



QUEENSLAND BRANCH NEWS

NEWSLETTER of the QLD Branch of the MARITIME UNION of AUSTRALIA

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To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing - Raymond Williams No. 129 - 4 May 2018

**May Day 2018, Your Day! - May Day 1985, Bob Jailed - Inaugural ATSI Conference, Cairns
May Day in History 1886, Shutting Down the Ports - Inflexible Work Practices - AI Tools
Climate Reality "We Are Doomed" - Qld Branch Raffle - Book Review**

March on the 7th of May - It's Your Day!!!

THIS YEAR'S MAY Day March in Brisbane is being led

by the Maritime Union of Australia. We need numbers to come out in force and march and enjoy the one day of the year set aside for working class people. We will be sharing a tent with our comrades

from the CFMMEU and it should be an enjoyable day for all.

The T-shirts the union sourced have been made in Australia, ethically sourced from a company with a union EBA. We can't do much better than that.

Can any members wishing to help set up on this Sunday kindly contact Paul Petersen on 0404 453 869.

May Day 1985 - Bob Carnegie Incarcerated

This photo is of the Building Trades Group march on May Day (aka Labour Day) in Kingaroy, Queensland. For readers of the newsletter who may not be aware, in May Day 1985 I was in maximum security detention in the remand section of one of Australia's toughest prisons, Boggo Road. This was for refusing to sign bail

conditions that stated I could not go within 100 metres of a SEQEB (electricity distributor) picket line.



This was after being arrested nine times for picketing in support of the 1000+ sacked SEQEB linesmen. As a point of principle, I refused to have my civil liberties denied, so the Queensland State threw me in a maximum security prison.

I spent three weeks in that hell hole and would have spent three years in it as I would never have signed those conditions.

I received a lot of support from the labour movement but also some criticism, such as "what are you trying to prove?" My simple answer to that was it was important that as individuals and groups that we not submit to tyranny and I would not and could not submit to an oppressive state.

During my imprisonment, I was asked to apply to the Supreme Court to be granted bail, thus overriding the Magistrate. However I refused, advising my supporters I would rather have the legal costs given to the sacked linesmen rather than spent on me.

Eventually, after three weeks, I was sent for a preliminary hearing to the Magistrate's Court and I appeared before the Magistrate. A very unusual decision was given. The Magistrate I appeared before overruled the previous Magistrate and dropped my bail conditions, so I was freed.

Authorised by Bob Carnegie, Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Queensland Branch Secretary

73 Southgate Avenue, Cannon Hill QLD 4170

As a young ‘knockabout’ merchant seafarer, and in those days, a ‘paypacket millionaire’ I came out of prison broke but still proud.

I caught a bus back to the prison, got a letter from the Governor and then I went to Centrelink and got one week’s dole payment.

I put myself on our roster (hiring hall) the next week and picked up the River Embley. I hope members and readers find this brief story interesting. *Bob Carnegie – Branch Secretary*

The Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining, and Energy Union’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inaugural Conference, Cairns 1st and 2nd May 2018

THE CONFERENCE BEGAN with an early morning rally that marched through the streets of Cairns starting at 7.00am towards the Centrelink office. The march was to bring attention to the discriminatory work-for-the-dole-scheme introduced by the LNP government. The community Development Programme (CDP) excludes workers from their right to federal occupational health and safety, workers compensation legislation and annual leave or sick leave. Essentially the LNP government have created a pool of free labour that has denied basic workplace rights and give corporations access to free labour.

There are more than 33,000 people covered by the CDP, most of whom are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. 80% of CDP workers are Aboriginal or Torres Strait islanders.

The CDP is blamed for driving up poverty and hunger in remote Aboriginal communities.

Under CDP participants are forced to work 25 hours per week to receive welfare payments. This is three times longer worked hours than the city-based jobseekers.

People are fined one-tenth of their fortnightly Centrelink payment if they miss or are late to work. The dole is typically about \$290 a week for a single person and fines range from \$48 to \$57 for each breach.

There have been 55,000 fines issued to remote work-for-the-dole participants in three months. More than 200,000 breach notices have been handed out since the scheme began in July 2015.



The Queensland MUA Branch was well represented at the rally by the First Nation’s delegates, Vickie Morta, Clinton Tipo, Paddy Neliman, Mike O’Shane and Adam Corowa.



The March was led by Thomas Mayor NT Branch Secretary, MUA and Jade Ingham Assistant Secretary QLD/NT Branch, CFMEU, Michael O’Connor National Secretary CFMEU and myself, Paul Petersen MUA Queensland Organiser.

Don’t Like War? Then Don’t Work! Remembering When Dockworkers Shut Down the Ports on May Day

Sourced from: <http://inthesetimes.com/working>
By Peter Cole

MAY DAY—A legal holiday for workers in most countries—was born in Chicago. On May 1, 1886, workers shut down America’s greatest industry city, and other cities too, to demand the 8-hour workday. In 1894, the U.S. Congress intentionally created a Labor Day at another time of the year, but some Americans continue celebrating the original, real Labor Day.

On May 1, 2008, 10,000 members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), one of the strongest and most militant unions in the United States, walked in those Chicagoans’ footsteps. They did so by walking off the docks at all 29 West Coast ports, completely shutting down America’s Pacific trading network.

These workers did so, they said, “to demand an immediate end to the war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Middle East.” Their action revealed the power of organized labor as well as ongoing frustration with U.S. wars that continue to this very day.

Protesting Imperialist Wars

The plan for this “stop work” originated inside Local 10, which represents dockworkers throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Jack Heyman, a long-time rank-and-file militant in Local 10, played a key role in organizing

for the 2008 May Day action, alongside other internationally-minded socialists in the local. In 2007, these socialists helped organize an international labor conference to stop the war in Iraq. Unionists from around the world participated, as did British Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn. As Heyman tells *In These Times*, “The main resolution of that conference was for trade unions to go back and organize strikes at the point of production.”



ILWU Local 19 member Al Webster joined the other 10,000 United States Longshore workers who voluntarily gave up a day's pay to protest the Iraq War on May 1, 2007. (WikiGolightly/Creative Commons)

Subsequently, Local 10 offered a resolution at the ILWU Longshore Caucus, in which workers elected from every local meet to establish union-wide policy. They proposed a “stop work meeting” during the day shift on May Day to protest America’s imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although within their contractual rights, rarely are such meetings held for an entire shift, let alone for a day shift or for a political reason.

The International officers and Local 13 officials (Port of Los Angeles-Long Beach) urged caution, as recalled by several workers present at this Caucus. However, as Samantha Levens, then a rank-and-file member of the San Francisco Region of the ILWU’s Inland Boatmen’s Union, recalls in an interview with *In These Times*, “Members from across the ILWU rose and spoke in favor of the resolution. I was new to the ILWU at this time, so this was the most moving thing to me. Many members spoke passionately against the war, many were veterans or had children in the military.” The resolution passed 97-3.

After much planning, including the organizing of marches and rallies in conjunction with the shutdowns, ILWU members stopped work in every port on May 1. As Seattle’s Local 19 President Herald Ugles said at the time, “Normally, when I see the cranes all boomed-up [longshore parlance for not moving], it makes me sad ... But today it’s a great sight to see—not just here, but all up and down the West Coast!”

Heyman recalls, “That was uncertain going into the action, because PMA [Pacific Maritime Association], the employers’ association, was publicizing that the action

was illegal and they’d take action in courts to stop it. Besides, they arrogantly stated that the largest longshore local on the Coast, L.A., would go to work. L.A. officials were not committing themselves, but on May Day the membership spoke loud and clear. Nothing was moving on the docks that day!”

Thanks poured in from around the world. As published in the June 2008 issue of the ILWU’s monthly magazine, *Dispatcher*, someone identified as “M.J.” wrote, “My husband is currently serving his second 15-month tour in Iraq. I want to thank you for your brave, and in my view, highly effective protest of the Iraq war. My husband and I are very pro-union for a lot of reasons, and you’ve given us another great reason to proudly say Union YES!!!”

Perhaps the most poignant message came from the General Union of Port Workers in Iraq: “The courageous decision you made to carry out a strike on May Day to protest against the war and occupation of Iraq advances our struggle against occupation to bring a better future for us and for the rest of the world as well.”

“Longshore workers tried to show the labor movement that the working class has the power to stop these imperialist wars,” says Heyman. “The chant at the start of the Iraq War in the port of Oakland [in 2003] was “War is for profit, workers can stop it!”

Social Justice Unionism

The 2008 action belongs to the ILWU’s 80-year-and-counting history of labor and political activism. From its inception, the ILWU has been racially integrated, and Local 10 has proven particularly committed to recruiting African Americans and other working people of color. In their formative “Big Strike” of 1934, dockworkers won a coast-wide contract, a union-controlled hiring hall, wage increases and more.

Dockworkers refused to handle cargo for fascist Japan in the 1930s and from apartheid South Africa in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

In 1999, the ILWU shut down the coast to demand the release of journalist, former Black Panther and death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. Arguably, their effort played a role in stopping the state of Pennsylvania from executing him.

On May Day 2015, to protest police killings of African Americans, particularly Walter Scott in Charleston, South Carolina, Local 10 shut down Bay Area ports. And last August, the ILWU helped lead resistance to a planned alt-right protest in San Francisco.

“The May Day 2008 anti-war walk-out was a clear reminder of the right and need of union members to be social activists,” Todd Iverson, a current leader in Local 23 (Tacoma) and participant in 2008, tells *In These Times*. “The ILWU has a long history of standing up for social justice from apartheid to wage inequality and more recently Black Lives Matter. We as ILWU members feel an obligation to be the voice for the voiceless.”

Peter Cole is a Professor of History at Western Illinois University. He is the author of Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive Era Philadelphia and is currently at work on a book entitled Dockworker Power:

Race and Activism in Durban and the San Francisco Bay Area. He is a Research Associate in the Society, Work and Development Program (SWOP) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, and has published extensively on labor history and politics. He tweets from @ProfPeterCole.

Tribunal Says Inflexible Work Practices Justify Axing Agreement

Sourced from: <https://www.workplaceexpress.com.au>

THIS ARTICLE RELATES to the decision of the Commission to terminate the Port Kembla Coal Terminal Agreement and have it reverted back to the Award. Effectively what the FWC has done is place a sword of Damocles over the head of the workforce. Stating either you accept wholesale and ruthless changes to the conditions you have fought for over a generation or you will go back to an Award in which over 60% of your current wages and conditions will be annihilated at the stroke of a pen." Change the Rules!!! Bob Carnegie

THE FAIR WORK Commission acceded to a bid by mining giants to terminate a coal loading agreement after concluding that a system of "self-directed" work teams that constrains management prerogative "needs to go".

But Senior Deputy President Jonathan Hamberger delayed the axe falling on the Port Kembla Coal Terminal Limited Enterprise Agreement 2012-2015 for 12 months, to maximise the changes of negotiating a new deal that removes the team system.

"The 2012 agreement – and the team system embedded within it – needs to go," he said.

"I am not satisfied that this will occur unless the application to terminate the agreement is granted, as I am not confident that the bulk of the workforce (as opposed to their representatives) have fully accepted this fact."

"However, it is better that this sort of wide-ranging change be introduced by agreement."

Reasons follow order last month

Senior Deputy President Hamberger issued an order approving the s225 application after the final hearing on March 29, with the termination taking effect on the same date next year.

He published the reasons for his decision today.

The Port Kembla terminal has been in private hands since 1990 and is held by a consortium of six equal shareholders, all coal producers on the NSW southern and western coalfields.

It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with the agreement covering about 60 workers represented by the CFMEU.

The Commission said PKCT balanced its operating costs with its loading charge and did not retain any profits from its operations, with lower throughput generally leading to an increased charge.

Other NSW coal loaders, such as the Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group and Port Waratah Coal Services (PWCS), operate on a "take or pay" basis, where customers allocate a certain number of tonnes at the start of the financial year to be shipped at a set loading rate.

Coal prices, production down since last deal

Senior Deputy President Hamberger said the parties negotiated the 2012 agreement (see Related Article) in a strong economic environment, when the forecast for PKCT indicated substantial further growth on top of throughput that year of 14.7 million tonnes.

But a big fall in coal prices ended expansion plans, with forecast throughput for the current financial year now as low as 4.6 million tonnes. The loading charges increased from \$3.84 per tonne in the 2011-2012 financial year to an anticipated \$6.90 in 2017-2018.

Senior Deputy President Hamberger accepted PKCT was under pressure to reduce its costs to remain viable.

The CFMEU alleged that PKCT's customers had diverted exports through Newcastle or Port Waratah, but the Commission said found only "mixed" evidence for this.

Documents leaked to the ABC's 7.30 program early this year said PKCT wrote a memo in late 2016 saying that terminating the agreement would give the company a "clean slate" and "deliver outcomes that are more acceptable to the company" by placing workers on the "significantly less generous" award.

Team model constrains ability to manage: Hamberger
Senior Deputy President Hamberger said the 2012 agreement contained some unusual features, particularly those prescribing the use of "self-directed" working teams.

"While this 'team system' may be attractive from the point of view of industrial democracy, it significantly constrains [PKCT's] ability to manage its employees, including in relation to performance, discipline, rostering, working time, leave, and promotion."

"I am satisfied that the relevant provisions restrict [PKCT] from flexibly organising and structuring its working arrangements and utilising its workforce to maximum benefit during working and paid hours."

Furthermore, the superannuation entitlements in the 2012 agreement reflected the arrangements in place at the time of PKCT's privatisation, with employees contributing 8% of salary and the employer an additional 17% per cent.

If an employee contributed a further 2% per cent for any consecutive six-year period, the employer was required to contribute a further 3.5%, bringing its maximum contribution to 20.5%.

Bargaining began in March 2015 and employee representatives rejected a PKCT offer that year that included changes to the team system and reducing the super contribution to the level of the super guarantee (currently 9.5%) for workers engaged after 1990.

The employee representatives later presented a proposal, which was rejected by management, that included changes to the team system and greater management responsibility.

Last year, workers took protected industrial action while PKCT locked them out for a period early this year.

Management put a new offer in September 2017 which would have "largely dismantled the team system and significantly increased managerial flexibility" but included some concessions.

Workers rejected deal struck with unions

Employee representatives agreed to the offer apart from wanting four annual pay increases of 2% rather than two increases of 1.5% and two of 2%; and a maximum employer super contribution of 14% per cent for new employees.

The rejection of the new offer by about 90% of workers contributed to a "hardening" of the employer position that led to it applying to terminate the existing agreement.

Senior Deputy President Hamberger said that while employee representatives had "genuinely accepted the need for major change, including the dismantling of the team system, this was not necessarily the case for many of the employees".

"I am satisfied, moreover, that the vote at least partly reflects that many employees had a low level of trust in management."

"Further bargaining has occurred in 2018, with [PKCT] indicating some willingness to move back to the provisions in its September 2017 proposal."

Last year's proposal a "sound basis" for replacement deal

Senior Deputy President Hamberger said he was concerned the 2012 agreement was "not consistent with the promotion of economic prosperity, especially as its retention in the longer term may jeopardise PKCT's viability."

He said terminating the agreement would give scope to increase productivity and reduce costs but could lead to a "significant reduction" in pay and conditions, even though management had given undertakings to maintain certain conditions post-termination.

"The September 2017 proposed agreement (perhaps with some minor modifications) provides a sound basis for reaching agreement on a replacement."

"There is a real risk that simply terminating the 2012 agreement immediately will further polarise the parties, reducing the likelihood of reaching a new agreement and undermining the potential for productive workplace relations at the terminal.

"By delaying the implementation of the termination of the 2012 Agreement for 12 months, I have sought to maximise the likelihood that the parties – and the employees – can negotiate a new enterprise agreement which removes the team system well before termination takes effect."

Port Kembla Coal Terminal Limited [2018] FWCA 2391 (30 April 2018)

Maersk to Test AI-Powered Situational Awareness Tools Aboard its Boxship

Sourced from: <https://worldmaritimeneews.com/archives/251247/maersk-to-test-ai-powered-situational-awareness-tools-onboard-its-boxship/>

DANISH SHIPPING GIANT A.P. Moller-Maersk has teamed up with Boston-based Sea Machines Robotics to trial the tech hub's perception and situational awareness technology aboard one of its newbuild Winter Palace ice-class containerships.

The installation marks the first-time utilization of computer vision, Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) and perception software aboard a container vessel to augment and upgrade transit operations.

The solution chosen by Maersk uses artificial intelligence (AI) to improve at-sea situational awareness, object identification and tracking capabilities, Sea Machines Robotics said.

As explained, the system uses advanced sensors to collect a continuous stream of information from a vessel's environmental surroundings, identify and track potential conflicts, and displays the knowledge in the wheelhouse.

By turning to such a system Maersk wants to prove the technology can remove the line of sight restriction from the bridge, providing the infrastructure for a future autonomous collision avoidance system.

"This partnership with Maersk marks our first foray into the shipping sector and allows us to positively

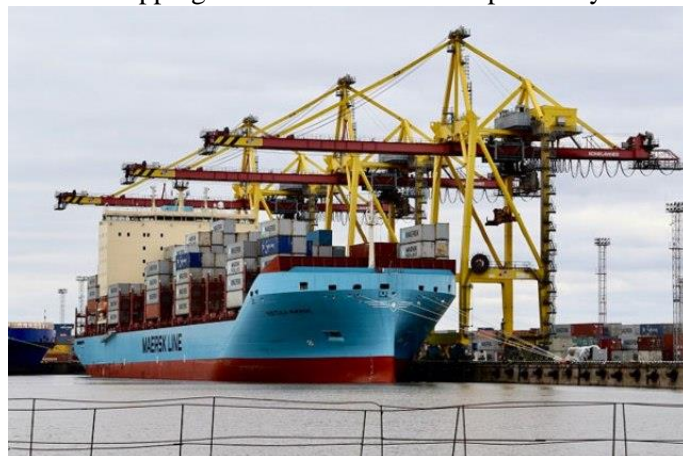


Image Courtesy: Sea Machines

contribute towards the operator's technology goals. Our mission is to propel the maritime industry forward with 21st-century technology and it's exciting to see the growing demand for Sea Machines products," Michael Johnson, founder and CEO of Sea Machines, said.

"For this containership situational awareness program, we aim to prove the technology increases our safety, efficiency, and reliability. Autonomous vessels are not an end goal for Maersk nor is unmanned vessels, what is more of interest is the technology along the journey and the value it brings," said P. Michael A. Rodey, senior innovation manager, A.P. Moller-Maersk.

The duo started exploring their collaboration three years ago, according to Rodey, when the company was developing the concepts of its first autonomous systems.

Sea Machines is also managing a pilot program with Tuco Marine, of Denmark, to test the autonomous technology aboard ProZero workboats. Its first industrial-grade control system, the SM300, serves operations

looking for level 3 operator-in-the loop autonomy in survey, spill response, dredging and security/surveillance.

'We're Doomed': Mayer Hillman on the Climate Reality No One Else Will Dare Mention

By Patrick Barkham

Sourced from: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/26/were-doomed-mayer-hillman-on-the-climate-reality-no-one-else-will-dare-mention?CMP=share_btn_fb

THE 86-YEAR-OLD social scientist says accepting the impending end of most life on Earth might be the very thing needed to help us prolong it.



Dr Mayer Hillman with his bike outside his home in London. Photograph: John Alex Maguire / Rex Features

“We’re doomed,” says Mayer Hillman with such a beaming smile that it takes a moment for the words to sink in. “The outcome is death, and it’s the end of most life on the planet because we’re so dependent on the burning of fossil fuels. There are no means of reversing the process which is melting the polar ice caps. And very few appear to be prepared to say so.”

Hillman, an 86-year-old social scientist and senior fellow emeritus of the Policy Studies Institute, does say so. His bleak forecast of the consequence of runaway climate change, he says without fanfare, is his “last will and testament”. His last intervention in public life. “I’m not going to write anymore because there’s nothing more that can be said,” he says when I first hear him speak to a stunned audience at the University of East Anglia late last year.

From Malthus to the Millennium Bug, apocalyptic thinking has a poor track record. But when it issues from Hillman, it may be worth paying attention. Over nearly 60 years, his [research has used factual data to challenge policymakers’ conventional wisdom](#). In 1972, he criticised out-of-town shopping centers more than 20 years before the government changed planning rules to stop their spread. In 1980, he recommended halting the closure of branch line railways – only now are some closed lines reopening. In 1984, he proposed energy ratings for houses – finally adopted as government policy

in 2007. And, more than 40 years ago, he presciently challenged society’s pursuit of economic growth.

When we meet at his converted coach house in London, his classic Dawes racer still parked hopefully in the hallway (a stroke and a triple heart bypass mean he is – currently – forbidden from cycling), Hillman is anxious we are not side-tracked by his best-known research, which challenged the supremacy of the car.

“With doom ahead, making a case for cycling as the primary mode of transport is almost irrelevant,” he says. “We’ve got to stop burning fossil fuels. So many aspects of life depend on fossil fuels, except for music and love and education and happiness. These things, which hardly use fossil fuels, are what we must focus on.”

While the focus of Hillman’s thinking for the last quarter-century has been on climate change, he is best known for his work on road safety. He spotted [the damaging impact of the car on the freedoms and safety of those without one](#) – most significantly, children – decades ago. Some of his policy prescriptions have become commonplace – such as 20mph speed limits – but we’ve failed to [curb the car’s crushing of children’s liberty](#). In 1971, 80% of British seven- and eight-year-old children went to school on their own; today it’s virtually unthinkable that a seven-year-old would walk to school without an adult. As Hillman has pointed out, we’ve removed children from danger rather than removing danger from children – and filled roads with polluting cars on school runs. He calculated that escorting children took 900m adult hours in 1990, costing the economy £20bn each year. It will be even more expensive today.



Hillman believes society has failed to challenge the supremacy of the car. Photograph: Lenscap / Alamy Stock Photo/Alamy Stock Photo

Our society’s failure to comprehend the true cost of cars has informed Hillman’s view on the difficulty of combatting climate change. But he insists that I must not present his thinking on climate change as “an opinion”. The data is clear; the climate is warming exponentially. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts [that the world on its current course will warm by 3C by 2100](#). [Recent revised climate modelling suggested a best estimate of 2.8C](#) but scientists struggle to predict the full impact of the feedbacks from future events such as methane being released by the melting of the permafrost.

Hillman is amazed that our thinking rarely stretches beyond 2100. “This is what I find so extraordinary when scientists warn that the temperature could rise to 5C or 8C. What, and stop there? What legacies are we leaving for future generations? In the early 21st century, we did as good as nothing in response to climate change. Our children and grandchildren are going to [be extraordinarily critical](#).”

Global emissions were static in 2016 but the concentration of carbon dioxide in the [atmosphere was confirmed as beyond 400 parts per million](#), the highest level for at least three million years (when sea levels were up to 20m higher than now). Concentrations can only drop if we emit no carbon dioxide whatsoever, says Hillman. “Even if the world went zero-carbon today that would not save us because we’ve gone past the point of no return.”

Although Hillman has not flown for more than 20 years as part of a personal commitment to reducing carbon emissions, he is now scornful of individual action which he describes as “as good as futile”. By the same logic, says Hillman, national action is also irrelevant “because Britain’s contribution is minute. Even if the government were to go to zero carbon it would make almost no difference.”

Instead, says Hillman, the world’s population must globally move to zero emissions across agriculture, air travel, shipping, heating homes – every aspect of our economy – and [reduce our human population too](#). Can it be done without a collapse of civilisation? “I don’t think so,” says Hillman. “Can you see everyone in a democracy volunteering to give up flying? Can you see the majority of the population becoming vegan? Can you see the majority agreeing to restrict the size of their families?”

Hillman doubts that human ingenuity can find a fix and says there is no evidence that greenhouse gases can be safely buried. But if we adapt to a future with less – focusing on Hillman’s love and music – it might be good for us. “And who is ‘we’?” asks Hillman with a typically impish smile. “Wealthy people will be better able to adapt but the world’s population will head to regions of the planet such as northern Europe which will be temporarily spared the extreme effects of climate change. How are these regions going to respond? We see it now. Migrants will be prevented from arriving. We will let them drown.”

A small band of artists and writers, such as [Paul Kingsnorth’s Dark Mountain project](#), have embraced the idea that “civilisation” will soon end in environmental catastrophe but only a few scientists – usually working beyond the patronage of funding bodies, and nearing the end of their own lives – have suggested as much. Is Hillman’s view a consequence of old age, and ill health? “I was saying these sorts of things 30 years ago when I was hale and hearty,” he says.

Hillman accuses all kinds of leaders – from religious leaders to scientists to politicians – of failing to honestly

discuss what we must do to move to zero-carbon emissions. “I don’t think they can because society isn’t organised to enable them to do so. Political parties’ focus is on jobs and GDP, depending on the burning of fossil fuels.”

Without hope, goes the truism, we will give up. And yet optimism about the future is wishful thinking, says Hillman. He believes that accepting that our civilisation is doomed could make humanity rather like an individual who recognises he is terminally ill. Such people rarely go on a disastrous binge; instead, they do all they can to prolong their lives.

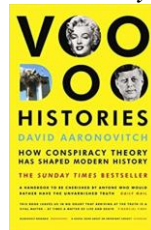
Can civilisation prolong its life until the end of this century? “It depends on what we are prepared to do.” He fears it will be a long time before we take proportionate action to stop climatic calamity.

“Standing in the way is capitalism. Can you imagine the global airline industry being dismantled when hundreds of new runways are being built right now all over the world? It’s almost as if we’re deliberately attempting to defy nature. We’re doing the reverse of what we should be doing, with everybody’s silent acquiescence, and nobody’s batting an eyelid.”

Book Corner

Voodoo Histories – by David Aaronovitch

Book Review by Martin Thomas



I WAS SPURRED to read David Aaronovitch's book on political conspiracy theories, "Voodoo Histories", by talking with Roy, a middle-aged carpenter who came to the last reading group on Marx's Capital which I ran in London.

Roy is affable, studious. Not very widely-read but not without background knowledge, either: he's picked up a social-science university degree along the way. And he's been politically active, on a low level, around the left, since 2001, with groups like Stop The War and the People's Assembly.

I asked how he'd got into politics. Answer: by becoming convinced that the Islamist attack on New York's World Trade Centre in 2001 was in fact conspiratorially carried out by the US government.

Further conversation revealed that he believes that capitalist conspiracies are also working to undermine national identity and family structures.

He wasn't keen to argue: when I offered him the Communist Manifesto's idea that it is good when capitalism works to make "national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible", and that the change since the 1970s which has made 30% of London's workforce migrants, and 90-odd % of my Further Maths students at the high school where I work of migrant background, is progressive, he smiled and shrugged.

I dug further, and found that the number in the USA believing, or half-believing, that the US government "did" 9/11, is around 25%. It includes vast numbers who

are not at all social dissidents in general. 49% of Republicans believe a story (cooked up by white supremacists) that Hillary Clinton's staff organised a child sex ring through pizza shops.

David Aaronovitch seems an unpromising writer: he is the son of the British Communist Party leader Sam Aaronovitch, was a prominent CP member himself when young in the 70s, and is now a Blairite journalist. He has done a good job, though.

He analyses conspiracy theories from the Protocols of the Elders of Zion through the claims about Marilyn Monroe's death to 9/11, and shows how, politically, they allow left-wing, or at least anti-establishment, sentiment to be diverted into right-wing and often antisemitic channels.

Conspiracy theories reflect an attempt to short-cut the difficult job of social analysis: rather than understand the social structures which make the capitalist world so bewildering and cruel, you suppose it's a matter of an evil few behind the scenes.

They also feed on psychological roots: "paranoia", writes Aaronovitch, "may often be a defence against indifference, against the terrible thought that no-one cares about you". Our probably hardwired to attribute intention to unintended processes (the weather is bad because the sky-god is angry with us) underpins both religion and the grip of conspiracy theories.

Unity Bank News



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Tickets \$20 each, 2000 to be sold.

Drawn at Branch Monthly Meeting
26th June 2018

No. 0001



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New Queensland Branch Raffle

THE QUEENSLAND BRANCH is holding a new raffle in support of prostate cancer research and save the merchant shipping campaign.

Tickets are \$20 each with only 2000 to be sold. Imagine where you could go with a \$5000 travel voucher!

Contact the Branch on 07 3395 7215 or email muaqld@mua.org.au to get your tickets.

May Day 2018!

M.U.A. Queensland



Strength in Unity

Monday 7th May 2018.

Gathering at 9.30am at the corner of Wharf and Turbot Streets Spring Hill marching to Brisbane Showgrounds, Bowen Hills.

March commencing at 10am SHARP!

Free Australian made ethically sourced, Union EBA T-shirts are available at the start of the march from 9.30am



Authorised Bob Carnegie, MUA Qld Branch Secretary, 73 Southgate Avenue, Cannon Hill 4170

**Authorised by Bob Carnegie, Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Queensland Branch Secretary
73 Southgate Avenue, Cannon Hill QLD 4170**