking what can I do to placate a crazy man? Having got what he wants he will still kill you.”**

Nobel prize winning economist Joseph Stiglitz on the madness of the market

**“Chile has benefited enormously from the free market reforms it passed under dictator Augusto Pinochet.”**

The *Wall Street Journal* says that dictatorships help prepare countries for earthquakes

**“At that point one of my friends introduced me, dropping in that I am completing a PhD. At this, Rudd rolled his eyes and in a terse voice lacking any sense of irony remarked that is the ‘excuse’ that ‘all’ young women are using nowadays to avoid starting families.”**

Nina Funnell on her experience meeting Rudd after a speech on our ageing population

**“The poor will always be with us.”**

Abbott on why he would not commit to Rudd’s goal of halving homelessness by 2020

**“I probably feel a bit threatened, as so many people do...”**

Abbott admits his homophobia on Channel Nine’s *60 Minutes*

# Radioactive racism: Labor’s NT waste dump



**A meeting at Tennant Creek resolved to take action to stop the dump**  
Photo: Tennant & District Times

By Paddy Gibson

ON WEDNESDAY March 3, 150 people packed a community hall in Tennant Creek for a protest meeting against the imposition of a nuclear waste dump on the Muckaty Aboriginal Land Trust, 100 kilometres north of the town.

There was a strong mood of defiance. Local people feel deeply betrayed by the Rudd government.

Before the 2007 election, clear promises were given that Howard’s draconian Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act (CWRMA) would be repealed and a nuclear waste dump would not be forced on the NT. But Labor’s new National Radioactive Waste Management Bill (NRWMB) is just as draconian. Whole sections have literally been cut and pasted from Howard’s laws.

The NRWMB suspends the NT Land Rights Act, Aboriginal Heritage protection laws, all relevant State and Territory legislation and the Environmental and Bio-Diversity Conservation Act. Resources Minister Martin Ferguson also has the discretion to suspend any other legislation that might get in the path of the dump. Spent nuclear fuel rods are

returning from France and Scotland in 2015. They have been sent overseas for reprocessing from the Lucas Heights reactor in Sydney.

Lucas Heights should be shut down and its toxic refuse managed on site where there is expertise and resources. But under the racist logic of Australian politics, vulnerable communities on Aboriginal land are being targeted for a dump.

### Dumping on Land Rights

The Northern Land Council (NLC) nominated the site at Muckaty in May 2007 under the CWRMA.

The NLC claim that traditional owners from Muckaty, all members of the Ngapa clan, signed a contract with the federal government to offer up the land. The NLC refuse to make the

**The racist logic of Australian politics means that vulnerable communities on Aboriginal land are being targeted for a waste dump**

contract public and it is unknown how many signed.

Twenty three Ngapa signed a strong petition against the dump in 2009 and others have written letters of protest. But the idea that the land just belongs to this small group of people is a total fiction invented to justify the waste dump.

The Ngapa are only one of five clan groups within the Muckaty Land Trust, which has hundreds of registered members. A report done by the NT Land Commissioner, which led to the hand back of the land in 1993, says clearly that all members of the Land Trust must be considered “traditional Aboriginal owners of any part of the land”.

Under the NT Land Rights Act, any contract would require the “informed consent” of all people on the Land Trust. But this law remains suspended, allowing Ferguson to play divide and rule.

\$12 million has been offered to the signatories. This will be paid into a trust fund for educational scholarships, roads and housing. These are basic citizenship rights, denied to increasingly desperate NT Aboriginal communities unless they accept a toxic trade off. A substantial cut will go to the NLC.

### Fight Back

The meeting resolved to fight the dump, if necessary with direct action to stop it being built. A mass demonstration will be held over the Easter Weekend. Muckaty traditional owner and campaign leader Dianne Stokes told the *Centralian Advocate* she would block the Stuart Highway.

A motion from the MUA, pledging to put a ban on the unloading of nuclear waste bound for unwilling Aboriginal communities, received a loud cheer.

At their February full council meeting, Unions NT resolved to support communities and unionists refusing to co-operate with the dump.

## Labor's 'business as usual' boosts Abbott

ABBOTT IS convinced he is on a winner. He thinks his line that Labor's Emissions Trading Scheme is a "big new tax on everything" has struck a chord.

Encouraged by an opinion poll boost, Abbott is systematically embracing Howard's policies—the 1950s view of women, WorkChoices, turning refugee boats around at sea and extending punitive welfare quarantining to all beneficiaries.

His rise in the opinion polls is a worry, though the polls show that the Liberal primary vote is still well below its losing effort in 2007. But to understand Abbott's rise, we need to look at Kevin Rudd.

In June last year, history professor Greg Melleuish wrote, "Rudd has been many things in the few years since he entered the public spotlight. He has been a good Christian, a fiscal conservative, a good bloke and a social-democratic true believer. He has the capacity to shed his skin and acquire a new one as circumstances change... Rudd is Australia's first post-modern Prime Minister."

Rudd certainly wants to give the appearance of taking on the big issues.

But what happened to the education revolution? Public education needs more teachers and more funding, but Rudd offered (and hasn't delivered) a laptop for every student. He introduced the MySchool web site and NAPLAN tests to create competitive league tables.

Rudd described climate change as the "great moral challenge of our generation". A year ago, in his essay in *The Monthly*, Rudd favourably quoted Sir Nicholas Stern's comment that climate change is "the greatest market failure in human history." But the market is at the centre of the CPRS, which would hand hundreds of millions of dollars to the big polluters and coal bosses. As soon as the Liberals stalled the legislation, Rudd put climate change on the back burner.



**Rudd hospitals takeover has given him a boost, but there is no new money for four years**

Similarly, the house insulation fiasco has rattled Rudd. He thought the scheme would kill two birds with one stone—look like he was doing something about climate change and boost a shovel-ready industry as a short-term response to the global financial crisis.

But there are doubts about the effectiveness of house insulation as an energy saving measure. The \$2.45 billion dollars spent could have built five solar power stations, each able to power to 45,000 homes.

But it was the short-term appearance that mattered to Rudd. Even the job creation element lies in ruins—scrapping the scheme may cost up to 2000 jobs.

### Hospitals takeover

Now, Rudd has made another big announcement—hospitals will be taken over by the federal government. Rudd told a press conference, "This Australian Government is going to get on with the business of fundamental health and hospital reform."

But the scheme has all the hallmarks of Rudd's other

failures. It won't even come into effect until well after the next election.

Real health reform means more beds, more nurses, more doctors, more funding, but all that's on offer is re-shuffling the deck chairs of health administration.

There will be no new money for hospitals for the next four years. Worse, Rudd is proposing that hospital funding will be based on the economic rationalist case-mix funding—paying hospitals at a nationally set "efficiency price" per service.

This is the funding scheme that has directly led to the shocking state of hospitals in Victoria and Queensland. Under-funded federal hospitals will be no better than under-funded state ones.

Despite his talk about "making a difference", Rudd is unwilling to challenge the status quo or disturb the pampered existence of the establishment.

In his *Monthly* essay, Rudd quoted George Soros on the financial crisis: "the crisis is not caused by an some external shock...the crisis was generated by the system

itself." Soros was right, Rudd declared, but he has shown no inclination to do anything about the system.

A year ago, he railed against the bonuses paid to the Wall Street bankers: "these are epic numbers generated by a greed of epic proportions," he wrote. But Rudd has done nothing about Australia's profiteering banks. This year, Westpac's top 15 executives got an average of \$3.3 million, while the Commonwealth's executives got an average of \$4 million. The average bank worker's pay is \$40,000.

Real reform of the education system will rely on teachers defending public education and banning NAPLAN tests. Genuine hospital reform will need nurses' unions and doctors to fight for more jobs and more funding. The climate campaign will need to fight for the government to build renewable power stations. Unions need to fight the anti-union laws (see page 24).

Until that happens, Abbott's popularity will grow while Rudd pulls Labor further and further to the right.

# Stopping new coal power key task for movement

By James Supple

THE CAMPAIGN to stop new coal power stations is shaping up as one of the key issues for the climate movement—both in NSW and nationally.

In early March the NSW government gave “concept approval” for plans to build two new coal-fired power stations—one in the Hunter Valley and one at Lithgow. But there is still plenty of time to stop them going ahead. The government plans to sell the development sites for the two power stations together with the approval to build. It wants the private sector to build and run the new power stations. But it still has to find an interested buyer.

Delays to its power privatisation plans, where the government hopes to sell retail electricity companies and the “trading rights” to power produced in state owned generators, show that this will not be easy. The development sites for the new power plants are to be sold as part of the privatisation process.

In February the government announced a six month delay to power privatisation, abandoning its original schedule of completing the sale by June. As the *Financial Review* revealed, “Sources close to the government said the main reason for the delay was that it was waiting for additional competition in the process”. In other words there were not enough bidders.

This is good news for the campaign. The government had hoped to sneak the plans for new power stations through and avoid public attention. It released the environmental approval the same day as Kevin Rudd’s major announcement about his health takeover, hoping to avoid media coverage.

If the new power plants go ahead they will add 15 per cent to NSW’s total emissions. Even gas plants would add 7 per cent to emissions. And a report by independent consultants Arup found



Snap actions were called in response to the approval of “concept plans” for two new NSW coal-fired power stations

that emissions from the Mt Piper plant “could be up to 20% higher than the values presented in the greenhouse gas estimate”.

These emissions would be locked in for 30 years, the life of a power station.

Research by Greenpeace has revealed that there are a total of 12 new coal power plants being planned across the country, one in every state except Tasmania.

In Victoria, HRL is still struggling to find financial backers for its new brown coal power station in the LaTrobe valley. The plant is unlikely to be finished until 2013. The HRL plant will use new coal gasification technology, with the aim of reducing emissions from brown coal by 30 per cent—which would make it “only” as polluting as ordinary black coal. The Victorian government sees

the technology as a way to allow the continued use of brown coal to power the state. Stopping these plans is one of the key challenges for the climate movement. If the movement is able to succeed in blocking new coal power stations we will be in a better position to force more rapid installation of renewables.

Stopping new coal power stations must also be linked to the uselessness of Rudd’s CPRS climate policy. If a policy that is supposed to reduce greenhouse emissions can allow new coal power stations to be built then it is worthless. Climate groups should be looking to call a national day of protest when the CPRS is back in the Senate in May, to call for no new coal power, no CPRS and for government funding for renewables.

## We could cut emissions to zero in ten years

AUSTRALIA COULD cut emissions from electricity generation to zero in ten years for \$40 billion a year, according to a preview of Beyond Zero Emissions’ first Zero Carbon Australia plan.

The plan, which is based solely on commercially available technology, relies mainly on solar and wind power to provide the country’s power needs.

Twelve large-scale solar power plants could provide 60 per cent of energy, with the remaining 40 per cent coming from wind turbines.

Twenty-four hour a day power from solar energy is possible through molten salt heat storage at the power plants, which would be heated to up to 650°C and then used to boil water for steam at night to produce power.

The plan was presented at the Transition Decade launch in Melbourne.

The Transition Decade campaign is based on the knowledge that the world is so close to a climate catastrophe that there must be urgent action to reduce emissions.

It is a response to the failure by state and federal governments to introduce policies that would significantly reduce emissions.

Such a transition plan could only be implemented through large-scale government investment in renewable energy.

The \$40 billion a year to fund the plan could be raised simply by restoring the corporate tax rate to its 1987 level of 49 per cent, which would raise about \$50 billion more in tax per year.

# Carbon tax not the solution we need on climate

By Chris Breen

WITH RUDD'S CPRS stalled in the Senate, and support for the scheme falling, the debate about solutions to climate change has opened up.

The Greens have proposed an interim two-year carbon tax, as a transition to carbon trading, starting at \$23 per tonne this year. Unlike the CRPS it would not involve tradeable permits, or the use of offsets, but as the Greens state "The scheme would operate using the proposed CPRS administrative framework". The proposal originally comes from the Garnaut review, the report by free market economist Ross Garnaut that led to the CPRS.

The Greens are attempting to deal themselves back into climate negotiations with the government, rather than fight for solutions that would actually work. Given the scale of the problem, their carbon tax proposal is remarkable for its timidity. However timidity is not the only problem. A carbon tax will make getting solutions that work more difficult.

The Greens are proposing exemptions for "trade exposed emissions intensive industries", just as with the CPRS.

This would include exemptions for companies like Alcoa, who have just done a deal to source their power from a coal-fired power station in Victoria, Loy Yang power. It will lock in their enormous use of power for the next 26 years.

Exemptions are designed to support Australian companies against international competitors. But being Australian companies does not make their emissions any less harmful to the climate. Climate change doesn't recognise nations.

## Problems

Carbon taxes are market mechanisms that, like Rudd's CPRS, work by imposing a price on carbon emissions. This is designed to make polluting forms of energy more expensive, which would

supposedly encourage the private sector to invest in renewables.

But a carbon tax set at \$23 is far too low to do this. Renewables expert Mark Diesendorf estimates it would have to be set at \$100 or more to make solar power competitive.

Energy producers would simply pass the cost of a carbon tax on to consumers. This means ordinary people would pay the cost of a transition to renewable energy—not the polluters.

Some argue increased prices for consumers could be offset by giving them back the revenue from a carbon tax or eliminating other regressive taxes.

But even the threat that prices might rise will alienate ordinary people. It is with good reason most working class people are suspicious of government policies that might raise their cost of living. We have experienced over 20 years of neo-liberal "reforms" designed to cut living standards and boost corporate profits. The climate movement needs to make it clear whose side we are on.

We need a mass movement to force our rulers to act to stop climate change. People will not join our movement if it could mean they can't afford to drive a car, or if they are cut off electricity.

The right will attack a carbon tax in the same way Abbott has attacked Rudd's CPRS—labelling it a "great big new tax" that will hurt living standards.

## Regulation

If government is serious about stopping something dangerous, it bans it. DDT is banned because of its effects on the environment. So is asbestos. We need to regulate absolute limits on carbon pollution. Why allow companies to pay a tax and continue to destroy the planet?

Carbon taxes are always less effective than regulation. For instance taxing old incandescent light globes would reduce their use, but banning them stops it altogether. Taxing the car industry or petrol might force some poor



**People who spend a high proportion of their income on energy bills like pensioners, would be hard hit by a carbon tax**

people to stop driving, but requiring car manufacturers to produce electric cars run on renewable energy alongside massively expanded public transport would make a real difference.

## Funding renewables?

The Greens say that their proposal "Results in a surplus of \$2.97 billion... which could be directed towards climate mitigation and adaptation infrastructure".

We do need a way of raising money to pay for the building of renewable power generation. But this should come from taxing polluting corporations and the rich—those responsible for climate change.

If government was serious about funding a transition it could

raise corporate tax and the highest individual tax rate back to where they were in the 1980s—corporate tax would go from 30 per cent back to 40 per cent and the highest tax rate from 45 per cent back to 60 per cent.

The movement must demand what is necessary, rather than try to come up with "solutions" that are acceptable to those who run our world, but that will not work.

Rudd claims carbon trading can be the key mechanism to fight climate change. The climate movement's answer must be that a massive program of government spending to install renewable energy and public transport is necessary, not to argue for a carbon tax.

# Aboriginal home ownership: Macklin's fantasy



Ampilatwatja walk-off protesters and supporters at the “protest house” built in just two weeks with the help of unions Photo: Bob Gosford

By Lauren Mellor

ON JANUARY 31, residents at Ilpeye Ilpeye town camp in Alice Springs became the only Aboriginal land owners in Australia's history to hand their land back to the Federal Government.

The following day Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin used extraordinary powers under the Commonwealth's Northern Territory Emergency Response legislation to take control of community land title, saying she hoped the deal would usher in a “revolution in land tenure”. It won't. The Ilpeye Ilpeye residents have been duped.

*The Australian* called the deal a landmark agreement that will allow town camp residents to own their own homes.

In reality, the Commonwealth is ratcheting up its aggressive push for control of Aboriginal communities. The deal is a cynical and divisive move driven by the collaboration of the Lhere Artepe Aboriginal Corporation who have openly supported government attacks on Tangentyere Council, the representative body for the other 17 town camps.

Unlike most residents of other town camps, the estimated 60-100 residents of Ilpeye Ilpeye are Arrente people and have Native Title rights over the camp land. Because of that, they are entitled to “just terms compensation”. In effect they are selling

their Native Title in return for a small investment in basic infrastructure and ownership of the homes on the town camp site.

Even worse, the deal will leave other town camp residents short changed. The compensation money paid to Ilpeye Ilpeye residents will be taken out of the \$150 million the government allocated for housing repairs and to connect water, power and sewerage to all the camps.

Macklin has portrayed the deal as a shift of emphasis in Indigenous policy “from a rights agenda to one of individual economic empowerment”.

But claims that individual home ownership benefits communities are a sham. With unemployment over 90 per cent, the stark economic reality is that there is no chance of most town camp residents ever owning their own homes.

Macklin says the government will work to establish “safeguards” to prevent non-Aboriginal people from buying the Ilpeye Ilpeye land in future. But there are no guarantees. Tellingly, Karl Hampton, Minister for Central Australia in the Northern Territory Government, says that the land could eventually be sold off to the “wider Alice Springs community”. The Ilpeye Ilpeye deal is no model for Aboriginal home ownership.

However, NT Labor Senator Trish Crossin has said the federal government will be investigating

whether similar arrangements can be reached in Aboriginal town camps in Darwin.

The pressure will now be on other struggling Central Australian Aboriginal communities. But they are steadfastly refusing to sign 40-year leases, despite the threats from the Federal Government—“voluntarily” hand over control, or expect to be starved of basic services and infrastructure and threatened with compulsory acquisition.

## SIHIP Failure

The Federal Government claims the recent completion of two houses under its \$672 million SIHIP program as a success story, despite it taking two and half years to build them. Both houses are in the Top End community of Wadeye where residents were forced to sign a 99-year lease before the houses would be built.

In contrast a “protest house” at Ampilatwatja was built in February in just two weeks by trade unionists and the Ampilatwatja community who set up the camp outside the “prescribed area” following the collapse of services and infrastructure under the Intervention.

Walk-off spokesperson Richard Downs scoffed at the government's achievement, “They've built two houses in two and a half years. At this rate the 15,000 Aboriginal families living in overcrowded housing across the NT will be waiting 15,000 years for a

new house!”

Unfortunately, Kim Hill of the Northern Land Council has backed the government's housing “achievement” saying “this will go some way to silencing critics of the SIHIP program”.

But far from the critics being silenced, opposition to the Intervention is growing.

Several hundred people attended rallies in Sydney, Melbourne and Alice Springs on February 13, the anniversary of Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generations, to say no to the leases blackmail, and to demand immediate funding for houses and services and that the government scrap the Intervention.

## Substandard Housing

The SIHIP program, started in mid-2007, promised 750 new houses, 230 rebuilds and 2500 refurbishments over 10 years.

But \$56 million has been swallowed by administration costs and the government has further reduced the amount for refurbishing houses from \$150,000 each to \$75,000.

Territory Alliance contractors told recent Territory Council of Co-operation hearings that the cut-backs will mean many houses get a new bathroom or kitchen sink and benches, but other urgently-needed repairs will not happen.

One contractor revealed at the hearings, “...some of the houses which are forming the base stock for the work will not meet the standards of the Residential Tenancies Act.”

# More lies exposed: Intervention laws won't restore Racial Discrimination Act

By Paddy Gibson

ACCORDING TO Minister Jenny Macklin, the new Intervention legislation would restore the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA), fulfilling a key Labor's election promise. It's a lie.

Submissions to the Senate enquiry, including the Australian Human Rights Commission's report, have revealed that Aboriginal people will not be able to use the RDA to challenge the Intervention.

Without inserting a specific clause in the new laws stipulating they are subject to the RDA, there is no legal basis for any challenge.

The new legislation simply brands racist Intervention laws as "Special Measures" under the RDA. "Special Measures" are supposed to benefit a particular racial or ethnic group. Although there is no such benefit in the Intervention, without the laws being subject to the RDA, the measures cannot be challenged.

The draconian powers of the Government Business Managers over communities, compulsory 5-year leases over Aboriginal township land, blanket bans on alcohol and pornography—all will remain in place.

In his final report, released on February 24, James Anaya, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights, again labelled the Intervention "racist". Australia has been called to formally face this charge at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva this September.

## Welfare quarantine still racist

Labor has tried to cover the explicit racism of Intervention by providing powers to extend income management to non-Aboriginal welfare recipients. But there will be exemptions for the elderly and disabled. However, the Liberals are refusing to pass the new laws, arguing that they would "soften"



Rudd's apology anniversary was marked with anti-intervention rallies

the welfare quarantine.

During Senate Inquiry hearings in Alice Springs, Labor Senator Trish Crossin assured angry Aboriginal pensioners that under the new system they would receive their entitlements in cash. In practice, Income Management would hardly change.

Centrelink would still determine whether to let NT Aboriginal pensioners off Income Management and has the power to declare people "vulnerable" and keep them quarantined. They can offer bribes of up to \$500 a year to keep people on Income Management. Many Aboriginal pensioners will have to wait until July 2011 before they can even apply for exemption.

In contrast to the ongoing impact on Aboriginal people, Labor has given no indication that Income Management will actually be imposed anywhere else in Australia. Originally, the quarantine was to roll out across the NT in July. But at recent Senate Inquiry hearings, Labor Senators only referred to applying Income Management to specific areas such as Palmerston, a suburb 30 kms from Darwin.

Anywhere in the NT, the burden will fall overwhelmingly on Aboriginal people. In Central Australia, Indigenous unemployment is more than 70 per cent while it is only 4 per cent for the general population.

The Greens' opposition to the laws might mean that the laws will never be passed. The Greens have provided useful criticism, but they have been too focussed on the "national roll-out" aspect of the new laws and warning that Labor is pushing for the most draconian changes to social security in Australia's history.

National expansion of Income Management would be a disaster for any poor, working-class suburb. But Labor will not be considering areas outside the NT until after a review in 2012.

In reality, the laws are a cover for Labor to continue the racism as usual for Aboriginal people in the NT.

The anti-Intervention campaigns needs to get the word out that whether or not the laws are passed, Labor is not re-instating the RDA. That fact alone damns the Rudd government and the Intervention.

## ACTU backs BasicsCard workers

THE ATTACK on Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) that has gone along with the NT Intervention has cost thousands of Aboriginal jobs. People still on CDEP—some working up to 40 hours a week—are now mostly being paid only their Centrelink entitlements, but 50 per cent of this is quarantined on a "BasicsCard".

Disgracefully, regional shire councils are using these workers as free labour to provide services such as garbage collection, construction, maintenance and cleaning. "BasicsCard" workers are also being used in art centres and schools.

Combined with Intervention policies that are starving remote communities of resources, the forced labour is pushing people out of their homelands in search of paid work. However, jobs and housing in the urban centres are extremely limited, and the drift is adding to the already acute social problems.

February's ACTU executive meeting discussed the plight of the "BasicsCard" workers. Kara Touchie, chair of the ACTU Indigenous Committee, gave a report on her recent trip to Ampilatwatja, where Aboriginal people have established a walk-off protest camp against the Intervention.

Following the report, the ACTU in principle endorsed the creation of a paid position for an NT community organiser to educate Aboriginal workers about unions and campaigning for proper wages and job creation across all communities.

A Prescribed Area People's Alliance activists meeting on February 12, resolved to get started unionising their communities and to hold a demonstration in Alice Springs on May 1.

# Rudd's austerity plans a danger to us all

By James Supple

RUDD CAME to office promising to be an “economic conservative”. His government is crafting a similar image as it prepares to fight this year’s election. Contrary to the received wisdom in the media, this is neither a popular nor a smart idea.

Treasurer Wayne Swan has confirmed that in this year’s budget the government will introduce a cap on new spending of 2 per cent, to remain until the government deficit is paid off. The cap will see government spending as a proportion of GDP shrink over time.

It means a return to austerity policies after Rudd’s response to the global economic crisis, when he condemned “extreme capitalism and unrestrained greed” and launched over \$60 billion in stimulus spending.

The government’s spending cap means new spending on health and education—for instance to put the funds into hospitals that could really fix the problems Rudd’s federal takeover is targeting—will be impossible without cuts elsewhere.

Rudd has capitulated to the Liberals’ scare mongering about the size of the budget deficit. It is another issue where he has tried to outflank Abbott on the right.

When Rudd first adopted his “economic conservatism” during the last election, many media commentators labelled this clever politics, claiming big spending initiatives from government would not be popular with voters.

But austerity measures are not popular with the majority of the population. A comprehensive poll on attitudes to tax and government spending done last year showed 79 per cent want governments to spend more on public services. And 64 per cent thought big business paid too little tax.

Rudd’s support for austerity is about appeasing big business,



Rudd spent billions on economic stimulus but has now retreated to pursue caps on government spending

who want taxes kept low in order to maximise profits.

## Stimulus-fuelled growth

But austerity measures also run the risk of tipping Australia back into recession.

Recent economic figures show the Australian economy grew by 2.7 per cent in 2009. This is near the expected “trend” of the boom conditions of the last decade. The Deputy Reserve Bank Governor, Ric Battellino, has declared that the threat of recession, “has passed, [and] the underlying dynamics of the resource boom are starting to re-appear”.

But as economics writer Peter Martin wrote in the Fairfax press “Take away the stimulus... and it’s hard to find evidence of a boom.”

Terry McCrann wrote that the main contributor to growth in the December quarter was “a massive 11 per cent increase in business investment”. But this was a result of a government tax break that ended in December—and mostly went on new cars.

The expanded First Homeowners Boost, which gave new homeowners up to \$21,000,

increased the number of new houses built per month from 7500 to 9600. This was also withdrawn in December.

As Wayne Swan admitted, “The stimulus peaked in the middle of last year and it will detract from growth as we go through the year.”

Most of the growth in the last year—1.7 per cent of the 2.7 per cent growth—was a direct result of the stimulus measures.

With the stimulus removed, there is no certainty that the Australian economy can keep growing. And this is without considering the impact that a new shock to global markets from more bank failures or the default of unstable countries in Europe such as Greece could have.

## The government’s spending cap means new spending on health and education will be impossible without cuts elsewhere

At the same time as the stimulus is disappearing, the Reserve Bank has begun putting interest rates back up. This will drain household incomes. According to calculations by economist Steve Keen, the cuts to interest rates added 5 per cent to disposable incomes during 2009, more than the stimulus measures which added only about 4 per cent.

Confident that the economy will keep growing, the Reserve Bank lifted interest rates to 4 per cent in March. This is up from 3 per cent in September. Some economists expect another percentage point increase by the end of the year.

Interest rate rises so far have already lifted repayments on an average \$300,000 home loan by almost \$200 a month.

As interest rates move back to the levels of a few years ago the huge debts that homeowners have racked up, encouraged by Rudd’s homeowners grants, will start to bite again.

Rudd’s obsession with cutting spending will be no help as working people feel their living standards threatened.

## Surrogacy conscience vote reveals Bligh's abortion hypocrisy

By Susan Shaw

LAST MONTH, Queensland's parliament decriminalised altruistic surrogacy. The reforms will allow same-sex couples to adopt children born to surrogate mothers. The laws passed 48 votes to 40 (two Labor MPs crossed the floor on the issue).

Liberal National Party (LNP) members used the debate in parliament to display their usual homophobic bigotry. One claimed that the new surrogacy bill represented, "a Trojan horse for the normalisation of same-sex parenting" and would reduce, "children to the status of pets".

Labor premier, Anna Bligh, allowed Labor parliamentarians a rare conscience vote on the issue.

Under the reforms legal parentage of a child born in surrogacy agreements will transfer from the birth mother to the parent or parents who commissioned the birth. In an add-on to the law, lesbian co-parents will also be listed as equal parents on their child's birth certificate. Commercial surrogacy remains illegal.

The laws were praised by the GLBTI community. But the vote has exposed Bligh's hypocrisy on



**Bligh allowed a conscience vote on surrogacy, but refuses to allow one on abortion**

the decriminalisation of abortion. Labor's surrogacy bill comes at a time when a woman and her partner await a trial date in Cairns on charges of procuring an abortion. While Anna Bligh allowed Labor members a conscience vote on surrogacy, she has refused to allow such a vote on abortion law reform.

Bligh and other Labor MPs mocked the LNP's regressive position on gay adoption stating,

"the LNP sure has their fair share of rednecks and they have been on display in the most embarrassing way possible..." The Labor leader went on to label her opponents "knuckle draggers" and "bigots."

But it's Bligh who is encouraging the rednecks on abortion.

Bligh attacked the LNP opposition, saying, "The time for putting our heads in the sand on this issue is over." Yet, the Labor

leader's head is firmly in the sand on the abortion issue.

Despite opinion polls showing 64 per cent of people favour abortion law reform, she refuses to allow a conscience vote on abortion.

The surrogacy reform bill is a positive step for gay rights. Women in Queensland have waited too long already—a vote to remove abortion from the criminal code is needed now.

## Liberals revert to refugee bashing—but Rudd's adding to the chorus

TONY ABBOTT is taking the Liberals back to the refugee bashing policies of the Howard era, saying he will re-impose temporary protection visas and turn boats around at sea.

Abbott claims that Howard's policies stopped the boats. Not surprisingly the truth is different. Temporary protection visas (TPVs) were introduced in October 1999. Over the next two years, boat arrivals actually increased—from 2939 people in 2000 up to 5516 in 2001.

But TPV holders were denied family reunion. That was why there were so many wives and children of refugees on the SIEV X when it sank in October 2001.

Of the 353 people who drowned, there were 146 children, and 142 women.

Neither that tragedy nor the Liberal's Pacific Solution stopped the boats. But the government stopped recording the numbers of asylum seekers who were towed or taken back to Indonesia.

After the Tampa in late 2001 at least four boats (SIEVs 5, 7, 11 and 12) were towed back to Indonesia. Three others (4,6,10) sank when they were intercepted or were being towed between 2001 and 2002. UNHCR estimates that at least 1600 people were "diverted" to PNG or Nauru over the years of Howard's Pacific Solution.

Labor finally ended detention on Nauru and the cruel practice of temporary protection visas in May 2008.

But Labor opened the high-security detention centre on Christmas Island in December 2008, using the same arguments linking asylum boats and border security as those used by the Howard government. Rudd's Indonesia Solution is an attempt to use the Indonesian government to detain asylum seekers and get its navy to intercept boats, to do exactly what the Liberals did in 2001—stop asylum seekers getting to Australia.

The fate of the more than 200 Tamils, still on the boat at Merak,

five months after Kevin Rudd called on the Indonesian president to intercept it, is a graphic reminder of what the Indonesian Solution means in practice.

And on Christmas Island, all the same problems of long term detention—the isolation, the self-harm, the mental illness—are re-emerging.

To mark the visit of Indonesian President Yudhoyono to Australia and 150 days at Merak, protests are being held in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and London calling on Kevin Rudd to close Christmas Island, end the Indonesian Solution, and bring the Merak refugees to Australia.

**Ian Rintoul**

# Greek workers fight crisis and cutbacks

By David Glanz

IN EVERY economic crisis, the central question is who shall bear the cost—the bosses or the working class? In Greece, that question is being fought out on the streets, with workers backing waves of mass strikes.

On March 5, *The Guardian* reported that airports, metro and bus services shut in Athens as staff protested against the government's promise to slash public sector pay. The government wants to cut its budget deficit to 3 per cent of GDP by 2013, from 12 per cent now.

Riot police attacked protesters outside the Greek parliament. Police used tear gas and baton charges, amid the worst violence seen in the last few years of protest in Greece.

The protests came as Prime Minister George Papandreou, leader of the PASOK (Labor) party, introduced proposals to cut public sector workers' annual bonuses by 30 per cent, increase GST by 2 per cent and freeze state-funded pensions.

The austerity package, which passed through parliament, will slash government spending by \$7.7 billion.

Two weeks earlier, 2.5 million workers from a total workforce of five million joined a general strike.

All flights in and out of the country were cancelled. There was no live TV, some shops were closed, and few buses or trains ran. There were no Greek newspapers the following day as there were no workers to produce them.

"The strike is very strong," Yiannis Theoharis, a union rep at the Intracom telecoms company in Athens told *Socialist Worker* in London. "The whole working class believes we have to fight back against the government's attacks.

"The employers, bankers and the EU stand behind the government. They want us to have cuts in wages, benefits and an increase in our retirement age.

"European leaders want to



Greek police brutally attacked demonstrations against the government's austerity package

use Greece to attack all workers on the continent. If they win here they will go further in other places. They want to generalise the attack to Spain, France, Britain, Germany and Portugal."

## Economic instability

The struggle is a result of Greece having major problems financing its debts, as do the governments of the other so-called PIGS countries (Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain).

The Australian media says the global financial crisis is over—but the reality is that it is continuing to destabilise the world economy.

The GFC has made credit harder to come by and the bankers are punishing weaker economies by making their governments pay extra for loans.

The Greek government has to offer interest rates of 6 or 7 per cent to persuade bankers to buy its bonds so that it can cover debt interest payments. That's 3 per cent more than the German government has to pay.

The situation has been made worse by years of cover-up by the former conservative government. In 2003 it claimed the deficit was 1.7 per cent of GDP, well under the 3 per cent required of model European Union members.

Within 18 months they had been forced to admit that the deficit was more than three times greater. Last October the newly elected PASOK government revealed that the deficit was in fact nearly 13 per cent of GDP.

The former Greek government was helped by bankers Goldman Sachs, who used the complex derivatives deals that characterised the GFC to "borrow" billions of dollars in exchange rate swaps, which did not officially count as debt under EU rules.

Goldman Sachs was the most heavily involved of a dozen Wall Street banks, so much so that *The Guardian* reports that its chief operating officer has visited Athens twice since November to pitch debt products, and has met Papandreou.

Now the same bankers, the EU and Greek capitalists who connived at piling up the debt are demanding that the Greek government must prosecute a war on Greek workers and pensioners. If it does not, then its bonds will not find buyers, and the government will not be able to pay its debts.

The stakes are international. A failure by the Greek government could threaten the credibility of the euro and other currencies.

As a British paper, *The Telegraph*, said: "The PIGS are old hat. The new acronym on trading floors for possible dominoes if Greece should fall is STUPID (Spain, Turkey, UK, Portugal, Italy, Dubai)."

Politicians may hope that the stabilisation (austerity) plan agreed between the EU and the Greek government will stem the immediate crisis.

But increasingly people are nursing a different kind of hope—that resistance in Greece can spread to show a way out of the crisis where the rich pay.

# Obama sides with banks and big business

By Carl Taylor

AMERICANS ARE losing faith in Barack Obama. His election promises to sweep aside the Republican legacy of financial deregulation and privatisation with social reforms and market controls have come to nothing. Life on “Main Street” is harder now under Obama than it ever was under George Bush.

Gary Langer, director of polling at *ABC News*, describes a “seething economic discontent and doubt about President Obama’s performance.” In recent months, Obama’s approval rating has fallen to 44 per cent.

The Democrats have only themselves to blame for the souring mood of voters.

Official unemployment stands at 10.2 per cent. Actual unemployment may stand as high as 20 per cent, as many long-term unemployed are not included in official statistics.

*The New York Times* reported in 2009 that, “Despite soaring unemployment and the worst economic crisis in decades, 18 states cut their welfare rolls last year, and nationally the number of people receiving cash assistance remained at or near the lowest in more than 40 years.”

Home evictions have, in Obama’s own words, “not topped out yet.” Three-and-a-half million Americans have become homeless since the recession hit.

Even basic necessities are now out of reach for many families. The US Department of Agriculture presented results of a 2009 study showing 17 million American households (or 36.2 million people) had difficulty obtaining enough food to meet basic nutritional needs.

## Business as usual

In 2009, as home evictions and job layoffs spiraled upwards, Obama asserted that Washington would no longer bend to the whims of “powerful lobbyists and



Obama has bailed out the banks at the cost of ordinary people. His popularity in the US is in steep decline

the wealthiest few.” Many of his liberal supporters anticipated a shift away from the free-market ideology that had inflicted social ruin on millions of working Americans.

Instead, Obama extended the pro-market policies of George Bush.

Between them, Bush and Obama doled out over one trillion dollars in no-strings-attached corporate bailout packages through their Troubled Asset Relief Program.

The intention was not to secure jobs, but to encourage “lean production” through layoffs and wage cuts. This was an effort to prevent ailing industries, like the automotive industry, from disappearing altogether.

Similarly, Obama’s planned healthcare reforms sit firmly within the interests of “the wealthiest few.” Government-run healthcare is not on the agenda. His proposal is to expand the multi-billion dollar health insurance industry. Dr. Andy Coates, a member of Physicians for a National Health Program, summed up the plan:

“In exchange for accepting some new regulation, the insurance industry will get the

government to coerce [30 million uninsured Americans] into buying their product. Because working people don’t make enough money to buy the product, tax money will be used to subsidize the private insurance premiums.”

## “Heads I win, tails I get bailed out”

After President Obama used hundreds of billions of dollars in taxpayer funds to bail out insolvent banks, it was widely expected that strong regulation would be imposed on the industry. This was supposed to bring an end to the “casino mentality” on Wall Street.

In an article entitled “A Year Later, Little Change on Wall Street”, *The New York Times* reported, “banks still sell and trade unregulated derivatives, despite their role in last fall’s chaos. Radical changes like pay caps or restrictions on bank size face overwhelming resistance.” They went on to say that, “regulators and lawmakers have spent most of the last year trying to save the financial industry, rather than transform it.”

So confident are the Wall Street speculators that Obama will not interfere in their affairs that

some are already planning investment schemes disturbingly similar to the sub-prime mortgage securities that precipitated the financial meltdown in 2007.

Jenny Anderson of *The New York Times* explained:

“The bankers plan to buy ‘life settlements’, life insurance policies that ill and elderly people sell for cash— \$400,000 for a \$1 million policy, say, depending on the life expectancy of the insured person. Then they plan to ‘securitize’ these policies, in Wall Street jargon, by packaging hundreds or thousands together into bonds. They will then resell those bonds to investors, like big pension funds, who will receive the payouts when people with the insurance die.”

Obama’s election was seen by many liberals as a once-in-a-generation chance to reform an economy characterised by corruption and corporate self-interest. Instead, Obama and the Democrats have seized the opportunity to pitch themselves, over the discredited Republicans, as the party to run the economy in the interests of the Wall Street players who reaped profits galore in the neo-liberal era.

# HOW AFGHANISTAN DROVE OUT THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 they thought they were in for an easy victory. But they underestimated the power of the resistance, writes **Dave Crouch**

IN THE early 1990s a common sight in the Moscow metro was young men in military uniform begging for money. They had no legs. These were some of the victims of Russia's disastrous occupation of Afghanistan.

It began on Christmas Eve 1979 and finished when the last Soviet troops retreated into Uzbekistan just over nine years later.

At a conservative estimate more than 15,000 Soviet troops died in the war. They killed half a million Afghans, maimed many more, and turned millions into refugees.

The Soviet Union threw its bombers, napalm, tanks, landmines and helicopters at the Afghan guerilla army, the Mujahadeen, but was still forced out.

Its defeat marked the beginning of the end of the USSR's military power and allowed mass national movements to pull the empire apart.

The Russian defeat in Afghanistan has haunted US and British military leaders. As a US army major wrote in 2005, "Whatever we decide to do, we must not follow the bear into those woods."

But 20 years after the Soviet pullout, the size of the NATO contingent in Afghanistan has grown to equal the number of Russian troops. Does the same fate await them?

Western leaders argue that their war is different to that of the Russians—that US and NATO forces have significant local support among those opposed to the Taliban.

But the Russians also had a puppet government that gave a civilian face to their brutal invasion.

And just like the US, Russia first entered Afghanistan with a

small force and limited aims, and became embroiled in a conflict that spiralled beyond their control.

The Russians stepped in to prop up an unpopular Communist government that had seized power 18 months before.

The government was on the verge of collapse—a situation that threatened to bring a wave of Islamic resistance in the southern republics of the USSR.

Russian special forces installed their puppet Babrak Karmal as president. They occupied the main cities and set about training an Afghan army to keep control.

The Russians already had a presence in Afghanistan—which they thought gave them an advantage.

They had enjoyed extensive trade with the country since the 1930s, while Soviet military and economic advisers had been a constant feature since the 1950s. They had built most of the country's roads.

Yet resistance to the Soviet invasion flared immediately.

On the night of 23 February 1980, almost the entire population of Kabul protested against the arrival of Soviet troops by climbing onto the rooftops and chanting, "God is great". Soon the Soviets found themselves facing a people in revolt.

Soviet generals pleaded for more troops. The head of the army, Nikolai Ogarkov, said the planned ceiling on troops numbers of 115,000 was "reckless"—he wanted five times as many. But he was denied.

Instead the Russians believed massive firepower would win the war. They brought the entire terrifying repertoire of an industrial

superpower's military technology to bear on the resistance.

But it didn't work. Outside the cities the Soviet troops were in constant danger and exposed to effective attacks by the highly mobile guerrilla resistance fighters.

## Provoke

Soviet armoured columns, defended by aircraft, would venture out into the countryside to destroy resistance strongholds—in the process inflicting huge damage on the civilian population and their crops.

This in turn would provoke more Afghans to support the resistance.

During an offensive in 1984, for example, the Soviets destroyed all the suburbs and villages within 20km to the west of the city of Herat.

Having cleared the area of Mujahadeen, they withdrew, and the resistance soon returned.

---

**Having cleared the area of Mujahadeen, they withdrew, and the resistance soon returned. This mirrors what the US and British troops are doing today.**

---

This mirrors what the US and British troops are doing today. The troops refer to it as "mowing the lawn"—as fast as you kill the resistance, it grows back up again.

Talk of "winning hearts and minds" is a sham. Last year general Stanley McChrystal, the commander of US and other NATO forces in Afghanistan, issued a set of guidelines to his troops that admitted "we sow the seeds of our own demise" by killing civilians, whose relatives then take up arms.

Outside their bases, occupation troops are vulnerable. Every month hundreds of cargo trucks are destroyed by the Taliban as they try to bring in supplies by road.

Like the US today, the Soviets tried to create an army of Afghans to do the fighting for them. It was some 150,000 strong.

But the Afghans didn't trust the Soviets. They felt that they were ordered to do the most dangerous fighting and were given inferior equipment and training. Russian racism towards them fuelled the animosity.

As a result there was considerable sympathy for the resistance within the Afghan army, which often fed valuable intelligence to the Mujahadeen.

The Soviet army consisted of conscripts who lived in dreadful circumstances.

During the nine years of occupation, some 650,000 Russians saw active service. Of those, nearly three-quarters were wounded or incapacitated by serious illness such as hepatitis, dysentery, malaria or typhus.

It was a prize for soldiers to seize sleeping bags or boots from the resistance, because their own were so shoddy. They were told



**An abandoned Russian tank in Afghanistan—despite their military might Afghan resistance drove them from the country**

they were fighting for high ideals against an evil enemy, but they soon discovered they were up against poor, proud farmers who were simply defending their way of life.

As a result, morale in the army was abysmal. Drug and alcohol abuse were rife, rape and violent crime were common.

Officers saw serving in Afghanistan as a poisoned chalice—victory was impossible, and they knew they would be blamed for the inevitable defeat.

By 1983 the Soviet press had only reported six Russian casualties—the actual figure was over 6000 dead and 10,000 wounded.

But the huge number of conscripts in the Soviet army meant that despite the media blackout the word began to spread that young men were being sent to die in a brutal, meaningless war.

Families took desperate measures to prevent their sons being

sent to fight.

US military writers looking back on the Soviet defeat all agree that the Russians lost the will to win.

This is what they call the “paradox of asymmetric conflict”.

It is a “paradox” because on the face of it a military super-power should always defeat an impoverished enemy. But in reality this is not the case.

### **Battle**

The war was “asymmetric” because it meant much less to the Russian population than it did to the Afghans, for whom it was a matter of life or death—a total war.

The same is true of the Americans today. As a result, the Afghans are much less likely to lose faith in their battle than are the British or US.

The methods that the technologically inferior guerilla

resistance fighters were forced to employ also meant that they never presented themselves for set piece battles with the occupiers. Instead they wear them down with ambushes and home-made bombs.

And for the Soviet government in the 1980s other considerations became more important.

The Russian economy was collapsing and there was international outcry over what they were doing in Afghanistan.

At home there was dangerous disillusionment with the Soviet system. The political and economic costs of staying in Afghanistan became too high.

Some argue that US support for the Mujahadeen was a crucial factor in Russia’s defeat.

They point to the provision of advanced Stinger anti-aircraft rockets in 1986 as a turning point in the war.

But even before the resistance was supplied with these missiles,

it had shot down or destroyed hundreds of helicopters and tanks.

One of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s first moves in 1985 was to find out from his generals if the war could be won—they told him no. The Soviet defeat was about politics, not technology.

Afghans have repeatedly proven themselves to be fierce fighters, particularly when confronting invaders. They repeatedly defeated the British during the 19th century when Britain was the world’s dominant military power.

They routed the Soviets during the 1980s when the Soviet Union was the world’s second most dominant military power.

As the first US bombs were falling on Afghanistan after 9/11, a CIA chief warned, “The US must proceed with caution—or end up on the ash heap of Afghan history.”

**Socialist Worker UK**

# Obama's surge brings more horror to Afghanistan



Obama is sinking more and more resources into an unwinnable war in Afghanistan

By Mark Gillespie

NATO BEGAN a massive new offensive in Afghanistan in February when 15,000 troops began an assault on the southern provincial town of Marjah. Operation Mosharak is the biggest offensive since the 2001 and after two weeks of heavy fighting NATO commanders were claiming victory.

As *Solidarity* goes to press, NATO commanders are planning an assault on Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city.

Operation Mosharak and the coming assault on Kandahar are an integral part of Obama's "surge" strategy for dealing with the insurgency. Obama has effectively doubled the number of US troops in Afghanistan since coming to office, while his NATO allies have committed an extra 10,000 troops.

The air war, too, has escalated dramatically. The number of strikes between January and October last year jumped by 39 per cent while the number of bombs dropped per month more than quadrupled.

Meanwhile the cost has

climbed from \$37 billion in 2007 to over \$100 billion this year. The Afghan war is now Obama's war.

All of the extra troops and resources thrown at Afghanistan have done nothing to break the insurgency or bring peace. More civilians were killed last year (2412) than any other year, while many more had their lives shattered. NATO's recent assault on Marjah forced over 10,000 refugees to flee to the provincial capital Lashkargah, while the number of Afghan refugees fleeing the north to Tajikistan is rising.

## Resistance

Last year, too, was the worst for NATO casualties (over 500), but still the insurgency gets stronger. In November the Taliban had a "permanent presence" across 80 percent of Afghanistan—up from 72 percent on the year before.

A number of factors are driving the insurgency. First and foremost is the backing the NATO powers give to the corrupt Karzai government. It is widely acknowledged that he and his warlord allies stole last year's presiden-

tial election using thuggery and "widespread fraud".

Secondly the occupying powers have failed to improve people's lives. Sixty per cent of Afghans live on less than one dollar a day and millions of refugees wallowing in Iran and Pakistan can see no reason to return.

Civilian casualties from NATO air strikes, too, don't help. More than 359 died last year—the worst year yet. The more firepower Obama throws at Afghanistan the more people suffer. Already NATO has had to apologise on three separate occasions this year for air strikes that wiped out civilians.

Obama's war is becoming increasingly unpopular at home. The farcical Afghan presidential elections—combined with rising US casualties—saw support fall to an all time low of just 39 per cent. While support has since recovered, a majority still oppose the war.

In December Obama made a vague promise to start withdrawing troops in July 2011. This was an attempt to reassure the public the war wasn't endless. The very next day, however, General Stan-

ley McChrystal was saying the timetable wasn't "absolute".

Internationalising the conflict is another attempt to reassure the public. Unlike Bush, Obama consults his allies and asks them to carry more of the load. The allies, however, aren't falling over themselves to commit more troops. They too face growing public scepticism. It was public opposition to the war that forced the recent collapse of the Dutch government and the end of their troop commitment to Afghanistan.

The London Conference on Afghanistan—convened by the British government in January—was another attempt to deal with public unease.

Needing to look decisive the leading powers came up with a carrot and stick approach to "degrade" (not defeat) the Taliban. The stick was the deployment of extra troops to retake the country "province by province", while the carrot was the establishment of a trust fund to bribe sections of the Taliban to change sides. Once the provinces are retaken, the plan is to hand over security to a vastly expanded Afghan army, while a "civilian surge" would provide better governance.

These plans are unlikely to succeed. Firstly, the more firepower Obama commits, the more mayhem he causes, turning people against the occupation. Secondly, the Karzai government has no legitimacy. The NATO powers back him, however, because there is no credible alternative.

Thirdly, the Afghan security forces are in no shape to take over security. Ninety per cent of the army recruits are illiterate and only join out of financial desperation, while drug addiction and corruption are serious problems in the police force. Finally, the Taliban can see the occupation has problems and will more than likely bide their time. Meanwhile the instability in Afghanistan spreads across the border into Pakistan. Obama's war is fast becoming Obama's crisis.

# CORPORATIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

We can't trust the future of our planet to big business, argues Amy Thomas

ON THE surface, it seems corporations have changed their attitude to climate change. In 2000, companies like BP, Shell, Dupont and Morgan Stanley defected from the denialist organisation they'd set up in 1989, the Global Climate Coalition, and formed a new group—the Partnership for Climate Action. They announced their intentions to take “concrete steps to assess opportunities for emissions reductions”.

BP was one of the first to take a “concrete step”, changing their name from British Petroleum to “Beyond Petroleum” and including a sunflower in their logo.

Some environmentalists have embraced corporations' emerging climate consciousness. The strategy of Melbourne's Climate Emergency Network includes winning over “elites”—inviting them to the launch of Safe Climate Australia. Since then, Safe Climate Australia has accepted funding from Mercedes Benz and NAB among others, and youth climate conference PowerShift took \$5000 from Westpac, the single largest shareholder in BHP Billiton.

The shift in corporate attitudes began soon after the anti-capitalist protests in Seattle in 1999. Public critiques of corporate profiteering had becoming more mainstream. Books like Naomi Klein's *No Logo* sold in the millions. This, plus the Kyoto Protocol of 1998 and the 2001 UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's



The world's most polluting companies are trying to “green” their image

Third Assessment Report, helped to shift corporations away from a strategy of vigorous denialism. The millions previously spent attempting to discredit climate science was re-directed to consultants who promised to “green” corporate images.

But dig a little below the surface and the problem of looking for allies in the corporate world becomes clear. The new corporate interest in a green image is a strategy to hijack climate change concern—and turn it into something compatible with corporate

interests.

There is no doubt that some industry leaders regard climate change as a real problem. Some businesses will be adversely affected by it—through higher insurance premiums, higher crop prices and the loss of “fixed capital” (infrastructure).

But genuine concern is not the main motivator—primarily corporations are using climate change for their benefit. They have found new ways of profiteering through market schemes and false “solutions”, and are deflect-

ing blame for climate change away from corporations and states and back onto consumers and the poor. Even those concerned about climate change have worked to implement “solutions” that pose no challenge to business-as-usual.

## Greening their image

A survey by accounting firm Accenture in October 2007 showed that 81 per cent of consumers thought climate change would directly affect their lives—and 89 per cent of those indicated they would switch to energy providers offering products that emitted less carbon. Sixty four per cent said they would be willing to pay a higher price.

The book *Essential Managers: Green Business*, published in 2008, advises: “Businesses that convince customers that the money they spend will not be used to damage the planet will find that consumers respond well.”

It advises corporations to “consider working in partnership with an NGO or charity” because “the public trust these organisations so will be more likely to believe your claims”.

Most multinational corporations are only too willing to advertise their “green” credentials. In 2008 the oil giant Shell attempted to sell a vastly polluting oil project in Canada with an advertisement that claimed “we invest today's profits in tomorrow's solutions... continued investment in technology is one of the

key ways we are able to address this challenge, and continue to secure a profitable and sustainable future.” Shell explained it was harnessing its technical expertise “to unlock the potential of the vast Canadian oil sands deposits”.

The Advertising Standards Authority fined Shell, stating the obvious—that “oil sand developments had considerable social and economic impacts on water conservation, greenhouse gas emissions, land disturbance and waste management” and that Shell could not reasonably call them “sustainable”.

Shell, however, seems little dissuaded by efforts to keep tabs on their greenwash. They had already been fined in 2007 by both UK and Dutch advertising authorities for claiming in a European advertisement that they used all their waste CO<sub>2</sub> to “grow flowers”.

Other oil companies follow a similar tack. BP, which emitted 1.3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere in 2007, advertises its strategy for an “energy mix”. They point to their purchase of Solarex—the world’s largest manufacturer of solar panels—and the setting up of a renewable energy arm. But the \$45 million spent on Solarex is a quarter of what it spent revamping its green image in 2005.

Tesco’s chief executive gave the game away in an article designed to combat accusations that Tesco was involved in greenwash: “the truth is that Tesco has been getting greener for years... There are sound commercial reasons for doing so. We’d be doing many of these things even if we had no concern for the environment at all.”

Green PR helps to generate profits—and quell criticisms. Green consultancy companies like Ecos have found there are huge profits to be made in manufacturing greenwash. They were employed by BHP to engage with environmentalists and community organisations opposed to the Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea to “turn a crisis into a dialogue”. The environmental destruction

caused by the mine is uncontested—even the World Bank, hardly a radical organisation, called for its closure because it polluted local rivers.

Ecos helped BHP lobby the PNG government for legislation that protects it from any legal action taken after its withdrawal from the mine—like that of landowners who wanted to sue BHP for breach of its 1996 promise not to continue to pollute the rivers.

Ecos were also employed to help Cotton Australia counter a campaign to ban the poisonous use of Endosulfan, a pesticide which is toxic to humans, animals, birds, fish, plants and insects.

Key environment groups were signed on to provide advice and Cotton Australia talked of the “positive marketing and branding of Australian cotton internationally”—while they continued to lobby against water restrictions and use Endosulfan until it was banned in 2001. Past Ecos employees include former (and current) environmentalists, like Rick Gilding, former head of Greenpeace International, and Blair Palese, current CEO of 350.org Australia.

### Consumer power?

Another popular element of corporate strategy is to talk about “empowering” consumers to make decisions about green products.

A Climate Change Summit sponsored by Shell in the UK chose the slogan “it’s the consumer, stupid”. Heather Rogers has traced the history of business-led campaigns that set out to create the idea that individuals are the primary source of pollution: “In the 1950s, the group Keep America Beautiful was formed by industry to pre-empt legal restrictions on disposable goods, namely packaging. Through an elaborate public relations campaign the organisation generated a popular narrative about garbage that shifted the responsibility from industry to the individual... its goal was to distract people from questioning the viability of an increasingly trash-reliant marketplace.”

UK companies have adopted

this approach to climate change with “carbon labelling”. Individual consumers have negligible market power and influence. But the delegation of responsibility works to keep the heat off business.

Schemes that encourage consumers to purchase green energy by paying extra on their energy bill—called GreenPower in Australia—are also popular. Some climate change campaign groups even advertise GreenPower on their web site and run campaigns promoting it. But the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has admitted that it cannot definitely say whether GreenPower is genuinely reducing emissions or increasing the use of renewable energy.

Australian consumer group Choice banned a GreenPower company called GreenSwitch in 2008 for taking money from customers to buy GreenPower certificates, but failing to buy all the certificates required.

### Greenhouse mafia

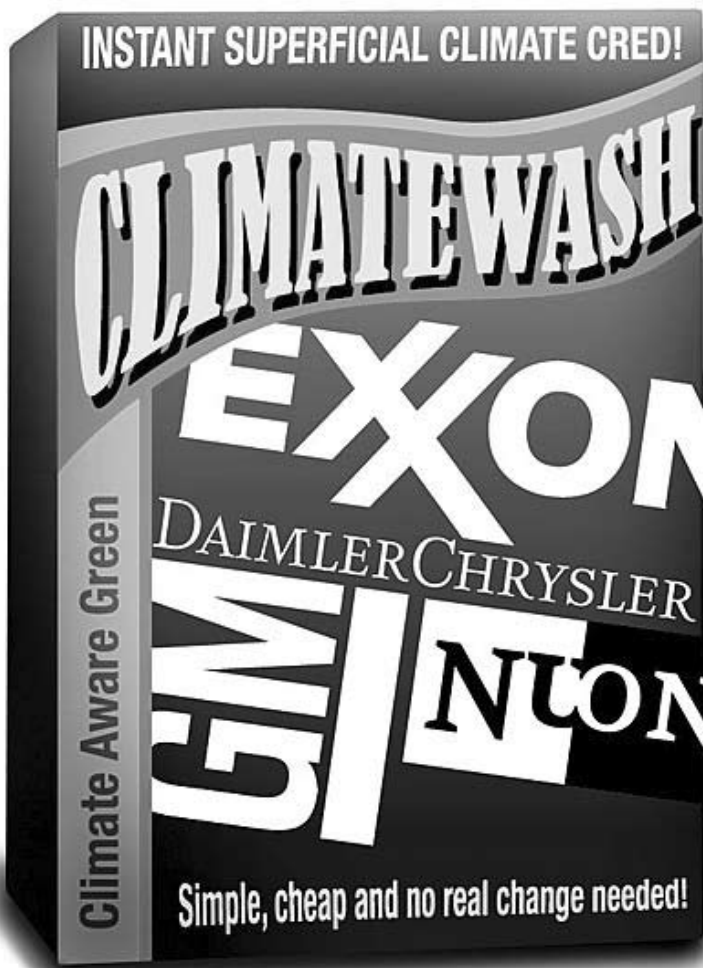
“Greenwash” by business is not confined simply to reworking the image of their products—but to the kind of “solutions” that corporations lobby for with governments and during international negotiations.

Guy Pearce has described in his essay *Quarry Vision* how the “greenhouse mafia”—an array of fossil fuel, electricity, mining and refining industry leaders—monopolise climate change policy-making in Australia. Ross Garnaut, the free market economist employed by the Rudd government to undertake its climate change Green Paper, is himself chairman of Lihir Gold Limited and director of Ok Tedi Gold Mine.

Lobbyists and their backers consistently seek “solutions” to climate change within the framework of business-as-usual, either by entrenching current practices or by opening new markets for commodification and exploitation.

At Copenhagen, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development promoted a strategy of “self-regulation”—and opposed legally binding environment and

.....  
**“Greenwash” by business is not confined to advertising. It also extends to the kind of “solutions” that corporations lobby for with governments and during international negotiations**



social standards for corporate activities. They advocated a global carbon market, agrofuels, nuclear energy and “clean coal”.

Emissions trading is central to most states’ climate change strategy, Kevin Rudd’s Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) being a prime example. Well-funded, high emissions businesses can buy the “right to pollute” on the permits markets.

As Clive Spash documents in *The Brave New World of Carbon Trading*, emissions trading encourages information distortion and cheating because companies themselves supply figures. Bigger companies lobby for better deals and free permits—compensation in Rudd’s CPRS amounts to something near \$24 billion.

Some industries make windfall profits from this—the US nuclear industry is expecting over \$1 billion in free permits from Obama’s climate bill. The EU’s emissions scheme crashed

because of an over-allocation of permits—but not before one corporation made enough off trading and selling in the carbon market to open a coal-fired power station. A recent report by Point Carbon estimated the global carbon market would be worth US\$170 billion by 2010.

Carbon “offset” projects are also key to corporate strategy, because they allow business to “outsource” the cost of reducing emissions by supposedly reducing them overseas, and continuing to pollute as usual at home.

Both Rudd and Obama’s climate schemes allow companies to meet their entire carbon targets through offsets. It doesn’t take a genius to realise that investing in “tree plantation” overseas does nothing if fossil fuel extraction continues—in fact, it leads to a total adding of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Trees die and burn down.

This “loophole” in offset

schemes gained some publicity when a forest sponsored by band Coldplay, designed to offset their album, *A Rush of Blood to the Head*, burnt down. Coldplay’s forest was also typical of offset schemes for another reason—those employed to tend to the trees never got paid.

These kinds of “solutions” are the end result of strategies like that of BP to “focus efforts on influencing policy and regulation... encouraging market mechanisms.” While NGOs were blocked from entering the Copenhagen conference venue—some, like Friends of the Earth International, were outright banned—corporate lobbyists remained inside.

### Profit and competition

It’s obvious to any one who cares to look that the “green” strategies of corporations are a sham. Attempts by corporations—and by the states that represent them—to deal with climate change are an attempt to combine two contradictory imperatives.

To avoid instability, climate chaos does need to be mitigated. Some business leaders see this. But they can’t break out of the pressure to consistently maximise profitability and out compete rivals.

Cutting emissions means shutting down coal-fired power stations. It means massive investment into infrastructure like vast large-scale solar thermal plants and domestic high-speed trains.

This kind of investment is not immediately profitable. The amount of investment that is needed would take decades to pay off.

Beyond Zero Emissions has estimated Australia’s energy transition would cost approximately \$40 billion a year for ten years. The effect of the economic crisis means corporations are even less likely than before to make these investments. States originally funded the expensive infrastructure for coal-fired power (though much of it has since been sold off to corporations to profit from).

The reality of constant competition compels capitalists to always be seeking more ways

to accumulate profit. This is a requirement of business. Firms need to consistently reinvest in the latest technology and commodities to keep up with competitors. A firm that treats its workers like human beings and tries to produce goods ethically will quickly go bust. As Marx said, the mantra of the capitalist is: “Accumulate, accumulate, that is both Moses and the prophets!”

Major corporations are aligned against real action because no firm or nation wants to risk its profitability and status in the world system. In short, human and environmental need is always secondary to the concern to profit. This is why leaders like Rudd look to deflect blame for action onto other economies and claim that cannot act until China and India take the lead.

The global economy is powered by fossil fuels. Those countries whose economies are most wedded to carbon-intensive production—those who would find it most expensive to break out of this pattern—are the most determined against real solutions. The richest corporation in Australia is by far BHP Billiton, worth \$59.5 billion in 2008, closely followed by Wesfarmers and Caltex.

Globally, most of the fossil fuel giants have their base in the United States. Shell, ExxonMobil, BP and Chevron are all based there and are all in the top ten of the richest corporations in the world. They make their money digging up fossil fuels and building infrastructure to use it.

The result of leaving the planet in their hands is easy to see. Emissions are rising 3 per cent each year, the highest ever in human history.

NASA climate scientist James Hansen estimates that if we continue to burn fossil fuel at this rate, the earth will head to an ice-free condition, with sea levels 75 metres higher than today. The arrogance of the corporations is astonishing—and deadly. We need strategies for action that work to take the power out of their hands—and a movement that’s willing to do so.

# GANDHI'S SALT MARCH AND THE MYTH OF NON-VIOLENCE

Gandhi's celebrated strategy of non-violent protest was not responsible for winning Indian independence, and actually held back the struggle, explains **Lucy Honan**

AS THE police gathered forces and began violently attacking protesters at the Copenhagen Climate Summit, activists on the streets argued in meetings over how violent or non-violent their defence of themselves and the environment could be.

Author and anti-capitalist activist Naomi Klein pleaded with a crowd to refrain from “escalating” the tense situation: “We can’t control the cops but we can control our own behaviour. Anybody who escalates is not with us.” Her moral appeal was met with both cheers and “shames”.

This will be a familiar scene to left wing activists the world over. At high points in the campaigns, climate camps, education rallies and anti-war actions this very debate is regularly rehearsed. Is insisting on the right to protest itself violent? How, when we have the opportunity, do we actually confront oppressive forces?

For many activists, Klein’s non-violent line seems to be a principled, proven strategy of collectively exposing hypocrisy and injustice. Gandhi’s non-violent independence movement in India, and Martin Luther King’s non-violent desegregation movement in the US appear to be the historical proofs for the strategy.

On the 70th anniversary of Gandhi’s famous Salt March it is worth looking at the real history of the independence movement and investigating just how sound is the non-violent strategy, and where the non-violent logic will take a movement.

On the eve of Gandhi’s Salt March in 1930 India was, and had been, the most valuable of all Britain’s colonies since its conquest in the late 18th century.

The East India Company and

then Britain itself used India and Indian troops to conquer more East Asian territory. They created monopolies and taxes on necessities like salt to finance their military activities and to send profits home.

And finally, in order to truly bleed India (as Lord Salisbury, Secretary of State for India put it in 1875) Britain imposed an agricultural cash economy that resulted in mass dispossession, enormous profits for British traders and a steep drop in the standard of living for most Indians.

Gandhi was a vocal opponent of British rule in India, and saw the importance of a united Indian national independence movement to oust the imperial force. To this end, in March 1930 Gandhi led a march of 78 Satyagrahis (activists trained in Gandhi’s philosophy of non-violence) to the coastal town of Dandi.

In an act of civil disobedience, Gandhi broke the law that prohibited individuals making their own salt and in doing so evaded the British monopoly and tax on salt. He encouraged others to do the same in a mass “Salt Satyagraha”.

The image of a humbly clad Gandhi holding a fistful of muddy salt up after the 23 day Salt March and declaring to a crowd and the world media, “With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire,” inspired hundreds of thousands of Indians then, and many people world wide today, to confront oppression.

Yet Gandhi called off the mass movement that grew out of the Salt Satyagraha well before it could bring India closer to independence.

Two questions arise out of the Salt Satyagraha: What about Gandhi’s strategy was so success-

---

**Gandhi called off the mass movement that grew out of the Salt Satyagraha well before it could bring India closer to Independence**

---

ful for mobilising masses for the independence movement? And why did Gandhi call off the movement at its height?

In the first place, Gandhi could effectively mobilise the masses because, quite outside of the non-violent strategy, he gave expression to an already existing outrage with British rule.

During the 19th century the hated monopolies, land taxes and renting systems had dispossessed large numbers of peasants. England flooded the Indian markets with factory goods, so handicraft industries were crushed. The dispossessed peasants and unemployed weavers and spinners became exploited agricultural day labourers, producing cotton, food grains and indigo for foreign markets. The surplus that peasants stored in case of bad crops, droughts or floods had to be sold to pay new taxes and rent.

The result was more frequent and more widespread famines. Gandhi’s declarations about the injustice of British rule and insistence that the British “had a policy of heartless exploitation of India... to be persisted at any cost” struck a chord with the workers and peasants who suffered under British rule.

Gandhi was not the first to demand political and economic justice for Indians, but he was the first to engage the vast majority of the population, the peasants and to some extent the workers, in the struggle to achieve it.

The Indian National Congress Party, made up of upper class Indian men, was formed to push for representation within colonial rule, the British Raj, although eventually it demanded outright independence.

However, the Congress



**Gandhi leading the famous Salt March in 1930**

strategy reflected its membership. The moderate wing lobbied and negotiated with the British representatives, while the more radical nationalists argued that a brave and dedicated minority could win a military victory on behalf of the masses.

Neither of these elitist strategies was successful in convincing or outwitting Britain, and Congress was as eager to recruit Gandhi to their ranks as peasants and workers were to participate in their own liberation.

After thousands were inspired to participate in the independence movement by breaking the salt laws, peasants and workers extended the strategy of defiance beyond making their own salt. Forest laws were defied, unfair taxes and rents were evaded and peasants physically defended their property from police seizure. When Gandhi was arrested in

May 1930 there were strikes and mass demonstrations in Maharashtra which forced the police off the streets.

In Sholapur workers replaced police with their own administration for a week. In Peshawar Hindu troops were ordered to fire on a crowd of Muslim demonstrators but two platoons broke ranks and handed their weapons over to the demonstrators.

British businessmen, alarmed by the uprising, began supporting demands for at least semi-autonomous self-government for India.

For almost a year, the movement of millions showed no signs of flagging but Gandhi called off the campaign when he was released from prison in early 1931.

He claimed that the participants were becoming dangerous, dishonorable and uncontrollable. Even the conservative members of Congress were devastated that the

movement was cut off before any real gains had been made. Gandhi signed an agreement with Viceroy Irwin without winning a single one of the original demands of the Salt March. Even the salt law remained intact.

At face value, it would seem that it was Gandhi's very strict ideal of a completely non-violent campaign that prompted him to quell the movement—but this is far from the truth. His non-violence was actually part of a political strategy to displace the British rather than overthrow them.

Gandhi's response to the mutinous Hindu troops who fraternized with Peshawar demonstrators instead of firing on them reveals that Gandhi's non-violent principles had a peculiar flexibility.

Far from congratulating the troops who mutinied as a triumph

of non-violence, Gandhi condemned the soldiers for failing to fire, saying:

“A soldier who disobeys an order to fire breaks that oath which he has taken and renders himself guilty of criminal disobedience. I cannot ask officials and soldiers to disobey; for when I am in power I shall in all likelihood make use of those same officials, and those same soldiers. If I taught them to disobey I should be afraid that they might do the same when I am in power.”

In this comment to a French journalist Gandhi revealed that the seeming idealism of non-violence actually cloaked an anxious reformism.

Gandhi wanted to preserve a placid working class and the forces to control it for when the British left. He took great pains to reassure the Indian elite that political strikes and threats to private property were not his agenda: “We want no political strikes... We seek not to destroy capital and capitalists, but to regulate relations between capital and labour,” he had said in 1918.

In 1921 he assured the landlords, “I shall be no party to dispossessing propertied classes of their private property without just cause.”

Gandhi reigned in the Salt Satyagraha before it won anything. The physical resistance that workers put up to defend picket lines and that peasants used to defend their land represented worker and peasant power that threatened to go beyond Gandhi’s strategy of forcing the British to negotiate.

Gandhi would not embrace the power that workers in particular had to defend themselves and to throw out the British. Nor was he committed to supporting their struggle to throw off the whole capitalist class.

As a result, the non-violence he demanded meant those he mobilised were left completely vulnerable to the brutal force of the British Raj. Where Gandhi had effectively muzzled activists, horrific scenes of violence were inevitable.

In May 1930, at a “non-violent” raid on a salt works in Gujarat the Satyagrahis were told under no uncertain terms that they were not to resist the soldiers.

A United Press reporter observed the results: “They went down like ten-pins. From where I stood I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls... Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies.”

Neither the quality nor the aim of worker or peasant violence was in any way equivalent to the violence that the British Raj had inflicted on them.

Not only were the British prepared to violently suppress the Independence movement, they routinely beat workers to discipline them, “bagged natives” on hunting trips and introduced systemic poverty, debt and hunger as part of their strategy of “bleeding India”.

In contrast to both the relentless violence of the British, and the completely disarmed and largely ineffective Satyagrahis, grew the kernel of a strong workers’ movement.

The violence that this group used was to defend themselves and to fight for liberation.

### **Bombay mutiny**

The Bombay naval mutiny in 1946 offers an example of the power that a united working class could exercise.

The resistance began as a strike to protest conditions of naval ratings, but quickly grew into a broader mutiny against the British rule in India. Popular support for the mutiny poured forth, as first the workers of Bombay held marches and general strikes. Workers in other cities followed suit. The Royal Indian air force, local police forces, and parts of the British Indian army joined the strike.

The mutineers and strikers marched with the flags of the Muslim league, Congress and

Communist Party tied together to symbolise national unity and a rejection of communal violence.

The British government was panic-stricken. They sent whatever police and soldiers they could muster to quell the uprisings. No longer able to rely on Indian naval forces they resorted to Scottish naval regiments to put down the spreading naval mutiny. The working class fought back to defend the growing movement with guns, rocks and knives.

Despite the magnificent display of unity and strength and its potential to force the British out, Gandhi condemned the militant activity.

Both Congress and the Muslim League denounced the mutineers and strikers. The demobilization of this unified struggle paved the way for the bloodbath that was to come when Indian independence led not to a unified state but to ethnic cleansing of Muslims and the creation of Pakistan.

When India eventually achieved independence in 1947, the ramifications of failing to use the strength of the working class to end imperialist control became clear. Britain negotiated the terms

of independence with the local elite, the bourgeoisie of Congress and the Muslim League.

In the absence of a united class struggle, the divide and rule tactics that the British had long used to weaken Indian resistance flourished. Hindu-Muslim violence and antagonism peaked. Congress agreed to partition off Pakistan because the alternative of a unified Muslim-Hindu working class was a threat to its own power as the new rulers of India.

The result was the gruesome violence of partition and two capitalist states, both with virtually unchanged bureaucracies and repressive police forces, both with exploitative ruling classes and neglected and impoverished labouring classes, with wars, nuclear weapons and communal violence.

The revolutionary potential of the united working class both appealed to and terrified Gandhi. His attempts to both mobilise and muzzle an anti-imperialist movement with non-violent philosophy sparked fierce mass movements, but also exposed Indian workers and peasants to the divisive, exploitative and physical violence of the ruling classes.

Despite the myth, non-violence did not win Indian independence.

Tragically, the lack of alternative political leadership in the independence struggle meant that the potential of the working class to end both the violence of British rule and that of the Indian elite that replaced it, went unrealised. The violence of the state was left intact.

Although it might seem a long way from Copenhagen to Gandhi and Indian Independence, there is an enduring lesson. Naomi Klein was perpetuating a myth at Copenhagen. There is no moral equivalence between the violence of the ruling class and its armies and police and the resistance of workers and protesters defending their rights.

Their violence leads to a perpetuation of a violent system. Our resistance has the potential to end it.

.....  
**The result was the gruesome violence of partition and two capitalist states, both with virtually unchanged bureaucracies and repressive police forces**

## Herron workers fight for fair redundancy offer

WORKERS AT Sigma's Herron pharmaceutical plant in Tennyson, Brisbane walked out on a week-long strike in February over their employer's unfair redundancy offer.

The plant is earmarked for closure. Herron's redundancy offer, of as little as two weeks pay per year of service, is less than what the company's other workers at Mansfield are entitled to. "They get four weeks pay per year of service at Mansfield. All we want is the same," one lab technician told *Solidarity*.

Herron bosses responded with hostility to the industrial action and locked out the striking NUW members for a further two days without pay.

One striker described the company's other heavy-handed attempts to break the strike: "The cops were called in by the company on a number of occasions. But [the police] just said they couldn't do anything. It's our legal right to do this."

Herron is feeling the heat after one striker was taken to hospital after being hit by a manager's car. Police again visited the site, this time to speak with management over the incident.

The company refuses to improve their offer or say when the redundancies will happen. The workers won't shift on their demand for fair redundancy pay.

The site's union delegate, described the resilience among the strikers: "We're staying strong.



Workers on the picket line at the Herron factory in Brisbane

[The company] can do what they want... we all know what we are trying to achieve."

The Tennyson strikers have recognised the wider significance of their struggle. "This is a platform for other [Sigma/Herron] workers around Australia. They'll be having EBA talks this year and the company will try to railroad them too," a picketing lab analyst explained.

"We've received messages of support from workers at the other sites, saying they are behind us," added another.

Other unionists have shown solidarity with the Herron strikers. Delivery drivers covered by the TWU have refused to cross the picket line.

Herron has shut down its nightshift operation due to the industrial action. Much of the factory's produce remains stuck in the warehouse. "The guys at the back gate are doing a great job stopping the trucks getting out," one worker explained.

The strikers called on their co-workers inside to join them on the picket line. "What those

guys inside need to remember is that if we win a pay rise or better redundancy, they get it too. We're fighting for them," said one striker.

Negotiation continues but Herron has not improved its offer. More industrial action looks likely.

A unified show of strength from all the workers at the Tennyson plant is needed to increase the pressure on the company to deliver the improved redundancy packages.

**Carl Taylor**

## Fair work decision undermines strike action at Star City

A PLANNED 24-hour strike at Sydney's Star City Casino during Chinese New Year was banned by a decision of Fair Work Australia. This is one of the busiest times of the year at the Casino and would have caused serious disruption.

Under Rudd's workplace laws, authorised periods of industrial action must be extended by a decision of the court 30 days after a successful ballot agreeing to

action. Although the Star City ballot had authorised both 24-hour and one-hour stoppages, the court found that because the union had not called a 24-hour strike within the 30-day period, it would have to rebalot if it wanted to strike for 24 hours.

The decision is another example of the restrictions against strike action under Rudd's Work-Choices-lite.

The union's plans to step up strike action from one hour stoppages to a full day strike was thrown into disarray by the decision. It means the campaign at Star City will be further drawn out, meaning a loss of momentum for the union and more time for management to prepare scabbing operations to make the strike ineffective.

It is another example which

shows that unions need to be able to defy the law to organise effective strike action. The union was holding another ballot for 24-hour and 48-hour strikes as *Solidarity* went to press.

Workers went on a one-hour stoppage for the eighth time in early March. Star City is standing by its appalling EBA offer, with plans to cut sick pay and offer just a 2 per cent pay rise in the first year.

### Woodside strike ends in draw but fines set scene for showdown

By Ian Rintoul

THE EIGHT-DAY strike over motelling at Woodside in Western Australia has ended in a draw. But the industrial battle isn't over by a long shot—not for Woodside, and not for the workers and unions hit by massive fines by Fair Work Australia.

The wildcat strike by Woodside workers was a shot in the arm for industrial militancy. They defied court orders and the urging of union officials to end the strike for eight days. A narrow vote accepted a deal which had guaranteed permanent accommodation for existing workers but has allowed Woodside to provide motelling accommodation for new fly-in fly-out workers.

The motelling issue however could blow up again as workers move between accommodation camps as new projects start up. The deal could mean that workers will lose their right to permanent accommodation when they move. At Gorgon, for example, the unions have signed off on a greenfields agreement which accepts motelling.

The issue of travel money is also looming as another battle. Under the existing agreement travel money is paid only for travel time over 20 minutes.

Mostly it is taking at least 40 minutes to get to work using company buses from the camps, but the company is saying because it should only take 20, it won't pay.

#### Union fines

The wildcat strike has rattled the Woodside bosses who are calling for stronger penalties to enforce court orders to return to work.

The government and other bosses are also worried that any wages break out and the militancy could spread to other sections of the workforce.

Another flash point could

come with the court action launched by Woodside and 13 other contractors against the 1668 striking workers who could face fines of up to \$22,000 for refusing to return to work.

Woodside also says it will sue the workers for millions in damages for lost production due to the strike.

Meanwhile, the CFMEU and AMWU have agreed to pay records fines of \$1.325 million in penalties for picketing John Holland during the West Gate Bridge dispute in Melbourne in April last year.

The Australian Building and Construction Commission took the unions to court for 52 breaches of the Building and Construction Industry Improvement Act.

Workplace relations Minister, Julia Gillard, says the settlement, "confirms the continuing need for a strong cop on the beat in the building and construction industry. It also confirms that anyone who breaks the law will feel its full force."

CFMEU member Ark Tribe also faces trial in Adelaide on June 15 for failing to attend a compulsory interrogation by the ABCC in 2008, and the possibility of six months jail if he is convicted.

Unions have promised an industrial campaign if Ark is sent to jail. But the need for a concerted industrial campaign not just for Ark, but to knock out Rudd's WorkChoices-lite industrial laws grows more urgent every day.

The unions can't just keep copping fines. In the 1960s the penal powers of the Arbitration Court were beaten by a organised union campaign of defiance. The Woodside strike shows that the power of strike action to defend workers' rights is still there to be mobilised.

What's needed is the political will to use it.

### Fiery mass meeting revives NSW TAFE campaign

By Mark Goudkamp

"THE BEST union meeting I've attended in years."

That was the response of many NSW TAFE teachers after a 3000-strong mass meeting filled and electrified the inside of Sydney Town Hall on February 11.

The 24-hour strike, held in defiance of orders and the threat of massive fines from the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (IRC), was a welcome antidote to the demoralisation that had taken hold among some NSW Teachers' Federation TAFE members after a year of short, locally-based stoppages and a hostile IRC decision.

As the meeting resolution read, "the NSW government has attacked the delivery of quality TAFE education and sought to undermine the working conditions of TAFE teachers by seeking to implement WorkChoices style changes to their working conditions."

These attacks included: a 20 per cent increase in workload in return for an average 1.5 per cent a year salary increase; an additional hour of face-to-face teaching each week; an additional five hours of attendance time; working overtime but not being paid for it for six months or more; being required to work anytime between 6am and 10pm, Monday to Saturday; and being required to teach up to 30 hours per week face to face.

Teachers' anger broke out in a fiery chant of "we will win" that lasted for several minutes.

In the discussion, all four speakers wanted to escalate industrial action, including the suggestion that TAFE teachers remain on strike indefinitely until Premier Keneally agreed to meet with the Federation leadership.

While Teachers' Federation President Bob Lipscomb successfully argued to reject these

amendments, there was clearly a mood for more radical action.

TAFE Teachers' Association President Rob Long told the meeting about retrograde changes to TAFE in Victoria that impose higher fees and HECS-style debts on TAFE students, and open up all TAFE courses to private competition.

Similar changes will undoubtedly be pushed by the NSW Government if they feel they can get away with it.

But the mass meeting's impact has been such that Keneally has since met with Federation on at least three occasions.

The government has made concessions, but TAFE teachers will still be forced to work additional hours.

These concessions are a testament to the fighting spirit shown by TAFE workers. But a better deal was possible if the union had fought on.

#### Lessons for future

However, while the TAFE teachers' action is inspiring, there is a lesson for teacher unionists.

It's now just over twelve months since the "joint union-government working party" was set up to find "savings" in TAFE—at the same time that a deal with minor trade-offs had been struck between Federation and the government for school teachers.

This cut off TAFE from the bulk of the Federation's membership, giving the Department of Education the confidence to go on the offensive against TAFE's highly casualised workforce.

A threat to call out school teachers in support of TAFE, which could have helped to reverse this, was never seriously acted upon.

Teacher activists need to ensure the government and the Education department don't breach our unity again.

# Challenging portrayal of life at the bottom



**Precious**  
**Directed by Lee Daniels**  
**In cinemas now**

WATCHING *PRECIOUS* is a harrowing experience. Director Lee Daniels milks every dramatic movement of Sapphire's novel *Push* in bringing Clarieece "Precious" Jones to the big screen. Precious (Gabourey Sidibe) is a product of the ghettos of Harlem circa 1987—poor, overweight, abused and illiterate—her life is rough.

With a celebrity cast and an endorsement from Oprah, *Precious* has gained more attention than many expected. However, much to the chagrin of mainstream commentators, Sapphire and Daniels refuse to manufacture a happy ending.

The film follows Precious as she is kicked out of high school, unable to read at sixteen and pregnant to her father for the second time. She begins to attend an alternative

school where she meets Ms Rain (Paula Patton), the first adult to take a real interest in her wellbeing. It is here that Precious learns to read and write—and to question the basis of her hardships.

*Precious* is a product of her circumstances—failed by a stressed public schooling system, the subject of racism and sexism and, most noticeably, the poorest of the poor. Daniels, bringing to life a vibrant supporting cast at school with Precious, shows that it is class (not "intelligence") that is the determining factor in literacy.

The only downside to an otherwise powerful film is the portrayal of what we know is a fraught welfare system in the United States.

Daniels romanticises the welfare available to Precious. The reality is most people do not have access to a small, caring alternative school and a proactive case officer.

On the other hand, Daniels asks us to judge Mary (Precious's mother, played by Mo'Nique) for her reliance on welfare, rather than asking the real question—why is there not enough welfare money to allow Mary, Precious and the rest of the family to live comfortably and access education?

Daniels's apparent lack of sympathy for Mary is disappointing, considering her violent outbursts are a result of the same poverty and abuse that has characterised Precious's life.

*Precious* is a must-see film. It is difficult to watch, but only because it reminds us that life is difficult to live. It is refreshing to see the realities of poverty and racism on the big screen.

It is Precious's determination to fight back, not a fairytale ending, that leaves you with a real sense of hope.

**Shannon Price**

# Satire paints damning picture of masters of war

**In the Loop**  
**Directed by Armando Iannucci**  
**In cinemas now**

*IN THE LOOP* is a satire about the government machinery of the US and Britain preparing for war against an un-named country in the Middle East. Of course it's about Iraq.

The US President is unseen, as is the British PM, so the mockumentary focuses on a British junior Minister, his new aide and a section of the US State Department and Pentagon against a war.

In order to carry the junior and wavering middle-ranks of the British government, the PM's media adviser and enforcer Malcolm Tucker sees to it that he abuses and bullies all who waver.

Simon Foster, Minister for International Aid, can't quite get the party line right, which is to neither "confirm nor deny" war is on the agenda. When he departs from Tucker's script, the media latch onto his gaffe and continue to hound him into further gaffes, like "climbing the mountain of conflict". This becomes a running gag throughout the film.

Foster is then shunted between London and Washington by the pro-war Tucker and US bureaucrats against the war, as each side tries to find allies to bolster their case.

There are plenty of laughs as Tucker spews his venom on his own people and Foster's cowardice over his career sees

him flip-flopping on what he stands for. His aides provide no help, as they too are interested in their own careers.

The scene where Tucker finally delivers British "intelligence" to the US delegation to the United Nations is hilarious, as he never had any.

## Limited picture

The film has faults on several levels. Bush and Blair were far more venal, cynical and ruthless than *In the Loop* shows. Their lies were stupendous compared to Tucker's.

Its setting, in the middle layers of government, means that once war is declared, almost all its opponents snap back into line. US General Miller's previous anti-war stance is only pragmatic not principled.

There is not a hint of the anti-war movement in either country, so by the time Australia sees this film in 2010 (It was released in Britain in April 2009) it just fuels cynicism and apathy about government decision-making in the decaying democracy of the neo-liberal era.

At the time of the anti-war protests in February 2003, the *New York Times* called the movement "the world's other superpower".

In order to see this film you have to go find some of the smaller "independent" cinemas to see it. In Melbourne, only four out of 456 screens were showing it. This is just one more of the injustices of the Iraq war.

**Tom Orsag**

# A lifeless world destroyed without any explanation

**The Road**  
**Directed by John Hillcoat**  
**In cinemas now**

*THE ROAD*, a film based on the Pulitzer Prize winning novel by Cormac McCarthy and brought to the screen by Australian director John Hillcoat tells a bleak story.

Set in America in the near future, a boy and his father are among the wretched survivors on a post-apocalyptic Earth. The cause of the apocalypse is unspoken or unknown.

What is known is that the planet is dead and bandits lurk in the shadows looking for food and fuel.

The father (Viggo Mortensen) is on a mission to keep his son (Kodi Smit-McPhee) alive and warm as they journey towards the coast.

You might call this a pessimistic film, or a one-tone film.

Indeed there is little to celebrate apart from the odd bomb shelter filled with canned food or the last can of Coke in a vending machine.

It seems there is no hope for humanity. Suicide is the preferred option for some, a choice the father wrestles with throughout the film.

But it is also a spectacular film to look at. The cinematography is masterfully realised with barren and desolate wastelands and surreal tangled backdrops which dazzle the eye.

The destroyed landscapes are disturbingly beautiful and this does alleviate some of the heavi-



**A father and son confront an apocalyptic wasteland seemingly without any hope in *The Road***

ness of the storyline.

You can sit back and enjoy the scenery which, coupled with Nick Cave and Warren Ellis's haunting score, paints a sort of tragic beauty in which to indulge.

It's kind of like listening to a very sad song on repeat until you wring all the sadness out.

Against this gloomy backdrop it's not hard for a few things to shine. An old man (Robert Duvall) who they meet on the journey provides one shard of luminance, as does the humanity and kindness of the young boy.

The palette used is overwhelmingly dark though, greys and khakis are the predominant colours along with gunmetal blues and washed-out skin tones.

Cannibalism is alluded to, and is all the more horrifying for its lack of direct graphic depiction.

During my viewing at the cinema, one couple walked out after a particularly harrowing scene.

### **An unexplained apocalypse**

Perhaps what is most problematic about the film is the premise itself.

The reason for the apocalypse is never mentioned, there is no way of knowing if a nuclear war or meteorological event caused Earth's destruction.

So the film is apolitical. Religion and faith is mentioned and maybe that's the only conclusion we are left with.

Things happen for no reason and you've just got to keep going. It's a

**The reason for the apocalypse is never mentioned, there is no way of knowing if a nuclear war or meteorological event caused Earth's destruction.**

struggle of life and death.

For socialists this is unacceptable. We must make a class analysis and find the historical and material reason for things even in fiction.

If *The Road* is simply "art for art's sake" then it is successful. It is a powerful and beautiful story, though it completely ignores any political or social questions.

Disturbingly, everything in this fictional world seems to be consistent and believable.

It's the "how we got there" which is missing and intentionally so.

With that in mind, *The Road* is a great film in and of itself. What it lacks is any new ideas or bold statements. Enjoyable nonetheless.

**Matte Rochford**

# Invaluable guide to climate science, but not solutions

**Storms of my grandchildren**  
By James Hansen  
Bloomsbury, \$35

LAST YEAR James Hansen, one of the world's best-known climate scientists, was arrested during a protest against the coal industry in West Virginia. He lives by the principle that if you know something is wrong you have to act. His recently published book, *Storms of My Grandchildren*, explores his commitment to ending global warming.

In the book we learn about the sinister influence of the energy lobby in Washington as well as the importance of ancient climate history to understanding how sensitive our climate is today. Hansen makes some very sharp criticisms of carbon trading schemes. But sadly he also details his support for nuclear power.

Hansen was not always politically engaged. In 2001 he addressed a high-level climate task force, led by Dick Cheney, to explain how human activity was causing global warming. But when they ignored his research he began to see the way the fossil fuel industry had captured the debate.

In 2005 he wrote, "special interests seek to maintain short-term profits with little regard to the long-term impact on the planet". At the time Hansen was a respected member of NASA but his outspoken stance drew a censorship net around him.

Hansen writes about the way energy executives campaigned to get NASA to remove his climate analysis from websites. Hansen's defence of his

work frequently referred to NASA's mission statement: "to understand and protect our home planet". Shortly after Hansen started using the statement it vanished from the NASA website. The next thing to go was 20 per cent of the NASA earth science budget. NASA's attempt to gag Hansen and disrupt climate research ended up on the front page of *The New York Times*.

At a time when the views of climate sceptics are receiving widespread media coverage Hansen's careful elaboration of the climate science is much needed.

He bases his assessment upon the detailed record of the "paleoclimate"—ancient climate patterns stretching back hundreds of thousands of years. He writes, "the more I looked at paleoclimate data, the more I realised how sensitive ice sheets were to even small global warming."

In the past natural phenomena like volcanic eruptions or the slow grinding of tectonic plates caused dramatic climate change. The slow build up of natural emissions created "amplifying feedbacks" like the release of methane gases trapped in the soil. Dramatic climate change then occurred over centuries or even decades.

Hansen is alarmed about the possible speed of runaway climate change caused by greenhouse gases released by human activity.

The last 10,000 years have been a relatively stable warm period. In previous warm periods when the temperature was slightly higher—2 to 3°C warmer than today—sea



**NASA climate scientist James Hansen is among the most prominent advocates of action on climate**

levels were about 25 metres higher. A sea level rise of just five metres would submerge Florida, Bangladesh and much of Europe.

## Solutions

Hansen is scathing of carbon trading and the fraudulent practice of "offsetting" emissions by supposedly locking up carbon elsewhere. He condemns the way US coal companies remove mountain tops to get at the toxic mineral beneath. These parts of the book are very useful.

However his alternative is a carbon tax. He calls it a "fee and dividend approach"—a fee is collected at the mine or port the first time a fossil fuel source is sold in the country. He proposes

giving 100 per cent of the proceeds back to the public based upon the size of their carbon footprint. Those who reduce their personal carbon emissions to a modest footprint will receive a reasonable dividend. Those who can only afford to live in suburbs with shoddy public transport and are forced to rely on car travel will be worse off. Hansen's plan is fundamentally unfair.

The really tragic part of the book is his call for a massive expansion of nuclear power. His support for nuclear power will confuse activists and weaken calls to invest in viable forms of renewable energy.

He argues that governments should invest in new "fast breeder" nuclear reac-

tors. But there is simply no such thing as safe nuclear energy. These reactors use plutonium, one of the most carcinogenic materials in existence. If there is a crack in a cooling pipe, plutonium particles will drift across vast areas. Plutonium remains dangerous for millions of years.

Hansen has written an important book that will be read by thousands of people concerned about climate change. His explanation of the science and the way the climate debate is sabotaged by energy corporations make the book invaluable. However his stature as a leading scientist shouldn't soften our condemnation of his call for nuclear power.

**Adrian Skerritt**

## FIGHT FOR LGBTI RIGHTS NO PRIDE IN RUDD'S HOMOPHOBIA

By Jean Parker

A GREENS bill to overturn the ban on same-sex marriage was predictably defeated in the Senate last month. Rudd Labor maintained its commitment to the shameful ban. Labor Senator Nick Sherry didn't bother to justify voting down the bill during the Senate debates, leaving it to the Liberals. Instead he attempted to redeem Labor by talking up the removal of 85 discriminatory laws 18 months ago.

Liberal Senator Brandis took up the task with enthusiasm, proclaiming "marriage... has never, ever in any society, in the whole of human history, been regarded as other than a relationship or a status that exists between a man and a woman". Tell that to people in Canada, Spain, South Africa, Norway, Belgium, Portugal, Massachusetts, Iowa, and now Washington, where people are already living in state recognised same-sex marriages.

When John Howard wanted to undermine Aboriginal rights, he talked about "practical reconciliation" being more important than "symbolism". Rudd wants to do the same by selling the "practical equality" of legal reform and denying the "symbolic" marriage rights that people are fighting for.

### Wearing inequality with pride?

The government's 85 legislative changes are being turned into an election-year PR campaign for the Rudd government through the "Wear it with Pride" campaign. \$800,000 of government funding has been spent, including \$395,000 to The National LGBTI Health Alliance to run it. At [wearitwithpride.com.au](http://wearitwithpride.com.au) you can buy 85 different t-shirt designs symbolising each piece of law reform.



Same-sex marriage demonstrations have drawn thousands of young people onto the streets

The laws are painted as bringing full equality to LGBTI people. This from the same government that has intervened twice to stop the ACT passing civil union laws! Celebrities interviewed on the site were asked: "Do you think these reforms are a huge step forward for Australia?" But even most of those interviewed on the website recognise that celebrating equality is a joke when same-sex marriage is banned. Jason Kerr from 2DayFM says "for us the most obvious example of same-sex discrimination is that we can't legally marry."

One "Wear it with Pride" t-shirt proclaims "the law once locked me up for who I love—now it's on my side". But the law was not on the side of a group of HIV-positive men who were removed by Police, at the request of management, from the Bankstown Arts and Crafts Centre last month. They had been running classes for six months when they were asked by the Centre to undergo pedo-

phile checks. They were asked to leave for violating uncited rules by leaving a copy of the LGBTI newspaper *Sydney Star Observer* in the space.

Neither is the law on the side of most same-sex couples on Centrelink, who are financially worse off because of Rudd's reforms. Same-sex couples are now forced to share their sexuality with Centrelink, regardless of whether they are open about it in their lives or not. Some may lose their payments and pensions altogether as a result. After a lifetime of discrimination and homophobia, many older people face financial ruin in the guise of "equality".

### Reignite the fight

Many organisations are feeling the pressure to "go quiet" on Rudd in the face of the upcoming election, especially when Liberal leader Tony Abbott is so well known for his white picket fence mentality.

But changes for LGBTI

people have not come about through the benevolence of Labor governments—in fact, it was a Labor Premier, Neville Wran, who reneged on a plan to decriminalise homosexuality in the late 1970s. He was in power in 1978 when the police brutality attacked the first Mardi Gras. That night the police, and later the Wran government, were confronted with a courageous fight back for LGBTI rights.

In stark contrast, the 2010 Mardi Gras saw peak LGBTI organisations fall in behind the government, celebrating the "Wear it with Pride" campaign.

The Aids Council of NSW, ACON, issued a warning to LGBTI people heading to Mardi Gras to expect an increase in hate crimes at the parade. Celebration is more than premature. The same-sex marriage ban is a dog whistle for this kind of homophobia. It's a symptom of a society structured around discrimination. We need to fight it head on.