

Speech by IPAN-SA convener Derek Burke at the support rally before Richard Boyle's court hearing November 11 in Adelaide

Over 12 months ago, we were all here to protest the persecution of the whistleblower, Richard Boyle. He has been dragged before the courts for divulging the Australian Tax Office's unfair and unethical debt recovery practices.

Richard exposed how his area of the ATO was instructed to use heavy-handed tactics to recover money from those with tax debts.

Now that his bid in the High Court has failed, he appears set to stand trial over those charges. He is now facing 24 charges and the charges carry a maximum sentence of up to 46 years.

The Australian whistleblower protection and the Public Interest Disclosure Act are a failure. In fact they are a sham. The Act only applies to the act of disclosure rather than steps taken to make that disclosure.

How else are you able to disclose malfeasance if you can't take steps to disclose it? The law is an ass!

The Public Interest Disclosure Act is a contradictory Act, a Catch-22. It is only there for optics and ends up protecting the powerful rather than the powerless.

Our Rule of Law equally reflects what our so-called democracy is; a big sham! The Rule of Law protects the power of elites and the wealthy. Similarly, with our so-called democracy, we have the worst elections that big money can buy.

Have you noticed that the corporate donors always win after an election and the ordinary voters get next to nothing? In effect we are ruled by a plutocracy.

Richard Boyle, Julian Assange, David McBride, Daniel Duggan, Bernard Colleary, Witness K and J have had to face authoritarian law that is in place to hide the truth and entrench injustice.

Julian Assange suffered 7 years confinement in the Ecuadorian Embassy and 5 years solitary imprisonment in Belmarsh prison until he pleaded guilty to one felony count of violating the Espionage Act in exchange for immediate release. This the penalty for exposing US military war crimes.

David McBride, the Australian Army lawyer and whistleblower who provided the Australian Broadcasting Corporation with documents that contained information about war crimes committed by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan, was prosecuted for unlawfully disclosing Commonwealth documents.

For his trouble with speaking truth to power, he was sentenced to 5 years and 8 months in prison, with a non-parole period of 2 years and 3 months. Once again, the act of taking steps to make a disclosure is what has criminalised McBride. This is plain and simple authoritarianism.

We can see authoritarianism at work with the Albanese Labor government cracking down on unions and their enterprise agreements. Labor's plans to destroy the CFMEU and place it under administration have got little to do with the union's alleged involvement with organized crime.

Victoria's Labor premier Jacinta Allan made that clear when she terminated existing enterprise agreements moments after the federal government moved against the CFMEU and placed it under administration.

In reality, the Labor government is doing the bidding of the construction industry bosses to end pattern bargaining under government administration.

Compare this to the treatment of the banks who were never put under administration nor broken up when they were found guilty of criminal behaviour and corruption by the Royal Commission.

Now we see Richard Boyle being sacrificed on an authoritarian altar in favour of the powerful Australian Tax Office for exposing their crimes.

The lesson is quite clear: do not embarrass or expose crimes of the powerful or else they'll make an example of you so that others will not dare be a whistleblower.

We must not tire of supporting Richard Boyle, David McBride and Daniel Duggan whatever happens to them. The real criminals should be put in gaol, the powerful who cover up their crimes, not the brave whistleblowers.