



Fortress Australia

Anna Pha

Claims that Immigration and Border Protection Minister Peter Dutton is seeking “Trump-like” powers to target visa-holders that appeared in some media outlets last week are not far-fetched. Amendments to the Migration Act that gained support in the House of Representatives on February 9 and US President Trump’s attempts to ban people from seven countries with Muslim-majority populations have strong similarities. There are differences in form, Trump attempting to directly use his presidential powers and Dutton seeking to gain similar powers through thinly disguised parliamentary legislation.

If passed, the *Migration Amendment (Visa Revalidation and Other Measures) Bill 2016*, would give Dutton and future Ministers unchecked discretionary powers to subject any group based on race, nationality or other holding a visa, regardless of whether the visa is permanent or temporary, to a revalidation test and possible cancellation of their visa.

Trump’s attempts to ban Muslims from the countries on his hit list have little to do with countering terrorism. For example, the list does not include Saudi Arabia, one of the most oppressive regimes in the world which has played a major role in training and funding terrorists and is believed to be behind the bombing of the Trade Centre Towers in New York city.

This is not surprising as Saudi Arabia is also one of the largest importers of armaments from the US and Trump is reported to be set to approve large orders from the Saudi regime that had been blocked by former President Obama.

Trump’s attempted bans, still hanging on court decisions as to their constitutionality, have much more to do with the reactionary politics of anti-Islam, xenophobia and authoritarian and demagogic politics of the far right.

The amendments to the Migration Act which passed through the House of Representatives on February 9 share the same politics as Trump’s ban. They were supported by Labor on the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee. The Australian Greens issued a dissenting report opposing the bill. Labor did however vote against the bill last week. It is now before the Senate.

The bill seeks to introduce a system of



online visa revalidation. Visa holders would be required to update information and answer other questions as and when determined by the Minister. Failure to meet requirements set by the Minister would result in loss of visa.

The claimed objective of the new visa provisions is a new, 10-year, “longer validity” visitor visa to be used by business people and tourists. This visitor visa is explained as necessary to compete with other countries offering longer visas to tourists. It would allow multiple visits with a limit of three months each time.

The bill provides for a trial of the 10-year visa for Chinese nationals only. The concept was raised in the White Paper on Developing Northern Australia as means of making it easier for business people and tourists from the People’s Republic of China to come and go at short notice. It is suggested that nationals of other countries would progressively be allowed to apply for the 10-year visa.

Dutton argues that over a period it would be necessary to require visa holders to routinely update the information they have previously provided to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Hence the need for the changes.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding accompanying the bill, visa revalidation “is designed to manage the risks to the Australian community that may arise in the context of longer validity Visitor visas, including a person’s individual circumstances changing over time, or in the event of a serious incident occurring overseas which may create a situation where it is in the public interest to reassess a visa holder’s individual circumstances in light of such an event. The amendments will allow the government to ensure that visa holders continue to meet the health, character, security and other requirements for entry to Australia.”

Broad application

As well as providing for a routine revalidation system, the bill also gives the Minister the power to personally decide that an individual or class of individuals must have their visas revalidated.

The Minister could exercise his or her powers on the basis of which country they are from, their ethnicity, religion, etc. This is referred to as “public interest” revalidation.

The Minister’s powers apply to all visa holders, not just to those on a 10-year visa, even

though the argument for their necessity was based on monitoring changes over 10 years!

The “public interest revalidation check [is] to manage specific, serious, or time-critical risks in relation to an identified cohort of visa holders,” Dutton said in his Second Reading speech.

“In such circumstances, issuing a *personal* ministerial revalidation requirement will immediately prevent specified visa holders from being able to travel to and enter Australia until they successfully revalidate their visa,” Dutton said. (Emphasis added – Ed)

The wording of the bill leaves it wide open as to what groups could lose their visas and be denied visas in the future.

Already there is legislation on the books that restricts areas Australian visa holders can visit without good reason such as visiting their family.

The revalidation check will require the visa holder to provide information via their secure online account that will allow the Minister to assess whether the visa holder passes the revalidation check.

Continued on page 2

3



Basic poverty trap

6



Nugan Hand: Drugs, dirty money ...

10



Culture & Life
It's NATO, not Russia

11



Film Review
Hell or High Water

Guardian

Issue 1765

February 15, 2017

The idiocy that is capitalism

"We do not have one modern high-efficiency low-emissions coal-fired power station, let alone with carbon capture storage." So runs PM Malcolm Turnbull's line on "clean" coal. His government plans to subsidise the construction of clean coal power stations as well as trying to bribe farmers to lift bans on fracking for coal seam gas.

Add to this the push by the Liberals for the construction of coal-fired power stations in Australia's north using the \$5 billion Northern Australian Infrastructure Fund (taxpayers' money). In addition, monies from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation – created to fund renewable technologies such as wind, solar and battery storage – to be diverted into clean coal technologies (all taxpayers' money for future coal mining profits).

Energy and Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg trumpeted that "we're taking a non-ideological approach" to sources of energy supply, along the lines of Turnbull's recent "technology agnostic" declaration. And in a fit of typical rank opportunism the government pounced on this month's power outages in South Australia during the current record-breaking heatwave as "proof" that renewables don't cut it.

Mining accounts for around seven percent of Australia's total production of goods and services. (gross domestic product), and employs around two percent of the workforce (compared to 300,000 in agriculture, 400,000 in financial services, 900,000 in manufacturing, a million each in education and construction, 1.2 million in retail and 1.5 million in healthcare).

As far as paying tax, forget 30 percent: they are highly accomplished at moving taxable profits offshore to low tax havens.

In this light, the massively polluting and Barrier Reef-threatening Adani coal mine project in Queensland should be seen in all its potential destructiveness in the context of the Turnbull government's \$1 billion taxpayer gift to construct rail and port facilities.

So, if such facts and figures don't make it clear that the government's push for fossil fuels is not only against all common sense and a looming danger to the planet, consider the following.

Energy umbrella group the Australian Energy Council said this month "clean" coal plants are "uninvestible" and that its members, the biggest fossil fuel power generators in the country, have no intention of building one. Such plants have a 50 year life emitting 700 kilograms of carbon per MWh – and most likely more – over a period of half a century.

They cost up to \$5 billion to build.

The chief scientist Alan Finkel has been charged by the government to produce a national energy security review. Dr Finkel says that even "clean coal" technologies (there is no such thing as clean coal) won't be able to compete with low-emissions technology such as solar and wind.

If the government was expecting a stamp of approval for its plan to continue fossil fuel generation, it will be disappointed as Finkel rejects taxpayer-funded coal projects.

Royal Dutch Shell has begun a "gas-plus-renewables" strategy. Shell has created a New Energies division to invest in renewables and has a contract to build a 700 megawatt wind farm off the coast of the Netherlands. In France oil corporation Total SA is putting increasing investments into solar and battery power.

AGL Energy, the owner of the two biggest coal fired power stations in the country, states categorically, "AGL will not build, finance or acquire new or conventional coal-fired power stations in Australia" and "will not extend the operating life of any of its existing coal-fired power stations."

In Denmark, Dong Energy is now the biggest investor in offshore wind power projects in Europe and plans to become a completely coal-free power generator by 2023.

This is not by way of claiming that the big polluters have suddenly seen the light: some are simply and pragmatically, from the point of view of the profit bottom line, coming to terms with the reality.

Just a few years ago a former Saudi oil minister noted: "The Stone Age did not end for lack of stone, and the oil age will end long before the world runs out of oil."

Yet, in the face of all incontrovertible scientific evidence of the disastrous effect of global warming (if anyone knows of something more disastrous than the destruction of all life on earth, please write and let us know what it is), what is one to say about this government's climate change denial?

We can only point to the idiocy of a system based on profits first, foremost and above life itself.

PRESS FUND

Last Friday Clive Hamilton, professor of public ethics at Charles Sturt University, resigned from the Climate Change Authority in protest at the Turnbull government continued attack on renewable energy power generation. Last week in an extraordinary performance the federal Treasurer brandished a large lump of coal in parliament, declaring we shouldn't be afraid of its use as an energy source. Listen in for the announcement of that new coal-fired power station! It will probably be funded by a federal grant, because capitalists are now unwilling to invest in such a risky venture. We'll be campaigning against any such move, but we really need your support, so please send in a Press Fund contribution if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$10, "Rough Red" \$5, "Round Figure" \$15, JS \$20, GL Spiers \$50

This week's total: \$100 Progressive total: \$1,035

Universities condemn ban

Universities Australia has expressed concern about the impact of the new US executive order on the free exchange of students, academics and researchers between Australia and the United States of America.

Universities Australia Chief Executive Belinda Robinson said Australia and the US had longstanding ties between university sectors and a proud tradition of student and staff exchanges on a large scale.

"If brilliant scholars from the seven countries named in the executive order are based in the US and visit Australia to collaborate on research, they would not be able to return to the US," she said.

"The ban has the potential to adversely affect research collaboration, academic conference participation, student exchange programs and postdoctoral work.

"Collaboration is the lifeblood of world-leading university research and is vital to the economies and societies of both of our nations," she said.

Over 7,000 US faculty members and 37 Nobel Laureates have signed a petition voicing concern and urging US President Donald Trump to reconsider the executive order on immigration.

The Association of American Universities has also called for its reversal, saying that the ban threatens to cause "irreparable damage" to the academic reputation of the United States.

Universities Canada expressed its concern in a statement issued last week.

The petition: We call on the leaders of Australian universities to take concrete action. We call on them to say NO to the politics of the Trump administration and YES to academic freedom, human rights and equity in diversity.

We call on them to:

- Take a united public stand opposing the policies of the Trump administration that target international students or intellectual freedom and exchange in any way;
- Support international students by opening more places, and funding extra scholarships, for students from countries barred by Trump.

Why is this important?

The Trump administration is targeting the rights and freedoms of people both inside the US and worldwide: from women's reproductive rights to refugees to intellectual freedom and academic exchange. If we let this happen without our institutions and governments taking a stand, then we are tacitly condoning Trump's actions.

This is why it is essential for our intellectual and political leaders to show international students that they are welcome in this country, and to show that the free international circulation of people and ideas is essential to a robust higher education system and to a robust community. ✪

Fortress Australia

Continued from page 1

For example, it could result in the loss of visa and denial of entry for persons who live in or have travelled through a specific country or a particular area of a country; have travelled through a particular area; have contact with people in a designated region or country; are of a specific nationality or even are the children of immigrants from certain countries. It could also be applied to specific religious beliefs or races.

It contains the potential for loss or denial of visa retrospectively if the offending behaviour occurred prior to it being considered a security risk or what the Minister considers undesirable.

This raises the question of why the government would make provisions for the banning of "cohorts" of people, maybe even nationals from a whole country, along similar lines to Trump, unless the intent is to use them.

Trump makes no pretence about his agenda of banning Muslims or nationals from those seven countries that are on the US's hit list. Dutton is not so honest about his intentions.

Ministerial powers

A visa holder will pass a revalidation check if there is "no adverse information" relating to the person, or if there is, that it is reasonable

to disregard that information. "No adverse information" is not defined in the legislation. It is left to the Minister to determine what is adverse information.

The Minister can delegate power to deny and cancel visas.

The Minister has complete discretionary power to determine who is required to undergo revalidation. While the process is underway their visas cease to be in effect, denying entry until they pass revalidation. If someone is in Australia at the time, they would not become unlawful non-citizens at the time, but if "adverse information" is found, then they would have to leave Australia.

The bill also provides for new classes of visas making it far more difficult to gain citizenship.

New developments

Recently leaked documents reveal plans for new types of visas, a longer and more difficult process to gain permanent visas and citizenship, and delays in gaining access to social security.

The government is getting away with these laws after years of successive governments demonising asylum seekers, then Muslims and increasingly giving prominence to and normalising politics of the far right.

The attacks on the ABC are taking their toll, not just with the loss of important programs but with a right-ward lurch in "balancing" viewpoints on shows such as *Q&A*, *The Drum*, *One on One* and who they interview.

The likes of Andrew Bolt and Pauline Hanson, who get massive space to spread their poison on Murdoch outlets, are increasingly fouling the airwaves and social media. It is not just becoming far right's ABC but the legitimisation of their extremist views is having an impact on the outlook of many in their audiences.

The closure of the concentration camps on Nauru and Manus Island is urgent. Their occupants should immediately be brought to Australia and given all the assistance to settle in the community.

The way forward is a non-discriminatory immigration policy, an increase in the intake of refugees and family reunions. The education system has an important role to play in fostering and teaching about multiculturalism.

This is the way to ending the bigotry that is being fostered, and restoration of multiculturalism which is being undermined. ✪

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea.”

Katherine Lee Bates – *America the Beautiful* (1893)

Support *The Guardian* by donating to Press Fund

Basic poverty trap

Anna Pha

As the income gap continues to widen and poverty is on the rise in Australia and other industrialised nations as result of decades of neo-liberal economic policies, the concept of a universal basic income is being touted in conservative quarters and amongst some left economists. Trials are underway for some form of basic income for unemployed in Canada, Finland, the US and several other European countries.

The concept dates back to the Renaissance of the 16th century where with the new mercantilism it was no longer seen as the preserve of the church and charitable individuals to cater for the needs of the poor.

Humanists of the time such as Thomas More and Johannes Ludovicus Vives saw the need for a guaranteed minimum income so those in need would not be tempted by morally bereft behaviour such as theft or prostitution. It has surfaced from time to time over the centuries, often amongst progressive thinkers. Since the 2008 global financial crisis and the deep global recession that followed, conservatives have been pushing the idea.

There are various models but in essence concept of a universal basic income is presented as a means of ensuring that every adult has an adequate income to provide for shelter and food. It could be a partial or complete substitute for the existing social security system. The government would pay every adult a flat amount regardless of whether they were already working and regardless of their age and health.

In a trial in Oakland, California, 100 families will receive unconditional cash grants ranging from \$1,370 to \$2,740 a month. In Finland, about 10,000 people will receive \$850 a month for two years in a program being trialled there.

The discussion has arisen to the backdrop of high and rising levels of structural unemployment, decline in trade union membership, repressive anti-terror and anti-trade union

legislation, institutionalised and rising poverty, growing state authoritarianism, systemic racism, sexism and xenophobia along with the more recent targeting of Muslims.

The Brexit vote in the UK and the election of Donald Trump have given impetus to the debate around a universal basic income. Capitalism is in deep crisis, increasingly failing to meet the needs of people or to protect the environment. Growing dissatisfaction with neo-liberalism is fueling the rise of extreme right forces.

In Australia, one third of pensioners live in poverty; denied an adequate income for a comfortable life and the right to live in dignity.

The number of unemployed is set to rise as robotisation and other technologies develop. Capitalism increasingly has no need for a large percentage of the labour force. This is to some extent covered up in unemployment figures which include an hour of work in the past couple of weeks as being employed. These figures also fail to take account of the hundreds of thousands of people who have given up on looking for work.

The economic situation is set to worsen with more people being thrown into poverty or onto the scrap heap as corporations lay them off to increase profitability.

Part-time work, casualisation and intermittent work, "zero wage" contracts, "Uberisation", low paid visa workers, and growing deregulation of the workforce and the assault on militant trade unions are all contributing to the present crisis.

Some conservative governments are concerned that the present system of unemployment benefits with waiting periods for benefits, stringent work and income tests are acting as barriers to workers studying, taking any work that becomes available or trying to set up their own businesses.

The trials are aimed at seeing if a basic income from government would change the behaviour of the unemployed.

Proponents of the scheme tend to be rather light-on when it comes to costings. To be affordable a universal payment would need to be an



incredibly low income. In Australia, there are approximately 19 million adults aged 18 or over.

One figure being suggested by academics is a universal payment of \$1,000 a month – not enough to even rent a house or fund the average mortgage. It would cost \$228 billion. The basic pension for an individual is close to \$1,600 a month and below the poverty line.

Present costs for social security system are just under \$160 billion. Would the government use the universal payment to wind back or abolish social security payments? It would go part way to funding a universal benefit.

Such a scheme avoids capitalism addressing the real economic questions, of addressing the lack of well paid secure jobs, the provision of affordable housing, of the urgent need to increase pensions and unemployment benefits by at least \$50 a week.

The replacement of the current system of social security, as

inadequate as it is, once abolished and replaced by a universal basic income would never be restored. The universal income could only be sustainable if it were well below the poverty line.

The scheme has other problems. For example, if the government is paying you \$1,000 or what other amount, would it down the track treat it like a restricted welfare card, controlling what you spend it on?

Neo-liberal economists are winding back spending, handing out tax cuts to the rich and big corporations, and claiming the social security system is "unsustainable". They aim to spend less, not more on the well being of people. In such conditions, by necessity, any universal basic income will result in cuts to incomes for the unemployed, pensioners and other social security recipients.

Proponents claim that it would provide an income to cover basics for the unemployed with no income tests or other conditions. This sounds great on the surface, but in reality

that income would be too low to raise a family, undertake studies or live above the poverty line.

But it would create a large pool of labour desperate for crumbs from the world of Ubers and 7-Elevens. It would also generate a highly profitable source of free labour, workers hoping to get a foot in the door.

The basic income would also serve employers as a new floor to drive down wages.

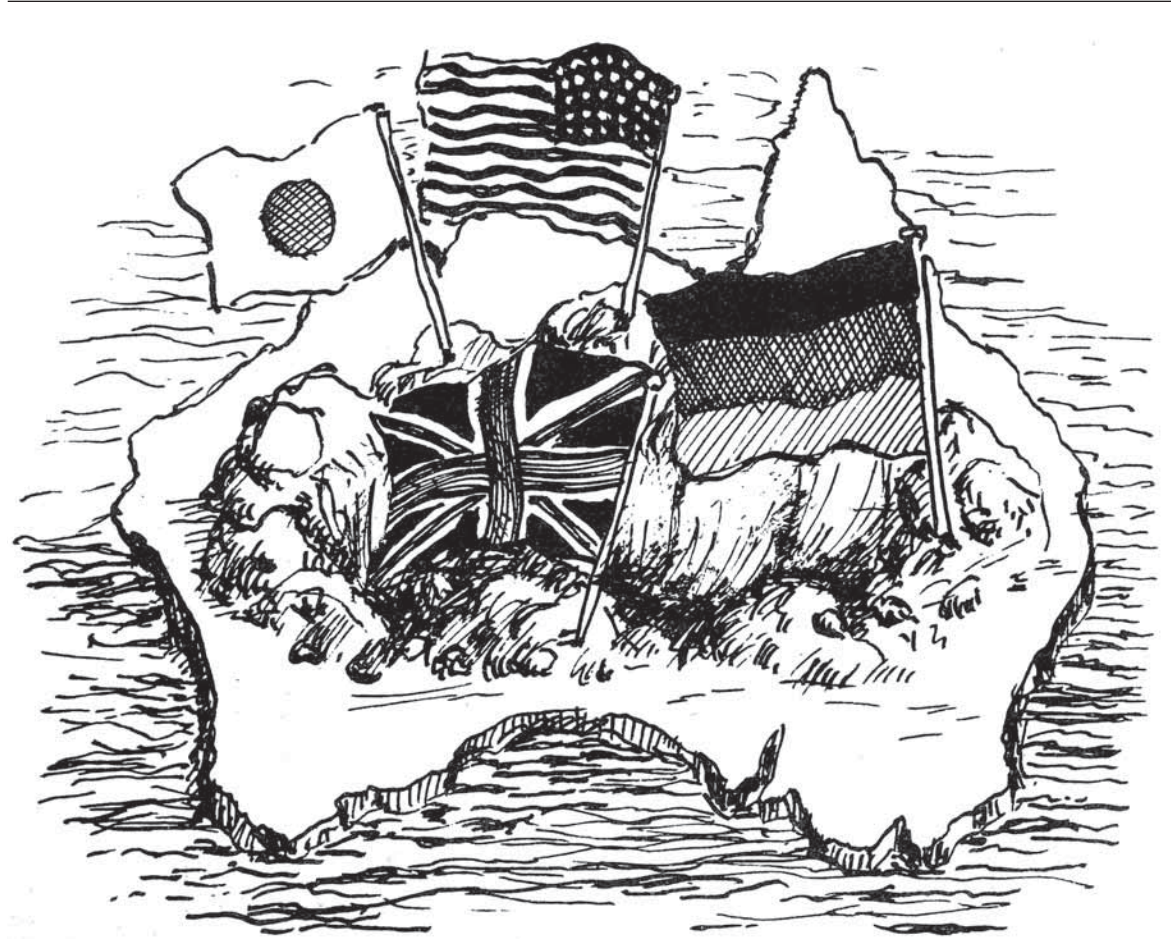
The scheme also attempts to sell the idea that there is no need to work. But the reality is that human society requires work. That work is part of the identity of a human being, in particular if that work is satisfying and contributes to society.

The immediate way forward is an increase in the amount of social security payments, an increase in corporate taxes, job creation programs, shorter working hours and higher wages.

Thanks to Richard Titelius for information used in the article. ✪

From the archives

Foreign loans uproar (see page 6) – *The Socialist*, July 1975



Politics in the Pub Perth presents

The People's Choice? WA State Election 2017

6-8 pm Wednesday February 22

43 Below Bar & Restaurant

43 Barrack Street, Perth CBD opposite Perth Town Hall

Guest speakers: In alphabetical order from the Arts Party, Greens, ALP and Socialist Alliance to discuss the issues, policies and processes of the coming election.

Hosted and chaired by the CPA

Food and drink available
Eating and drinking encouraged

Blogsite: politicsinthepub.blogspot.com.au

For more information: perth@cpa.org.au

Contact: 04198128272

IAC's future is unclear

Rudi Maxwell

The Turnbull government's muddled approach to Indigenous Affairs continued last month, with the dissolution of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) on January 31. As the *Koori Mail* reported in November last year, after the three-year appointments to the IAC expired on November 23, Turnbull extended the time-frame until January 31 this year.

The IAC met once in that extension, in mid-December.

From its formation under former Prime Minister Tony Abbott the IAC has been plagued with criticism from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies and people, with many pointing to problems with hand-picking advisors and issues surrounding transparency and purpose.

The last publicly available communiqué from the IAC is dated February 11, 2016 – almost a year ago. A spokesperson for Turnbull said he was “committed to the continuation” of the IAC.

“Members’ terms were extended until January 31 and then the appointment of new members goes through usual Cabinet processes,” she said. However, it seems unlikely that previous chair Warren Mundine

will be reappointed. In October last year Mundine took a public swipe at the federal government after they announced an inquiry into Indigenous incarceration without bothering to consult the IAC, saying he was “getting sick and tired of the crap that is coming out of this government in regard to Indigenous Affairs”.

“I’m not fussed in regard to the positions finishing,” Mundine told the *Koori Mail*. “What’s important is that this Prime Minister has to put his mark in the Indigenous Affairs area, put out his policies going forward. I think that’s critical. We’ve had the Productivity Commission report into Indigenous Affairs, the national audit of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and we’re about to see another Close the Gap report – which I’d firmly say is again going to be a damning report. So the big question is, ‘What is the Turnbull government going to do?’”

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples – the democratically elected Indigenous peak body – suggested that Turnbull scrap the IAC altogether and, instead, seek advice from already existing Indigenous organisations.

“This goes to very heart of the efforts to emphasise the importance of Congress with its



Jackie Huggins and Rod Little with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

membership expertise and experience across all sectors to the minister and Prime Minister,” co-chair Rod Little said.

“Congress is and will be a much more valuable informant to the parliament than hand-picked individuals with lesser networks, knowledge or experience across matters impacting on our people on a daily basis.”

Congress co-chair Jackie Huggins said it had been made clear last year through the Redfern Statement (a set of guidelines developed by Indigenous peak bodies for effective policy development in Indigenous affairs) that Indigenous people have the solutions.

“We have within our membership professionals, academics, experienced persons and organisations

plus most importantly, the beneficiaries of services who would in anyone’s mind be the best sources to inform of the impacts of policies, programs and services,” she said.

“Prime Minister, we are here. We have been for a number of years and will be for many more. It is time for genuine engagement with Congress.”
Koori Mail ✪

Bring Them Here

Locked up for seeking sanctuary

Imagine fleeing your country of birth because the words you wrote angered the regime in power so much that your life was in danger. But instead of being offered sanctuary by the country you fled to, you find yourself locked up in a remote island thousands of kilometres from home.

That’s the reality of life for Iranian journalist Behrouz Boochani.

For more than three years, Boochani, cartoonist “Eaten Fish” and actor Mehdi Savari have languished out of sight, out of mind on Manus Island.

A week ago, dozens of Australia’s best-known journalists, writers, actors and cartoonists took the unprecedented step of sending a letter to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull calling for the three men to be resettled here from the Manus Island detention centre.

For different reasons, all three men feared continuing persecution in Iran and embarked separately on treacherous journeys on open seas in a quest to claim asylum in

Australia. On Manus Island, their stories have become intertwined.

The little we know about life on Manus Island is due to Boochani’s courageous reporting for Australian and international publications, which has often put him at risk.

Eaten Fish’s sensitive and heart-rending cartoons eloquently depict the endless cruelty of our offshore detention regime.

And Savari’s talents as an actor and director of stage shows have provided some distraction from the daily grind experienced by his fellow embattled inmates.

All three men, like the hundreds of other asylum seekers detained on Nauru and Manus Island, have suffered immeasurably.

They each sought refuge from Iran so they could freely express themselves without fear of persecution or harm, but instead their freedom has been further suppressed in detention.

The farcical on again/off again resettlement deal with the US government has only increased their anguish.

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance is joining with a range of international freedom of expression organisations to call for the government to #bringthemhere.

We regard Boochani, Eaten Fish and Savari as professional colleagues who would make a meaningful contribution to Australian society.

Each has been recognised internationally – a motion in support of Savari was passed at last year’s International Federation of Actors congress; Eaten Fish won the 2016 Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning from Cartoonists Rights Network International; and Boochani has been shortlisted for 2017 Index on Censorship’s Freedom of Expression Awards.

MEAA has been a long-term campaigner against the strict media blackouts, secrecy and harsh anti-whistleblower legislation that governs not only the detention centres on Manus Island and Nauru, but asylum seeker policy in general.

Paul Murphy
MEAA

Public support for make it here

The Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union (AMWU) supports the findings of a recent poll published in Fairfax Media newspapers reporting that 83 percent of Australians believe we should be manufacturing more goods in Australia, but notes that Australians have thought this for decades.

“This is not new – Australians have been thinking this for many, many years. They know what politicians are only just waking up to – that manufacturing provides good, skilled jobs for Australians in both cities and the regions,” said AMWU national secretary Paul Bastian.

“Australians support having our trains built here, our naval ships built here, and they support having an auto industry which we are going to see end in October. Australia has a vibrant economy but it won’t stay that way unless governments support manufacturing.

“Advanced manufacturing of high technology components and renewable energy systems is just the start. What this country should be doing is utilising our highly educated and highly skilled workforce to drive technological development across a range of areas and create the jobs of the future,” Bastian said.

“We have just won the campaign to maintain naval shipbuilding in

Australia, and that will pay enormous dividends in the future with technology and skills transfer,” he said.


“Australia can’t afford to be left as a purely service economy just because the multinationals decide to export manufacturing jobs to low wage economies.”

Bastian said it was inexcusable for state and federal governments to focus purely on price when awarding contracts, when Australia has under-utilised manufacturing facilities across the country.

“Contract prices need to be considered on a ‘whole of life’ basis – which includes the cost of maintenance but also takes into account the local, social benefits of awarding contracts locally, for example – training opportunities for young people, employment provisions, and regional development.

“The union says that the federal government should be driving a national ‘local first’ policy on procurement – for example, for rail – that makes sure taxpayers get the best deal and that our economy gets a leg up.

“We have been hearing politicians talking about promoting Australian manufacturing for too long. The time for talking is over. What workers, companies and the community wants now is action.” ✪



Sydney

**VIGIL DEMANDING
THAT THE USA STOP
THE BLOCKADE ON CUBA**

Friday February 17 at 5:30 pm Martin Place – Sydney

Also to stop the subversion of funds against Cuba and
return Guantánamo to the Cuban people

Find out more about the

Communist Party of Australia

web www.cpa.org.au

email cpa@cpa.org.au

phone **02 9699 8844**

Public rage grows over NSW rail takeover

Peter Mac

Former NSW Liberal Premier Mike Baird said his recent decision to retire was prompted by family matters. Others suggested he wanted to avoid controversy over the rocketing costs of Sydney's new eastern suburbs light rail service, the questionable financial interests of some coalition politicians and their staff, and their intimate relationship with lobbyists representing the gambling, development and alcohol industries.

But another seething controversy concerns the proposed takeover of sections of Sydney's heavy rail network for a new privately-operated metro rail system.

The existing network is government-operated, except for the airport stations, which are privately run and shockingly expensive to use. The foreign-built driverless single-decker metro trains were originally planned for use on the new Northwest line, which will run from Rouse Hill about 30 kilometres north-west of the city, connecting with the existing line at Epping about 15 kilometres from the CBD.

The new tunnels can't accommodate the existing double-decker trains, and provision of new, entirely different trains will impose a totally unnecessary financial burden on taxpayers.

Moreover, the current 20 minute restriction on the time passengers have to stand while travelling will be greatly exceeded on the Northwest line during peak hours, and the majority of passengers will travel standing, whereas most would have been able to get a seat if the line had been designed for double deckers.

Last year the government announced the line would be extended to the city via Chatswood, and called tenders for construction of two new rail tunnels under the harbour.

Despite mounting public concern over high cost and design failings the government pressed ahead, knowing that transport-deprived north-west residents would welcome a rail service – at least before the scheme's faults became painfully apparent.

But now the government has announced that the existing fully-operational line running southwest from the city about 10 kilometres to Bankstown is also to be shut down and modified to accommodate metro single deckers.

That would involve tremendous disruption to local residents and an enormous, totally unnecessary cost to all NSW citizens. During the six-month conversion period the line would be replaced by a bus service to convey Bankstown line passengers into the CBD.

The government will also convert an existing rail tunnel to take Northwest line trains, but for several

months that project will put three existing stations out of action, forcing at least 14,000 people to transfer to buses and then back to trains to reach the city during peak hours.

As the Atlanta Olympic Games proved, attempting to move huge numbers of extra passengers by bus is a recipe for transport chaos, especially in the case of Sydney's often gridlocked roads.

The Bankstown line conversion would also necessitate the enforced resumption and demolition of at least 150 homes and businesses. Hundreds of Sydney residents have already been forcibly evicted with inadequate compensation during construction of Sydney's infamous WestConnex tollway.

Dodgy statistics, fake reasoning

The government recently investigated public opinion in a questionnaire regarding the so-called "upgrade" of the Bankstown line to Metro operation. Accompanying text made the highly misleading statement that 200 metro trains could arrive at the city every peak hour, compared with 120 double-decker trains at present.

The critical issue is not how many trains can reach the city per hour but how many passengers, and that depends on the number of trains arriving times the number of passengers per train.

Double-decker trains carry far more passengers than single-deckers, and the number of trains arriving per hour depends on the number of stops and the signalling and track conditions.

The questionnaire assumed that the new metro trains would miss two of the current stops along the Bankstown line and at Town Hall, but that the existing double-decker trains would stop at all three stations, as they do currently.

It also assumed the metro trains would benefit from improvements to the signalling equipment, track and stations, but it made no such assumption for the double-deckers.

Given equivalent operating conditions, double-decker trains could certainly deliver more passengers to the CBD in peak hours than single deckers.

And then there's the financial cost. Extending the new, mostly underground metro line 65 kilometres from Rouse Hill to Bankstown via the city would bring the cost to a staggering \$20 billion.

Last year the government announced that by 2021 work would commence on construction of another metro line, running from Parramatta 20 kilometres eastwards to the city, at an estimated cost of \$10 billion. Little information was given about stops, but eventually the new line would almost certainly replace



Preserved Bradfield motor car C3045 at the NSW Rail Transport Museum.

the existing main western line to Parramatta.

The government gained \$6 billion from the sale of electricity distributor Ausgrid, but the total estimated eventual cost of the Northwest and Parramatta metro lines is \$24 billion.

The government knows that Sydneysiders love their trains, and that ill-intentioned interference with the rail system has in the past contributed to the downfall of transport ministers and even governments.

Accordingly, it adopted a tactic of initially describing the new privately-operated system as a means of supplementing the existing rail network rather than replacing it.

The government refuses to disclose its long term plan. However, the proposal to convert the Bankstown line and construct the new Parramatta line has boosted long-held suspicions that the government wants to ultimately dump Sydney's entire heavy rail network, in a gargantuan and totally corrupt waste of public money, in order to turn the state's rail operations over to private hands.

To achieve that objective it's likely to flog off much of the state's crucial infrastructure, beginning with Endeavour Energy, the Land and Property Information service, the state forestry business and parts of Sydney Water.

But meanwhile, public anger is rising over the lack of metro seating, closure of the Bankstown line, the lack of stops on the revamped Bankstown line and at Town Hall, the extremely hazardous replacement of train drivers by computers, and the lack of any arguable public benefit for introducing the unbelievably expensive metro system.

It was an entirely appropriate time for Baird to exit, leaving his successor Gladys Berejiklian to face the growing wrath of Sydneysiders and other NSW residents. ❖



In a speech at the Canberra Press Club Malcolm Turnbull repeated the claim that school funding had increased by 50 percent in the past decade. Not so, according to the NSW Teachers Federation President Maurie Mulheron. A NSW government analysis of federal education spending for the period of 2000-2013 showed school spending had increased only 0.97 percent, which was significantly lower than the real per capita economic growth of 1.48 percent over the same period. More importantly, any increase during this period was not distributed according to need. Since 2014, the Gonski funding agreement has seen funding in NSW schools increase. However, the total recurrent funding increase is to be rolled out bit by bit over a six-year period. By the end of the 2016 school year, only 18 percent of Gonski additional funding had been allocated to schools. "Turnbull's claim of a 50 percent increase in school funding must be one of those 'alternative facts' we've been hearing about", Mulheron said. "The reality is that his government has opposed the Gonski needs-based schools funding model since day one and is still refusing to fully fund it beyond 2017".

"It's been well established in research overseas that when you get more prisoners than there is space available to fit them, you get an increase in violence, especially among younger prisoners," said the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research director Don Weatherburn. He pointed out that "in NSW over the last 25 years both major political parties have simply tried to outdo each other on law and order. The fear of being thought of as being soft on crime and be attacked by talkback radio hosts and the tabloid media pushed the parties into demanding tougher and tougher penalties." Prisoner numbers reached 12,729 in December in a system designed for 11,000 inmates. There are 4,388 people on remand, in custody pending trial. The District Court is so busy that people have to spend more time on remand. The Bureau report also noted that NSW prisoners have the lowest out-of-cell hours in the country – an average of 7.8 per day. Access to some services and resources were deteriorating. It seems that more money is being put into building more jails than on rehabilitation. The NSW government will spend \$3.8 billion funding 7,000 new prisoner beds. That includes 2,800 in the next three years. At the same time skills programs are being dropped and teachers made redundant. Not a good recipe for rehabilitation.

Last week our dear leaders were back at work. There are so many international and domestic problems to discuss and make sensible decisions about. What do they do? They start the year by slanging at each other. And here is the problem: who cares if Turnbull does not like Shorten. Parliament House is their place of work and they should not waste time trying to out-bully each other. We are over it – it's vulgar and disgusting. There is an old expression – "conduct unbecoming".

Join in the Launch of Common Action

We live in a society not an economy – A collective project to change the national debate about our economy and society

5:30 pm for 6:00 pm Wednesday February 22
Sydney Trades Hall Auditorium (enter from 367 Sussex St)

Refreshments provided -video clips, discussion starters

Speakers include: Kevin Tory, Aboriginal Trade Union Elder; Rita Mallia, President, NSW Construction & General Division, CFMEU; Jim Stanford, Director, Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute; Jane Corpuz-Brock, Spokesperson, Migrant Australia, Filipino migrant workers organisation

www.commonaction.org.au RSVP contact@commonaction.org.au

Nugan Hand

A tale of drugs, dirty money, the CIA and the ousting of

Joan Coxsedge*

In November 2015, a news item appeared in a weekday edition of *The Australian* about the reappearance of Michael Hand, now 73 years old and openly living in the US State of Idaho, who is running a business supplying combat weaponry and hunting knives. An appropriate choice considering his background. But few Australians will either know or remember much about his role in the notorious Nugan Hand Merchant Bank which, with its other two founders, Frank Nugan and Bernie Houghton, was set up in Sydney in 1973 with a paid-in capital of \$1 million.

Nugan claimed the money had come from astute share dealings during the 1970s mining boom, although his colleagues were sceptical. For good reason. Frank Nugan had less than \$20,000 in his bank account when he'd written a cheque for \$980,000 and Nugan Hand Ltd had a mere \$80.

But Nugan Hand was not a bank at all. It was an "unbank" that never did any banking nor hired any bankers, but became the centre-point in this country for a vast clandestine empire involved in drug-running, money-laundering, fraud, secret arms deals and covert intelligence operations, employing enough US Admirals and Generals to start a mini-war.

Its line-up included top brass in the persons of General Edwin Black who ran the Hawaii office, General LeRoy Manor who ran the Philippines office, General Erle Cocke Jr who ran the Washington office and Rear Admiral Earl "Buddy" Yates, the bank's president. Its "consultants" included former CIA deputy director Walt MacDonald and Guy Pauker, personal adviser to Kissinger and Brzezinski.

Nugan Hand's lawyer, former CIA boss William Colby, had retired from the agency after a long and controversial career in clandestine services. Colby ran the notorious Operation Phoenix program, an assassination and terror group responsible for the torture and deaths of an estimated 40,000 Vietnamese suspected of having Viet Cong connections.

Sacked by President Ford in 1976 for malfeasance, two decades later Colby died in strange circumstances. He was not a popular man in the intelligence community. Many considered him a traitor for testifying before various congressional committees. In the event, officialdom claimed Colby had gone out in his canoe and drowned, but his body didn't turn up for nine days, looking as if it had been immersed in water for only one or two days before being tossed in. Even more puzzling, divers had thoroughly searched the same area many times before.

Incredibly, since Nugan Hand's collapse in 1979 and despite four investigations, we still only know a small part of the story and its impact on Australian society. Not surprisingly, a great deal of material was suppressed, shredded or "disappeared", but in this article I have put together what is known, including some of my own material written at that time, trying to make sense of the workings of what was virtually a secret government that operated around the world unchecked for more than four decades.

The links between organised crime and intelligence agencies are not new, but Nugan Hand's influence extended way beyond a bevy of crooks out to make a quick buck. In intelligence jargon, it was a "conduit" set up to influence Australian politicians, trade union officials and journalists, some of whom were

probably unaware of the source of favours and of disinformation.

Slush fund for Opposition

A Nugan Hand principal, Karl Schuller, gave evidence that the CIA had transferred a slush fund of \$2,400,000 to Australia's opposition parties in March 1973, a mere four months after Gough Whitlam was voted in as Prime Minister of Australia.

Former CIA officer Victor Marchetti confirmed that the CIA had given funding to anti-Labor parties, but no documentation was ever found, probably because thousands of documents were destroyed, underpinning the reality that secret agencies are not an aberration, but are a fundamental part of society to maintain the existing power structure.

Nugan Hand has particular relevance for Australia because some of its people were directly implicated in the destruction of the Whitlam Labor government in November 1975. The day after the election at the end of 1972, Whitlam announced that he did not want his staff vetted by ASIO, bringing a furious response from the "security people" who passed the message on to the Americans.

The CIA man at Canberra's US Embassy curtly told a local journalist: "Your Prime Minister has just cut off one of his options." And apparently all the others. It soon became abundantly clear that the CIA was planning to deal with the upstart Labor government with the arrival of Marshall Green as the new US Ambassador, the only politically notable person ever appointed to the post.

According to the Pentagon Papers, Green was a high-ranking policy-maker in South-East Asia, had lectured at the CIA-sponsored Centre for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown and been involved with at least four other countries that later sprouted coups. As Ambassador to Indonesia from 1965-69, Green played a crucial role in the events that led to the massacre of at least one million Indonesian "communists" in the violent overthrow of President Sukarno and was quite blatant in his dealings with ALP leaders.

One senior minister, Clyde Cameron, reported that a threat was made by Green in his own office to the effect that if Labor handed control and ownership of US multinational subsidiaries to the Australian people "we would move in". And "move in" they did.

Destabilisation of a government

The task of destabilising the Whitlam government was given to Task Force 157, a mini-CIA set-up in the mid-1960s under the umbrella of US Naval Intelligence so that its real controller, Henry Kissinger, could deny any connection. Task Force 157 used several cover organisations incorporated in Sydney, including Australasian and Pacific Holdings, World Maritime, Aeromarine and Pearce Morgan, but its most important front in this country was undoubtedly the Nugan Hand Bank. Its CIA contact man was Ted Shackley, who dealt directly with Hand and Houghton. A Cold War veteran, Shackley ran the agency's activities throughout South-East Asia and later became number two in charge of its entire clandestine service.

In 1974, Watergate hit the headlines, a corruption scandal that swirled around the Nixon White House, exposing the President's part in the brutal coup d'état that destroyed Chile's Allende government a year earlier. On the first

anniversary of the coup, Whitlam addressed the United Nations General Assembly warning against moves to bring about political and economic change by "unconstitutional, clandestine, corrupt methods, by assassination or terrorism", suggesting he knew his government was also under attack, but apparently unaware that at least two ASIS agents were operating out of the Australian Embassy in Chile directly under the control of the CIA during the time of the coup.

A mere three months after Whitlam's UN speech, Christopher Boyce, son of an FBI agent and cipher clerk at TRW Incorporated, a Californian aerospace company and important CIA contractor, was sent to work in the "black vault", the code room where top secret messages were received and deciphered from US bases and satellites from around the world, including Pine Gap.

While discussing Watergate and Chile with his long-time friend Andrew Lee, Boyce said: "You think that's bad? You should hear what the CIA is doing to the Australians." The duo became an unlikely amateur spy network, but Lee was a drug addict, mentally unstable and desperately needed money. He flew to Mexico City, went to the Soviet Embassy and sold the document to the Russians for US\$76,000, naming Christopher Boyce as the source, even though he'd promised not to do so.

Prosecuting lawyers did not refute Boyce's allegations but agreed to a direct CIA request that their client would not mention the "Australian information" at his trial. Boyce and Lee were convicted.

"Our man Kerr"

Lee got life and after a "psychiatric assessment" Boyce was sentenced to 40 years jail in a federal penitentiary where he was kept in solitary confinement. It is claimed that his only hope of freedom rested on his continued silence about events in Australia. But in an interview he gave to Australian journalist Bill Pinwell, Boyce made specific mention of one name, Governor-General Kerr. The CIA referred to him as "our man Kerr".

Boyce also mentioned that our unions were infiltrated by agents who manipulated them on CIA orders to prevent strikes and that the US was only disclosing a fraction of Pine Gap's activities to us, ignoring the treaty that permitted the base. In Robert Lindsey's book *The Falcon and the Snowman*, Lindsey surmised that the Soviet Union might have tipped off the Labor Party about the information it had received, leading to questioning by Whitlam.

By the end of 1974, almost every move by the Whitlam government or by individual parliamentarians, whether it was a departmental decision, a staff appointment, an international cable, telex, phone call or confidential letter, became the property of the media in an unparalleled campaign of personal vituperation, hinting at incompetence, dissension, corruption and scandal within government ranks. Hardly surprising that in this atmosphere of intolerable pressure mistakes were made.

Things were coming to a head. US Ambassador Marshall Green had left Australia, no doubt believing it was better to distance himself from events that were about to unfold. In late October 1975, Whitlam sacked the head of ASIS, our overseas secret agency, for failing to disclose its activities in East Timor.

He then asked his foreign affairs department for a list of all CIA officials who had served in Australia after it came out that a CIA officer, Richard Stallings, was a friend



Gough Whitlam sits with singer Little Pattie, one of the celebs

of conservative National Country Party leader Doug Anthony and had rented Anthony's home, further infuriating our "pals" in Washington.

On November 8, 1975, Shackley called in ASIO to say: "that the CIA was gravely concerned about the actions of the Whitlam government", apparently on the behest of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, demanding that the "message" be relayed at once to ASIO's Director-General. On that same day, the CIA reported to President Ford.

Two days later, on November 10, ASIO Acting Director-General Frank Mahoney received an extraordinary telex from his Washington office stating that the Australian Prime Minister was a security risk in his own country and openly threatened to cut US-Australian intelligence ties. A message with the express purpose of convincing Governor-General Kerr to dismiss Whitlam?

Pine Gap and the "Loans Affair"

A crucial date was coming up. The Pine Gap Treaty signed on December 9, 1966, stated that after an initial nine years, either party could terminate the agreement on one year's notice, which would determine the fate of the CIA's most valuable overseas base.

It was widely believed that Whitlam would have renewed the lease but that may not be the case. In response to a series of questions on foreign policy from the Socialist Party of Australia [now Communist Party of Australia - Ed], first published in *The Socialist* on October 22, 1975, Whitlam gave a detailed reply. He included a quote from Hansard given on April 3, 1974: "The Australian Government takes the attitude that there should not be foreign military bases, stations, installations in Australia. We honour agreements covering existing stations. We do not favour the extension or prolongation of any of those existing ones."

On December 9 Whitlam would have been empowered to act but he didn't get the chance.

"The Australian Government takes the attitude that installations in Australia. We honour agreements extension or prolongation of

the Whitlam government



Whitlam's supporters who sang his election campaign jingle, *It's Time*.

Parliament returned on November 11 when Whitlam was sacked by Governor-General John Kerr using archaic constitutional powers, dangerous powers still in place.

Whitlam's "crimes"? He pulled us out of the Vietnam War, stopped conscription and released the young men jailed for non-compliance with the draconian National Service Act, abolished the White Australia Policy and assumed responsibility for Aboriginal health, education, welfare and land rights, initiated pay rises for workers, started MediBank [predecessor of Medicare – Ed], abolished university fees, established legal aid and relaxed censorship and divorce laws, among many other initiatives.

But it seems his biggest "crime" was the "Loans Affair" committed by Minister for Minerals and Energy Rex Connor who tried to "buy back the farm", in other words, buy back our foreign-owned resources.

The facts? Ruling circles in OPEC countries had accumulated vast sums following the 1973 leap in oil prices and made loans to the governments of Britain, France, Denmark, Italy and Japan without causing a commotion.

An Australian Executive Council meeting in December 1974 had authorised Connor to seek loans of up to \$4,000 million "... to deal with the international energy crisis, to strengthen Australia's external financial position, to provide immediate protection for Australia in regard to supplies of minerals and energy ..."

The authority was not given to Treasury because of the known treachery and hostility of departmental heads to the government. Although the decision was supposed to be secret, it didn't take long before offers arrived from some strange quarters. The government was a sitting duck for a CIA pincer movement in the "Destroy Labor" stakes.

In Lane One, Tirath Khemlani, Pakistani con-man, arms-dealer, "commodities merchant" minus an office, who was ordered to approach Connor by a Hong Kong arms firm closely associated with Commerce International, a

powerful Brussels-based armaments company linked to the CIA. Connor checked Khemlani's credentials and was given a firm OK by a London bullion firm.

In Lane Two, Melbourne businessman George Harris, friend of the Liberal Establishment, who contacted Federal Treasurer Jim Cairns with an offer of overseas loan money. Harris' overseas backers came from the New York office of Commerce International, the same firm lurking in Khemlani's murky background. Both had track records that should have made them singularly unattractive to their Labor backers. Harris got the thumbs down, but didn't give up.

At a later meeting in Cairns' office in March 1975, Harris produced a letter from a New York company offering \$4,000 million at 7.2 percent interest with an outrageous 2.5 percent brokerage with the money supplied by Commerce International, an offer flatly rejected by Cairns.

Harris was left in an outer office to dictate a draft letter of authorisation to one of Dr Cairns' secretaries, a Miss Stegman, a friend of Harris. She handed over the signed letter and he swiftly exited. It was addressed to Alco International and endorsed a 2.5 percent commission, a condition that had been flatly rejected by Cairns only a few minutes earlier. A depressing saga that developed a life of its own and had more twists and turns than the Big Dipper.

Despite the howls of the media not a cent was paid to anyone by the government, nor did any member of the government profit from the affair. The anti-Labor forces, however, profited greatly. The media continued to hammer the "Loans Scandal" and continued to publish pages of leaked telexes and documents, most of which were of mind-numbing triviality.

This did not matter, as the technique was meant to convey the impression of scandal by flinging glaring headlines across the page assuming that the expanses of fine print underneath would be accepted as damning evidence by most readers who wouldn't bother churning

through it to discover its irrelevancy. Connor's and Cairns' crime was stupidity not theft.

Supply blocked

For lack of anything more substantial, Opposition leader Malcolm Fraser seized on it as the "reprehensible circumstance" he had been waiting for and on October 15, 1975, the anti-Labor opposition used its single-vote majority in the Senate to block supply.

Five days before, eight leading Professors of Law had publicly declared that blocking the budget was "constitutionally improper" and "against all established convention", but were largely ignored, like a number of vital questions that remained unanswered:

Who leaked the documents that were bandied about so freely? Why did so many of them surface overseas, particularly in the US? Who brought out Khemlani and introduced him to Labor ministers? Who turned the "loans affair" into a major negative issue?

If successful, it would have been a far better proposition than our involvement with transnationals. Before the coup, trade unions had threatened retaliatory action and with genuine leadership, the entire country could have been tied up in a national strike with more crowds out on the streets than during the Vietnam War.

A mass movement would have rocked the conspirators and forced the Governor-General to resign, but such leadership was lacking. Bob Hawke, president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and member of the ALP Federal Executive flew to Canberra and issued an appeal to workers to "cool it". And Whitlam's rage was mainly directed at the Governor-General and not against the forces that stood behind him.

Whitlam and his colleagues were deprived of the normal prerogative of a retiring government, of choosing the date and issues for an election and the nature of the dismissal had made them look as if they were convicted criminals, lending credence to the continuing cries of scandal from anti-Labor forces. They were even denied access to information that would normally have been made available.

In any event, it appeared as if they were dazed by the coup and incapable of analysing how and why it had occurred. On December 13, the anti-Labor forces regained control of parliament, which they regarded as their birth-right. And on January 22, 1976, Fraser became Prime Minister and paid his dues to US imperialism and the CIA by giving them everything they asked for, offering them the Cockburn Sound Naval Base even before they had put in an official request. Aussie forelock-tugging at its finest.

The National Intelligence Daily reported that "the Fraser government had underscored the importance of Australia's ties with traditional allies, correcting what it saw as the tendency of the Labor Government to ignore such ties in the pursuit of Australian nationalism ... Canberra will push ahead with the construction of a new naval base on the Indian Ocean coast of Western Australia ... On the matter of port calls by US nuclear-powered warships, Canberra is not expected to impose obstacles ..."

Fraser was also seen as a plus for US business interests. "Direct government involvement in the mineral and energy field will be greatly reduced by the Fraser Government, a development which will tend to reassure potential foreign investors ... The Fraser Government has promised incentives for oil exploration and production."

Governor-General Kerr

Much has been written about the role of Kerr in the removal of the Labor Government, about his arrogance and pomposity and his close relationship with High Court Chief Justice, Sir Garfield Barwick, but almost nothing about his far-right views and long-standing ties to military intelligence.

During WW2 he was a member of the hush-hush "Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs" set up to counter "enemy elements" in Australia. Kerr was then sent to Washington where he had a brief stint with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) which morphed into the CIA. In the 1950s, he became chief legal adviser to the "Industrial Groups" which was strongly linked to the virulent anti-communist Democratic Labor Party whose destructive behaviour had kept Labor out of office for 23 years.

Kerr became an enthusiastic member of the elite, invitation-only, Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, which in 1967 was exposed in Congress as being founded, funded and run by the CIA. The group, like other similar CIA-backed outfits, held seminars and gatherings with the over-arching theme of anti-communism.

In the 1960s as its founding president, Kerr helped organise and run the Law Association for Asia and the Western Pacific, travelling to the US to get funding from a tax-free group called the Asia Foundation, a mob also exposed in Congress as a CIA conduit for money and influence.

Victor Marchetti, a retired CIA officer, wrote in his book *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* that: "the Asia Foundation often served as a cover for clandestine operations ... the CIA paid for Kerr's travel, built his prestige and even published his writings through a subsidised magazine. He continued to go to the CIA for money."

During Ambassador Green's tenure, Kerr received personal briefings on "international affairs", giving him special access to matters which were to dominate Australian political life during 1975.

When asked about his dodgy connections, Kerr said: "he was pretty sure he was unaware of the CIA's concern". What garbage! But why didn't Whitlam do his homework before appointing this creep? And why do academics who write about the dismissal treat it as a home-grown plot when there is abundant evidence of CIA involvement?

And why do they play down the profound effect the ousting of the Labor government had on the Australian body politic, spelled out by Whitlam at the Australian National University on October 29, 1975, a mere 11 days before he was sacked: "the question is whether any duly elected reformist government will be allowed to govern in future. What is at stake is whether the people who seek change and reform are ever again to have confidence that it can be achieved through the normal parliamentary processes." A question that can only be answered in the negative.

* Joan Coxedge is a political activist, artist and writer who authored *Thank God for the Revolution* (1984), *Cold Tea for Brandy* (2013), *Old Cuba, World Heritage* (2014), and co-authored *Rooted in Secrecy* (1982). NB The above is the first part of a long article by Joan Coxedge which will shortly be published in full as a pamphlet by the *Guardian*. ✪

there should not be foreign military bases, stations, covering existing stations. We do not favour the any of those existing ones."

The journalist's weapon – Truth

Akin Olgun

A journalist describes the Turkish author and investigative journalist Ahmet Sik, as “one that seeks the truth.” It wasn’t long before Sik experienced the danger that comes with chasing the truth in Turkey. Living in an authoritarian country and going after the truth means you are risking your life.

When you look at the number of journalists killed in different countries, you may not see the terrifying methods of oppression used by the authoritarian regimes there. But you should realise that the most courageous journalists are found under those regimes.

Hrant Dink, a Turkish-Armenian journalist and editor of the *Agos* newspaper who was assassinated in January 2007, summarised the situation facing journalists in Turkey when he said: “Either I really liked danger, or it liked me.”

If you are chasing the truth and you reveal it without distorting it then you are in danger. No authoritarian regime likes to hear criticism and it always sees such things as a “threat.”

But truth is a journalist’s only weapon. The fact that those in power are scared of the person who holds the truth shows us what an illusion that power actually is. The early 1990s were dark and unforgiving times in Turkey. Anyone who lived through them will tell you about the extrajudicial executions, the kidnappings and the missing people, the villages that were burned down and the Kurds who were killed.

They will tell you how no-one questioned the violence of the state.

Renault’s symbol became a symbol of fear for dissenters. In these cars, the counterinsurgency kidnapped people, many of whom were never found.

Every week the families of those missing people, who came to be known as “Saturday Mums,” held a sit-in at the Galatasaray square in Istanbul. For over 600 weeks, they continued to ask about the fate of their loved ones.

The reason I write this flashback is to begin the story of how the

Turkish authorities tried to silence and label Ahmet Sik a threat, all because he took his camera wherever there were extrajudicial killings or state violence.

Metin Goktepe, a journalist at the *Evrensel* newspaper, was a close friend of Ahmet’s. In January 1996, Goktepe was following the story of the funerals of political convicts who were killed in an operation at the Istanbul Umraniye prison.

He was detained by police and taken to the same gym where hundreds of people who wanted to attend the funerals were being held. The police beat and killed him. Sik and Goktepe’s journalist friends fought to get justice and put those responsible behind bars.

In June 2011, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, then prime minister, described Sik’s unpublished book investigating the Gulen Movement’s infiltration of the judiciary, the police and the army as being more dangerous than a bomb. It was written during a time when the government and the Gulen Movement were allies conspiring together to conduct a witch hunt through illegal wire-tapping and tracking. It was a time before the Gulen Movement was branded a terrorist organisation and blamed for the failed July 15, 2016 coup.

Sik’s unpublished book, *The Imam’s Army*, landed him in jail for 375 days.

The reason Sik was released was because of the incessant campaigns from democracy groups and because the fight between the Gulen Movement and the government escalated, revealing cracks in their partnership.

Met by journalists at the doors of the prison upon his release, Sik said: “Everyone should know this. From all this oppression and persecution, a life that we yearn and fight for and a life that the government is scared of will blossom.”

After leaving the prison, Sik continued to chase news and write. The main media channels, that were under extreme pressure and control, found ways to keep him off the air and out of their papers. The method



Ahmet Sik: In June 2011, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, then prime minister, described Sik’s unpublished book as being more dangerous than a bomb.

they used to do this was one of history’s most oppressive, censorship.

Sik began reporting on the jihadists crossing the Turkish border into Syria and investigating the forces that provided them with logistical support. Right after, he started looking into the Turkish intelligence services and the government’s role in the shipment of arms across the border. This, once again, made him an enemy of the state.

He started receiving threats from those organising the shipments. He began noting down the people who would be responsible for things that might happen to him. After spending time in London campaigning on the freedom of the press with the NGOs English PEN, Free World and Article 19, Sik returned to Turkey and found the country had been dragged into a new period of darkness.

Erdogan perceived the failed July 15 coup as “God’s gift” and used it as a chance to purge his erstwhile allies in the Gulen Movement. He did not hesitate to use this chance to label his political opponents terrorists and attack Kurds, opposition politicians, academics, journalists and writers.

Though the Gulen Movement had become enemy number one, its methods remained a friend of the government. Erdogan started taking away

all democratic rights by implementing a state of emergency and issuing executive orders until “safety was restored.” What followed was Turkey’s largest state-sponsored witch hunt since the coup of September 12 1980.

Sik was once again a target. He knew that he would be arrested but he refused to stop seeking and reporting on the truth. “Just because we are worried,” he said, “doesn’t mean we have to hide the truth.”

On December 29 last year, Sik was once again detained by the police at his home. His ideas, his journalism and his social media feeds were classified as “terrorist propaganda” and used against him in court. Sik responded to questions by explaining what journalism is.

He told his prosecutors: “I believe that sharing the truth with the public without distorting or betraying it is a duty... It is a right for the public to know the truth and this right has been entrusted to the journalist.”

In 2011 Sik was arrested by Gulenists for exposing their corruption and brutality, but this time he is accused of operating terrorist propaganda in support of the Gulen movement. Those who accused him realised that their accusations sounded ridiculous and so added support of

the Kurdistan Workers’ Party to their accusations.

Ahmet Sik is currently still in jail. According to data from the Journalists Association of Turkey, 780 journalists’ press cards were cancelled in 2016.

Over 800 journalists had to go in front of a judge because of what they wrote while 189 journalists were physically and verbally attacked. Over 150 publications have been shut down and over 140 journalists are under arrest.

In addition, 14 members of parliament from the HDP opposition, including the party’s co-leaders and 37 mayors, are in prison.

“Even under different gods, fascism is the only religion that doesn’t change,” tweeted Sik recently. I should add that there is now a separate case against him because of these words.

What can we do? That was the question.

There is only one thing. To tell the truth at the top of our voice. “The emperor has no clothes.” Akin Olgun is a Turkish freelance journalist and former political prisoner living in exile from Turkey. *Morning Star* ✪

Bangladesh Striking workers jailed

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has condemned the imprisonment by the Bangladesh authorities of at least 26 garment workers, including several union representatives, for participating in strike action in favour of a living minimum wage.

Trade union offices in Ashulia, the garment-producing hub of the capital Dhaka, have been invaded, vandalised and forcibly shut down, with membership documents burned and furniture removed. More than 1,600 workers have been fired and police have filed cases against 600 workers and trade union leaders.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said “Bangladesh has an appalling record of abuse and violations of fundamental workers’ rights and this latest round of repression against impoverished garment

workers, who are simply asking for a wage that provides enough for them and their families to live on, is a disgrace. The government’s long-standing anti-union stance leaves workers living from hand to mouth, and deprives them of the means to demand safe working conditions. We demand that these workers be released, and that the government live up to its obligations to respect fundamental labour rights.

“Garment workers in Bangladesh have the unequivocal right to organize and must be paid a living wage on which they can survive.”

Nearly four years have passed since the collapse of the Rana Plaza building. Though considerable progress has been made in the area of fire and building safety, primarily through the Accord, the Government of Bangladesh has done

tragically little to guarantee the respect for the rule of law, including labour law and international labour standards.

The European Union and others which have special trading arrangements with Bangladesh must use their leverage to support decent wages and working conditions in the supply chains that serve consumers in their countries. Global brands doing business with Bangladeshi suppliers must also accept their share of responsibilities.

Global Unions Federations IndustriALL and UNI have launched an international petition in support of the imprisoned workers – #EveryDayCounts.

For more information, see: www.industrialunion.org ✪

Film Screening – Adelaide

Time to Draw the Line

Monday February 20 (UN Social Justice Day)

7:00pm Capri Theatre

141 Goodwood Road Goodwood

A film by Fabio Cavadini and Amanda King

The David and Goliath battle over the absence of a sea border between Australia and Timor-Leste.

Learn about how Australia is stealing resources from Timor-Leste’s half of the Timor and why.

Also hear key speakers

Purchased tickets at Demand Film Cost: \$20 waged \$15 concession

More information

Andy Alcock: 0457 827 014 andyalcock@internode.on.net

Bob Hanney: 0469 359 199 bobhanney48@gmail.com

AETFA SA – 41 Years of Solidarity with Timor-Leste for Independence & Justice
(Affiliated to the Timor Sea Justice Campaign)

Ukraine

No military solution

“The entire nature of the existence of the Ukrainian government has been designed as a provocation toward Russia. Remember the very nature of the coup that overthrew the Yanukovich government was in response to him not signing the EU Association Agreement. Moreover, there was a discussion potentially of Ukraine joining the Eurasian Economic Union, which, what we see today is with the Eurasian Economic Union coming together with the new Silk Road of China. This defines an entirely new and very important essence of the emerging polycentric world, which the people who orchestrated the coup – the likes of Victoria Nuland and her husband, Robert Kagan, have been adamantly opposed to this polycentric world... The election of Donald Trump has overturned that order in terms of the détente that is emerging between the United States and Russia.”

Dave Christie
from LaRouche PAC Policy Committee

Ukraine is using the conflict in the country to position itself diplomatically and politically: as a way to gain sympathy, support, and money and to reposition itself with the new US government, said Brian Becker, coordinator of the anti-war ANSWER coalition.

In recent days, the situation has been escalating throughout the Donetsk region with Kiev's troops saying they're only retaliating to aggression from anti-government forces.

The village of Avdeevka, which is meant to be a “no heavy weapons zone” under the Minsk peace agreement, has suffered heavy shelling in

the past few days resulting in some soldier and civilian deaths. UNICEF reported over 17,000 people there were without electricity or water. A BBC correspondent filmed tanks and posted a video on his twitter account.

During a UN meeting, Ukraine's ambassador said the only aim of Kiev's sudden offensive is to bring peace. The Ukrainian ambassador's comments were met with harsh words from Russia's envoy to the UN. Vitaly Churkin said Kiev is on “a warpath” and is trying to undermine the Minsk peace agreements completely.

The Russian president has branded the current escalation in Eastern Ukraine a “provocation” by the Kiev authorities. His words came during a joint news conference with the Hungarian prime minister after their meeting.

RT: Locals say the situation was fairly calm in Donbass before Friday when the escalation started. What could have provoked it?

Brian Becker: I think the Poroshenko government is trying to initiate new conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine in order to draw sympathy for its struggle, especially after the inauguration of the new US President, Donald Trump. In other words, the government itself has instigated a new round of conflict, violating the Minsk agreement, really for political purposes and to reposition itself in relationship to the incoming US government.

RT: A representative of the OSCE mission to Ukraine confirmed Ukrainian tanks entered the town of Avdeevka, in a demilitarised zone determined by the Minsk agreements. Why is Ukraine apparently trying to find a military solution to the conflict?

BB: There is no military solution to the conflict. The government in Kiev is using



military means – including the cost of many lives of those who are killed, both those who are injured, those who are displaced – not to win, not to carry out a military victory, that is not achievable, but in order to position itself diplomatically and politically. So, in other words, it is using the conflict itself as a way to get attention for itself, as a way to gain sympathy, as a way to improve its leverage in its own negotiating position as the new administration in Washington comes into power and has to recalibrate US foreign policy toward Russia, which means most of all recalibrating US policy toward Ukraine.

RT: Who do you think profits from this long-lasting conflict in Donbass?

BB: Clearly, the illegitimate Poroshenko government gains to the extent that conflict gets drawn out, to the extent that the government in Ukraine tries to draw Western sympathy,

support, and money. Poroshenko, whose reign in office has been a miserable disaster, believes that this will be a card that he can play, something that will gain advantage for the government. The big losers, though, the people who are living in the eastern and southern part of Ukraine who are being subjugated to a new conflict. These are people who are trying to raise their families, send their children to school, and lead normal lives. They are again a pawn on somebody else's chess board.

We have the Poroshenko government trying to position itself as the grand victim in order to appeal to the EU. Of course, Ukraine economically is a basket case; the government has no policies that will really meet the needs of the people... so it acts the victim to gain additional funds and support from the EU.

RT – Russia Today ☺

Union stand against Trump

Larry Rubin & Mark Gruenberg

WASHINGTON: In an effort to save federal health and safety regulations, the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the Natural Resources Defence Council and Public Citizens are suing the Trump administration in federal court.

The aim of the suit is to overturn Trump's executive order that federal agencies dump two regulations for every one they promulgate without taking into consideration the protections involved.

Trump's order requires new rules to have a net cost of \$0 this fiscal year.

Putting such a bind on federal rules, CWA said in their brief filed in the US District Court for DC February 8, could harm workers, especially denying overtime pay and endangering job safety and health.

CWA and the other plaintiffs are asking the court to “bar agencies from following the order and to issue a declaration the order cannot be lawfully implemented.”

Chris Shelton, president of CWA, said in a written statement that workers shouldn't be required to “trade off one set of job, health and safety protections in order to get protection from another equally dangerous condition.”

Shelton continued, Trump's executive order “means the asbestos workplace standard, for example, could be discarded in order to adopt safeguards for nurses from infectious diseases in their workplaces.

This violates the mission of the Occupational Safety and Health administration to protect workers' safety and health. It also violates common sense.”

In the court papers, CWA listed other examples of the impact of Trump's order on workers – and not just on job safety and health.

As Trump's Office of Management and Budget “makes clear,” the suit states, “under the executive order an occupational health standard issued under the Occupational Health and Safety Act – and at least one other rule – will need to be repealed to enable an employee overtime regulation issued under the Fair Labour Standards Act” to be issued.

“Or an occupational health standard and one other rule will need to be traded in for a motor vehicle safety standard. And the netting out of costs is divorced from any consideration of the benefits (their emphasis) of these protections. This approach is not only irrational, it flies in the face of every one of these and similar statutes,” the suit says.

Making a bad situation even worse, Trump's order and its ramifications also prevent CWA – and everyone else – from exercising free speech rights to advocate for workplace safety and fair wage rules, plus other protections on a wide range of issues, the plaintiff on the suit said.

“CWA frequently engages in the federal agency rule-making process... advocating for rules that improve workers' wages, hours,

and working conditions,” the union explained.

“[Trump's executive order] threatens this first Amendment-protected petitioning activity and participation in rulemaking because, under the executive order, successful advocacy in favour of a particular regulation will result in repeal of other important regulations protecting workers' wages, hours, and working conditions.

“Workplace hazards currently slated [for federal rules] directly affect the health and safety of CWA-represented workers, such as trichloroethylene exposure for manufacturing workers and infectious disease exposure for nurses.

“Although in these examples CWA would press for strong worker protections that would save lives and are feasible, the executive order imposes a disturbing Sophie's Choice by insisting that other to-be-determined health and safety protections for one set of workers must be repealed in exchange for health and safety protections for another set of workers.”

Trump's order not only stops the union's legally-protected advocacy for workers and members, but will also harm them “by causing agencies to not issue, delay, or repeal regulations that protect the members' health and safety at work, or other workplace rights” in the first place, to comply with Trump's command.

No date has been set for a hearing on the suit.
People's World ☺

Sydney

TRUMP and US



You are invited to a discussion on the impact of US President Trump for peace in the world and for the anti-war movement in Australia

Saturday 25 February

1.30pm — 4.30pm

Mitchell Theatre
Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts
280 Pitt Street, Sydney

speakers:

Peace movement	Dr Vince Scappatura
ICAN	Gem Romuld
Greens	Senator Lee Rhiannon
ALP	tbc

Entry by gold coin donation

Folks had better hang on because this is going to be a wild ride... Only by connecting all the dots and working to build a broad and unified movement... can we put the brakes on this fall over the cliff that the new corporate government in Washington is pushing us toward. Bruce Gagnon

Organised by Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition (AABCC) 0418 668 098 and Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN-NSW) 0420 526 929

Support
The Guardian
by donating to Press Fund

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Housing ... not speculation

The housing system should be for housing rather than speculation, and also it is not an even playing field i.e. the system is rigged against first home owners.

Property is increasingly owned by property speculators as opposed to "normal" home owners who are being pushed out of the market.

And government at state and federal levels is making a motza as it reaps higher income from these investors and property speculators:

capital gains tax when investment properties are sold, land tax – which is not charged on the family home, and a further river of gold from rezoning and stamp duty etc, than it would from first home owners.

So both government levels have skin in the game when it comes to negative gearing and support for property speculation.

Yet the answer to the housing affordability problem is not that difficult. In the 1950s and 1960s home owners could claim the interest payments on their tax – something that is now only allowed to speculators under negative gearing. The government could reintroduce this system and instantly put first home owners on an even footing with speculators. Additionally, long term low interest loans for first home buyers, as has been very successful in the UK, could also be introduced – and would have the added kick of putting real competition to the big banks which are benefiting enormously from the current speculative property market.

While the solution seems fairly obvious, the reluctance of the federal government to even the playing field makes you wonder whether our politicians are more worried about the real estate lobby, the 4 Big Banks and big business lobby, as well as their own rivers of gold from the speculative side of the property market, than they are about fixing the urgent and major issue of housing affordability for first home owners.

Dr Con Costa
Sydney

To serve the people

The capitalist media, when it attacks Cuba, conveniently omits the US interference eg the Bay of Pigs attack, the numerous attempts on the life of Fidel Castro by the US, the inhumane blockade maintained by the US, and the US refusal to hand back Guantánamo Bay, which was taken by force over a century ago.

Cuba is a poor country, but its

people are proud of its free health cover and education system. And Cuba also assists many other countries by providing doctors, nurses and other health workers. Over 300 Cuban health workers are working in Timor-Leste and 300 places are reserved for East Timorese medical students in Cuban medical schools.

When the Cuban health workers saw that illiteracy was a problem in Timor-Leste (after 50 years of Portuguese and 24 years of Indonesian fascism is it any wonder?), they resuscitated the Cuban *Si, Yo Puedo* (Yes, I can) literacy program there. This was one of the first programs of the new Cuban revolutionary government after the defeat of Batista's right wing regime in 1959.

Many East Timorese I have spoken to say they prefer the Cuba trained doctors because they are trained to serve the people rather than using medicine to accumulate wealth for themselves.

Cuba has suffered greatly from US imperialism as has Timor-Leste. It must be remembered that it was the

fascist Indonesian dictator, General Suharto, who was installed by the US in 1965 and who invaded East Timor and wiped out a third of the population during its illegal and brutal 24 year occupation. Suharto had dinner with Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger on the eve of the full scale invasion in December 1975.

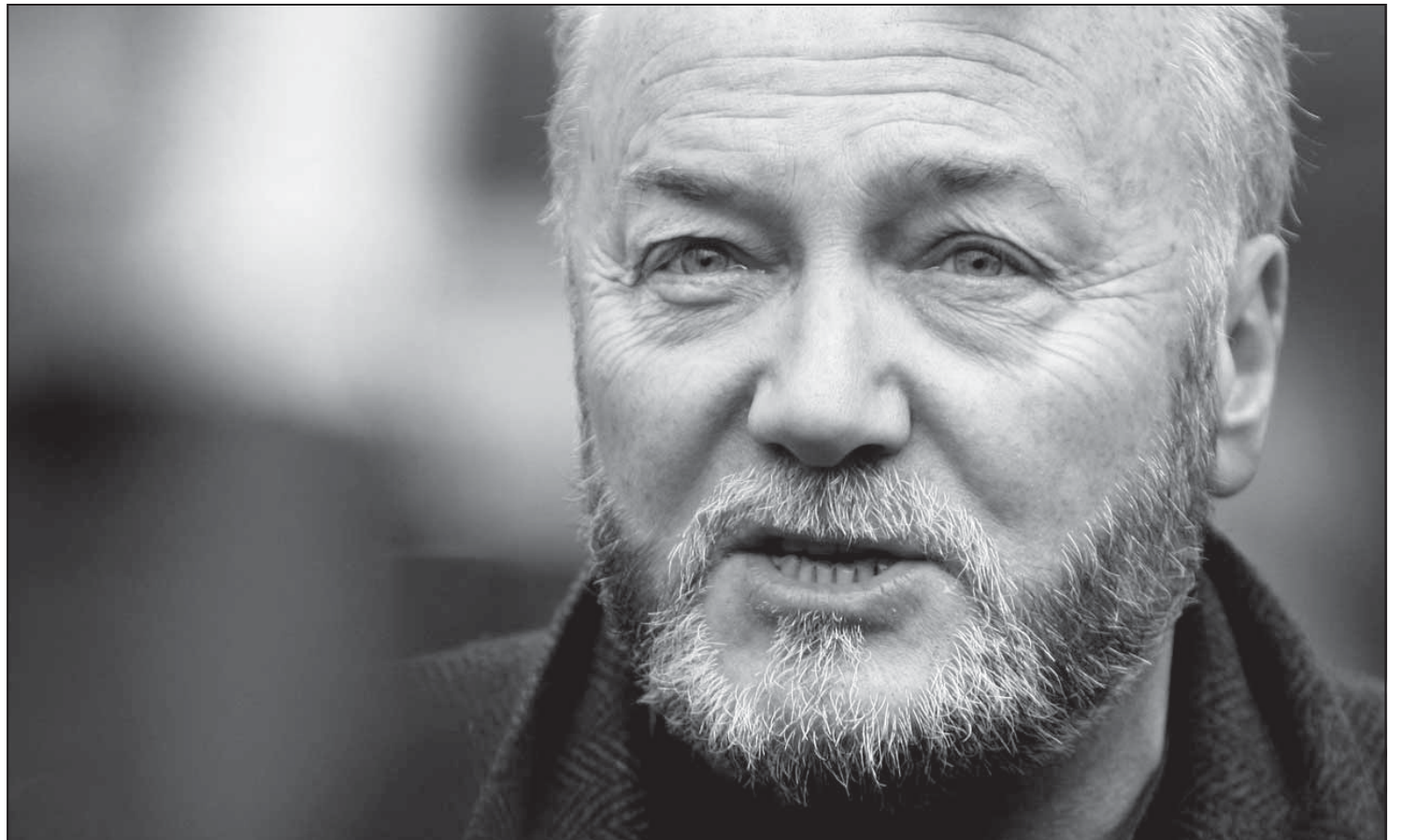
In 1965, CIA agents in Indonesia drew up lists of names of union, social justice and human rights activists for the Indonesian military (TNI). Indonesian soldiers went on a killing rampage for a year with militias and killed about 3 million civilians. The TNI went on to commit genocide in West Papua, Aceh and parts of Indonesia. Its brutal 55 year of occupation of West Papua continues unabated.

I have discovered that the Cuban literacy program is being conducted in some Aboriginal communities in Australia too.

In solidarity

Andy Alcock

Culture & Life



Broadcaster and former British MP George Galloway.

It's NATO, not Russia

British Defence Secretary's speech on "Russian threat" is a desperate attempt to "save jobs and budgets" for the Cold War crowd, which is worried the new US leader will not consider Russia an enemy, broadcaster and former British MP George Galloway told RT.

(Addressing a group of university students, the UK's defence secretary Michael Fallon warned of a resurgent Russia and said that it is becoming aggressive.)

RT: What did you make of Michael Fallon's speech?

George Galloway: Well, Michael Fallon puts the "squeak" in the word "pipsqueak". He is of course the defence minister of a small and semi-detached European power with not much military prowess and which wants to feel big about itself. And these people, and he's not alone – the military industrial complex in the United States is up to the same game – they are desperately thrashing around to save their jobs, to save their budgets, to save their roles as muscle-men in the world.

And Fallon got used to, as did other European powers, going around the world, threatening people with America's army. Now America's army is not quite so reliable, because America has a President who might not want to use the army in the way that these people

want him to, at least one hopes not. And so they desperately seek to continually exacerbate the existing tensions with Russia to defend their own relevance.

The people are asking, "What's NATO for?" The people are asking, "Why are we spending £160 billion on renewing Trident when we now know its missiles are more likely to hit Australia if they were aimed at Russia?"

I can understand the "carrot and stick" approach that is needed towards Russia, but at the moment we are only getting stick and there doesn't seem to be any carrot. More and more confrontation, sanctions and rhetoric against Russia whilst we are not actually trying to engage with them to try to lower tensions. This is very concerning for me and an increasing number of conservative members of Parliament.

If the tit-for-tat deployment of missiles continues at the pace and trajectory that it has done over the last few years, the Polish-Russia border will become the equivalent of the North-South Korean border – a no man's land. And then how do we get back from that cliff edge; what are the levers in place to try to rein in the escalating tensions? It's a very serious situation.

Daniel Kawczynsky, member of Foreign Affairs Select Committee in the UK Parliament

And in any case Russia has thousands of nuclear weapons, and we only a handful."

So it's all pretty pitiful, actually. Right down to the audience of university students, hoping that none of them would challenge him. I'd like him to debate these matters with me, he knows me well, he comes from the same town in Scotland as me. I'd really love to get

my metaphorical hands on him to have some of these matters out.

The truth is that the European Union is having to come to terms with the fact that the US now has a President that doesn't want war with Russia and they – who have built their entire 50-60 years of history on the possibility of war with Russia – are all at sea, except we don't have that many battleships left either.

RT: Let's assume he is telling completely the truth about everything he says. Big "If", but let's assume it's all true. What are his argument about NATO build-up on Russian borders?

GG: Russia has no tanks in Poland, but Britain does. Russia has no tanks in the Baltic States but the NATO countries do. It's the NATO countries that carried out the coup in

Ukraine, and moved their political, strategic and military force into Ukraine on Russia's border. The Ukrainian coup government is the one that's bombarding Donbass right now, as we speak, and shedding civilian blood, and rivers of blood are running down the streets. So it's quite Orwellian, actually, it's the complete reversal of the truth.

And of course he threatened cyber warfare against Russia. Most unwise, I would have thought, because it seems to me fairly clear that there are a lot of people in Russia quite good with the Internet, and a British Defence Secretary saying "Bring it on!" is probably unwise for Britain's industry, Britain's whole cyber infrastructure.

And he mentioned this place I'm sitting in now. The attack on so-called "Russian fake news" is an attack on RT. And why has he done that? Because RT is powering further and further forward, more and more people switching on to it. Because they don't like the fake news in the British state broadcaster, the BBC, because they don't like the fake news, the Cold War fake news that we've been treated to for decades. So in a way it's a badge of honor for those of us who present programs on RT, we're definitely getting under their skin.

RT – Russia Today

Film Review by Michael Berkowitz

Hell or High Water

Tanner Howard is fresh out of prison. His brother Toby is fresh out of money. Their mother has died leaving Toby the reverse mortgage indebted ranch. "She never liked me anyway," laughs Tanner. "That's because you killed dad," chimes Toby.

The brothers have a scheme to redeem. They will pay back mortgage holder Texas Midland Bank with money robbed from different Texas Midland branches. David Mackenzie's (*Starred Up*) revisionist rodeo *Hell or High Water* makes it clear who are the heroes and who are the villains. In the world between Bonnie and Clyde and Badlands, bankers do not fare well. "He looks like a guy who could foreclose a mortgage" observes Taylor Sheridan's (*Sicario*, *Sons of Anarchy*) sharply written script, explaining rather than excusing the Howard brothers ironic recycling scheme.

Chris Pine's (*Star Trek*, *Into the Woods*) Toby and Ben Foster's (*3:10 to Yuma*, *Lone Survivor*) Tanner start off clearing the cash drawers of Texas Midland branches, laundering the money through casinos. The Midland branches are small outposts of capital in the bleak West Texas wasteland of Bush Depression devastated small towns sinking in a sea of sagebrush. The brothers are reclaiming their reversal not for themselves, but for Toby's two sons. Survival, not profit, is their motive.

The long and lethargic arm of the law is represented by Texas Rangers Marcus Hamilton (Jeff Bridges) and Alberto Parker (Gil



Birmingham – *Twilight*, *Rango*). They are not exactly in hot pursuit. The Rangers stake out a Texas Midland Branch that Hamilton intuitively is targeted. They wait, exchanging racially charged barbs that send up stereotypes and showcase their closeness. They are standing the culture on its head, while Hamilton auditions for retirement and Parker for advancement.

Like oases in this parched landscape are

two brilliant cameos by small town diner waitresses: bruised but sultry Debraianna Mansini and tough as the T-bones she serves Margaret Bowman. The Route 66 locals that inhabit and locales that contain the movie make this a West Texas that is beyond the death of the west.

Fortunately, it's the players that we care about as the plot ratchets up to inevitable conflict. Mackenzie adroitly blends character and

action toward the brink of resolution, playing his cards closely but not cynically.

Of the films nominated for Best Picture this year, "Hell or High Water" is probably the darkest of horses. But like the best of its genre, the film leaves us with a bigger picture of our society and the forces that have shaped it.

People's World ✪

Trump declares war on Indian Country

Albert Bender*

To begin with there has been more than a little confusion on what Trump actually signed on January 24, in regard to promoting the Dakota Access Pipeline and resurrecting the long buried Keystone XL. At first it was reported that he had only signed executive orders; then a more sober look indicated some of the documents were actually presidential memoranda.

Next a White House expert opined that the memoranda have the same force as executive orders and other authorities disagreed. Hence, the confusion continues. Even Trump observed, in regard to the heinous pipelines, that construction isn't a "done deal." He has said, "We'll see if we can get the pipeline built," referring to Keystone XL. He sounds a bit less than decisive.

But, there are some aspects of this struggle about which there is no confusion: that is the fighting spirit and determination of the Native American opponents, and their allies, of these deadly projects.

The Standing Rock Oceti Sakowin Camp upon hearing of Trump's signings issued an immediate call for mass civil disobedience nationwide as a showing of solidarity with Standing Rock. The call was for people to hit the ground immediately. Trump should realise that people are willing to die to stop this foul project.

Chase Iron Eyes, the local Dakotas' Counsel for the Lakota People's Law Project (LPLP) issued a strong statement "This is the Trump administration's first salvo in the planned attack on our planet. Let's create an immovable bulwark against his assault. It's do-or-die time in the DAPL fight, and it's up to all of us to inspire right action from the Army Corps of Engineers." Chase also pointed out that Trump "can't prevent an Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Impact Statement" that can halt the pipeline permanently.

Trump has declared war on Native people with his memoranda which can be seen as a "document of intent" of his vision of America.



He envisions an America without Indians as did the so-called "founding fathers." Well, he has a surprise in store on that account – as did the progenitors of this capitalist monster we call America. Let the ravenous jackals of monopoly capital beware that DAPL and Keystone XL will again go down in defeat.

In the meantime, Trump's actions have evoked a reaction from the Court of Judge Boasberg, before who sit the tribal lawsuits and corporate countersuits in this struggle. Boasberg held a hearing January 30 to determine what effect if any Trump's memos will have on

the pending litigation that is set to begin in early February. At the hearing, the judge demanded a timeline for finishing construction from the Dakota Access pipeline's corporate backers.

The agenda of Trump, the agenda of mind boggling profits for the ruling class, the agenda of death, destruction and abject misery for the people of this land, the agenda he pursues with such greedy alacrity will turn this country topsy-turvy. Trump, the bombastic loudmouth of finance, will end up with a full-scale people's revolt on his hands. As well he should.

I echo what was said by the elders at Standing Rock this past summer: "It's not if we win, but when we win."

*Albert Bender is a Cherokee Indian. He is a freelance reporter and political columnist for *News From Indian Country*, and other Native and non-Native publications. He is also a historian and attorney specialising in Native American law. Currently, he is writing a history of the Maya Indian role in the Guatemalan civil war of the late 20th century.

People's World ✪

Subscription to **The Guardian**

12 months: \$100 (\$80 conc / \$150 solidarity) 6 months: \$55 (\$40 conc / \$80 solidarity)
 Special offer: 10 issues for \$10 (new subscriptions only)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

Pay by Cheque Money order (Payable to "Guardian Publications")

Phone in details on 02 9699 8844 or info@cpa.org.au

Or send to: Guardian Subscriptions

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

or by credit card: Mastercard Visa *\$20 minimum on cards

Card# _____

Amount: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____/____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

The Guardian

Editorial Office
 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
 Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
 Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Tom Pearson

Published by
 Guardian Publications Australia Ltd
 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by Spotpress
 24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment
 is taken by T Pearson,
 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Sydney

POLITICS IN THE PUB

February 16

LAND CLEARING, SPECIES EXTINCTION & MURDER:
THE STRUGGLE TO SAVE OUR ENVIRONMENT

- Dr Oisín Sweeney, Snr Ecologist, National Parks & Wildlife NSW
- Gregory Miller, Producer at Film Projects, Director *Cultivating Murder*
- Corinne Fisher, Co-ordinator for Stand Up for Nature campaign, Total Environment Centre & Nature Conservation Council

Every Thursday 6:30 pm
Harold Park Hotel
 Cnr Wigram Rd & Ross St Glebe

Charles Bradley 02 9692 0005
 odl_bradley@pacific.net.au

www.politicsinthepub.org.au

Israel's ties to Al-Nusra

Richard Silverstein

Any other ally which depended so profoundly on Washington for its security and existence wouldn't dare risk endangering that relationship to forge an alliance with an enemy of the US. But not Israel. Late last month, Jabhat al-Nusra (the Nusra Front), Al-Qaida's Syrian arm, announced that it was severing ties with Al-Qaida and renaming itself Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (the Front for the Conquest of Syria).

Al-Nusra shares certain common goals with Daesh (ISIS) in seeking to overthrow the secular government of Syrian President Bashar Assad and replace it with a more traditional form of Islamic rule. It has also expressed hatred for the United States and other Western governments.

Smokescreen or strategy?

In its recent re-branding, Al-Nusra also seems to be evaluating the political calculus of the Syrian civil war and acknowledging the recent gains by Syrian forces and their allies – Iran, Hezbollah and Russia. With Assad strengthening his position and the rebel forces in disarray, al-Jolani may be making a bid to unify the opposition by projecting a less militant image to the outside world.

In Israel's view, peace on its northern border would be guaranteed if Syria can be splintered into warring factions. It's an approach championed at the onset of the civil war in 2012 by Daniel Pipes, a pro-Israel neo-con who serves as president of Middle East Forum, a conservative think tank. Arguing that "the continuing Syrian conflict offers benefits to the West," he explained:

"As Sunni Islamists fight Shiite Islamists, both sides are weakened and their lethal rivalry lessens their capabilities to trouble the outside world. By inspiring restive minorities (Sunnis in Iran, Kurds and Shiites in Turkey), continued fighting

in Syria could also weaken Islamist governments."

He further noted:

"Nothing in the constitutions of Western states requires them to get involved in every foreign conflict; sitting this one out will prove to be a smart move. In addition to the moral benefit of not being accountable for horrors yet to come, staying away permits the West eventually to help its only true friends in Syria, the country's liberals."

In a 2012 email released by WikiLeaks, Hillary Clinton offered an Iran-focused variant of this approach:

"The best way to help Israel deal with Iran's growing nuclear capability is to help the people of Syria overthrow the regime of Bashar Assad."

The Al-Nusra-Israel bond

Ultimately, Israel doesn't care much about what happens in Syria as long as it can maintain a puppet protectorate along its Golan border. Israel began occupying and administering the region in the Six-Day War of 1967, and it officially annexed the Golan in 1981. Israel continues to refuse to return the territory to Syria despite near universal consensus that the occupation is illegal under international law. Further, the discovery of potential gas deposits there has coincided with a rise in Israeli settlement expansion in recent years.

Examining the Al-Nusra-Israeli alliance in the region, it's clear that the bonds between the two parties have been exceedingly close. Israel maintains a border camp for the families of Syrian fighters. Reporters have documented Israeli Defence Forces commandos entering Syrian territory to rendezvous with Syrian rebels. Others have photographed meetings between Israeli military personnel and Al-Nusra commanders at the Quneitra Crossing, the ceasefire line that separates the Syrian-controlled territory and the Israeli-occupied territory in the Golan Heights.

UN personnel also documented

Syrian rebel vehicles picking up supplies from the Israeli side:

Quarterly UNDOF [United Nations Disengagement Observer Force] reports since the pullback reveal an ongoing pattern of Israeli coordination with those [Al-Nusra] armed groups.

According to the December 2014 report, UNDOF observed two Israeli soldiers "opening the technical fence gate and letting two individuals pass from the [Syrian] to the [Israeli] side" on October 27. Unlike most fighters seen entering the Israeli side, these individuals were not wounded and the purpose of their visit remains a mystery.

UNDOF "sporadically observed armed members of the opposition interacting" with the Israeli military across the ceasefire line, the report states.

The next UNDOF report, released in March, notes that UN forces witnessed Israeli soldiers delivering material aid to armed Syrian opposition groups.

These were presumably supplies and equipment designed either to help the rebels in their fight against Assad or to improve communications between Israeli and rebel forces.

Israel's divide-and-conquer approach

Israel's support for radical terror groups is a long-term strategy it's exploited in multiple theatres. Its ultimate purpose is to weaken a strong foe. In terms of Hezbollah, Israel hadn't anticipated that the Lebanese militant group would grow to become a much more powerful and dangerous foe than the PLO had ever been in Lebanon.

The strategy worked better regarding Hamas because it has never been able to dominate Fatah. The two have maintained a wary and draining battle of wills over the decades, with neither being able to oust the other. This has created a rift that has substantially weakened the Palestinians and their cause. Still, Hamas



Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (the Front for the Conquest of Syria).

In Israel's view, peace on its northern border would be guaranteed if Syria can be splintered into warring factions.

has trained its sights on Israel as well and become an even more militant foe than Fatah ever was.

Thus, Israel's strategy of forging an alliance with Al-Nusra and strengthening it so that it can wage a formidable fight against Assad is part and parcel of a longstanding goal of dividing the enemy. Israel hopes the militant extremist group will dominate the Golan region and maintain stability and security there. However, Israel neglects what almost always happens to these golems: Once they are created they take on a life of their own. The creator loses control of his creation, which wreaks havoc and even turns against him.

Just as it happened to Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, and Mary Shelley's Dr Frankenstein, so it happened with the US alliance with the Afghan mujahadeen, and the Israeli alliances with their own Arab proxies.

Israel's alliance with Al-Nusra also points to the utter cynicism of its approach. While the rest of the world labels the group terrorists, and fights to prevent their terror attacks on Western soil, Israel looks only for its own advantage. There's the

old saying that "The enemy of my enemy is my friend," but in Israel's playbook, the saying goes: "The enemy of my friend may certainly be my friend." This rings especially true when Israeli leaders warn the world about the threat of global jihad, while also cosying up to jihadis in their own corner of the world.

The US and European countries seem to either not notice or deliberately ignore Israel's tactical embrace of the jihadi movement. The Obama administration is even preparing to ink a new record-breaking military spending agreement with Israel that will up US aid from the current US\$3 billion a year. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded US\$5 billion per year over the life of the 10-year deal, and the final amount will likely settle somewhere in the middle.

Only Israel gets away with such a level of cognitive dissonance in its alliance with the US. Any other ally that depended so profoundly on Washington for its security and existence wouldn't dare risk endangering that relationship to forge an alliance with an enemy of the US. globalresearch.ca ★

The Communist Women's Collective
Invites You To ... **IWD LUNCH**
Sunday 1 pm March 5
Cyprus Community Club 58-76 Stanmore Road Stanmore
\$15 Adult / \$40 Family – includes speakers / lunch / entertainment
RSVP by 02/03/2017 For more info & bookings contact Linda – 9699 8844 / info@cpa.org.au

Equality, Women's Rights, Equal Pay

May Day International Brigade
Cuba – April 24 to May 8, 2017

On the occasion of the International Workers' Day, and as a special tribute to Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara (The 50th anniversary of Che's death)

In addition to the voluntary work, participants will visit places of historical and social interest, receive lectures on our reality, and will have the opportunity to exchange with representatives of different social and political organizations, with Cuban workers and unionists.

The Brigade will take place in the provinces of Havana, Artemisa, Villa Clara and Cienfuegos, Cuba

Registration will be open until March 30, 2017

The Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) and its travel agency Amistur Cuba, SA

For more info: www.cpa.org.au/whats-on

Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au cpa@cpa.org.au

General Secretary
Bob Briton
email: gensec@cpa.org.au

Party President
Vinnie Molina
email: president@cpa.org.au

Adelaide Bob Briton postal: PO Box 612, Port Adelaide BC, SA 5015
phone: 0418 894 366 email: sa@cpa.org.au web: www.adelaidecommunists.org

Brisbane postal: PO Box 6012, Manly, Qld 4179 phone: 0499 476 540
email: bris@cpa.org.au

Canberra email: act@cpa.org.au

Darwin Vinnie Molina phone: 0419 812 872 email: darwin@cpa.org.au

Melbourne Andrew Irving
postal: Box 3 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth Vic 3053
phone: 03 9639 1550 email: cpavic@cpa.org.au

Head Office (Sydney)

postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
phone: 02 9699 8844 fax: 02 9699 9833 email: info@cpa.org.au

Newcastle email: newcastle@cpa.org.au

Perth Vinnie Molina postal: PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906
phone: 0419 812 872 email: perth@cpa.org.au

Western NSW Allan Hamilton
postal: 121 McKay St, Cootamundra, NSW 2590
email: western.nsw@cpa.org.au

Sydney Wayne Sonter
postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010 phone: 02 9699 8844

Tasmania Bob Briton phone: 0418 894 366 email: tas@cpa.org.au

