

Climate of fear

Abbott's terror tactics

Peter Mac

Last month PM Tony Abbott gave a special news conference about possible terror attacks against Australia. Flanked by eight national flags he used the word "threat" 16 times, "death cult", "safe" and "secure" seven times, and "protect" five times. He took no questions.

The government is ramping up public fears about terrorism to justify introducing legislation restricting Australians' right to be a citizen and to be considered innocent until proven guilty.

Abbott has suggested that protecting the community will require weakening of individual rights. The government is deliberately whipping up a climate of fear, then posing as the people's defender, to undermine civil rights and gain access to metadata information about every Australian, while maintaining its grasp on power.

Abbott has argued that Man Haron Monis, perpetrator of the Lindt café siege, had mistakenly been given "the benefit of the doubt", and that people who "might be a threat to our country" should be denied welfare, Medicare and other social security payments.

The denial of rights and entitlements to people who *might* engage in terrorist activities, even though they haven't actually done so, opens the door for political victimisation.

Abbott also proposed that people suspected

of intending to travel overseas to engage in unauthorised armed conflict would have their passports cancelled.

Australians with dual citizenship who managed to slip the net and engage in conflict would be stripped of their Australian citizenship. The policy would force them back to their country of origin. Those who had fled persecution there could face a death sentence.

Those who fought but only had Australian citizenship would formally remain citizens but would be banned from returning, and would lose their rights for consular assistance. Despite the government claims, they would in effect be rendered stateless because they would be unable to return home.

The ban on overseas travel also reverses the onus of proof. The accused would have to prove they had a legitimate reason for visiting a particular country before they could leave.

Abbott also wants to "take action against hate preachers" like members of the Islamist fundamentalist group Hizb Ut-Tahir, who have never been found guilty of terrorist offences. But the government is still defending the right to be a bigot. So presumably anyone can be a bigot, unless they're Muslim. There is no legal definition of "hate preachers" just as there is no substance to back Abbott's terror preaching.

The meta-menace

The government claims telecommunication now play an essential role in terrorist

recruitment, and it wants telecommunication companies to retain customer metadata which would be available to law enforcement agencies without a warrant.

Metadata is data recorded electronically from telecommunication equipment, other than the content of the calls and messages.

It includes the number, duration and location from which a phone call is made, email addresses, the logs, status, aliases or identifiers of on-line chat rooms and the start and finish times of internet sessions.

It does not include email attachments or web camera transmissions. Nor does it include information about which websites an internet user visits. That's currently treated as content, although the Northern Territory and Victorian police have argued that it should be accessible.

Metadata currently held by companies is available to state, territory and federal police, ASIO, the tax office and other organisations conducting criminal investigations.

Under current law companies don't have to retain metadata, hence the government's plan to enforce them to do so.

Law enforcement agencies requested metadata access 339,640 times in 2012-2013. However, one request may involve information concerning many individuals, and the figure does not include the number of requests by ASIO. That's secret.

Some commentators have argued that legislation should specify the type of data retained.

But the government doesn't agree, because that could result in blockage of the legislation by opposition MPs concerned about invasion of privacy. It wants to be free to spy on anyone and essentially everyone.

Access to metadata is loaded with privacy issues. Last July Queensland Police officials investigated police cadets' metadata to find out whether they were sleeping with each other.

Journalist Laurie Oakes had his metadata accessed by intelligence personnel seeking the identity of an informant. Metadata access will inevitably lead to retribution against whistleblowers and against journalists.

In 2012 Victoria's Privacy Commissioner described data retention as "characteristic of a police state" and "premised on the assumption that all citizens should be monitored".

Governing by terror

Abbott claimed ASIO currently has 400 counter terrorism investigations underway, but ISIS is not currently posing a direct threat to Australia, nor even to the US, as US Homeland Security Secretary Joh Johnson admitted recently.

Moreover, Abbott consistently makes reference to "Islamic terrorists". He implied that Monis' religion contributed to making him a terrorist, even though he was clearly a highly troubled individual with a history of mental illness and a criminal record.

That insult was heightened by Abbott's remark that he wished more Muslim leaders would publicly embrace peace as part of their religion, and "mean it".

The implication is that they don't, and that's a gross libel of the Muslim community. The irony is that the public animosity created by Abbott's finger-pointing could actually foster conditions for terrorist recruitment.

The government's attempt to link terrorists with the internet in order to justify the metadata legislation is also spurious. A British report on terrorist recruitment reveals that the internet still plays a relatively minor role, with personal contact the main influence.

One company has estimated that retaining metadata would cost \$400 million and add \$10 per month to the average subscriber's bill. The government has indicated a willingness to pay half the cost, despite its claims about the nation's disastrous financial condition.

Would the situation change if Abbott was dumped as Liberal leader? Several years ago Malcolm Turnbull described a Labor government proposal for data retention as "... the latest effort by the Gillard government to restrain freedom of speech." But as Communications Minister he has fully supported the present move to gain metadata access.

The Australian people must remove the odious coalition from power, root and branch. ✖



Adelaide: Part of the March 4 nation wide actions against the Abbott government's attack on worker's rights. (Photo: Craig Greer)

3  Science cuts

4  Protest in Perth against Abbott gov't's attacks

5  Lock the Gate's election agenda

10  Culture & Life Agent Orange

Guardian

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A corporate dictatorship

Public awareness of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal is steadily growing. This is despite the whole process being steeped in secrecy, with the government authorising the final text before any of it becomes public. It is then to be reviewed by a parliamentary committee which, in any case, cannot change the text.

To exclude elected representatives from closed negotiations that give privileged access only to corporate insiders undermines democratic processes.

Agreements signed without proper scrutiny will lead to government decision-making being bound to the interests of transnational corporations. The TPP is not about “free trade” but about giving corporations power over national governments’ laws and regulations. It has been written in secret by transnationals for their interests.

For example, we will no longer be able to refuse products that don’t adhere to Australia’s environmental regulations. Under the TPP a tribunal comprised of lawyers from the corporate giants will be set up to rule on such matters. Sovereignty will be undermined and elected governments and national laws and regulations bypassed.

Claims by Trade Minister Andrew Robb that “the TPP will not be kept secret”, that “once it is agreed by participants it will be made public and also subjected to parliamentary scrutiny prior to any final ratification” are weasel words.

There is also the insidious legal wordplay of “corporate personhood”, granting corporations the status of “persons”. This translates into such claims that citizens knowing what is in their food, and making choices based on that information, is taking away the “free speech” of the corporate “person”.

The Investor State Dispute Settlement clauses in treaties such as the TPP are in fact clauses of corporate personhood through which corporations want to have the right to sue governments that act in the public good.

As activist Vandana Shiva puts it: “The rise of corporate personhood is the death of democracy, the death of sovereignty, the death of human rights, the end of freedom. We cannot allow this fiction to become the basis of governance.”

Opportunism and hypocrisy

Stop the boats. Stop the executions. Liberal and Labor holding candlelight vigils for Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran at Parliament House, calling for mercy from the Indonesian government: these are the same political forces who have overseen the incarceration of innocent men, women and children, who are seeking asylum, in inhumane conditions in offshore prison camps.

Where was the mercy then?

Where was it when they incarcerated pregnant women? Where when they were traumatising the world’s most defenceless people, children? It is decades now that this exercise in violating international laws for political gain has continued, in at least one case a murder, from John Howard’s vicious little regime through to complicit, opportunistic Rudd-Gillard governments.

Now Abbott’s crew of privateers are cynically exploiting the impending deaths for drug trafficking of Chan and Sukumaran in Indonesia for their own political ends, to try and lift their stocks in the polls.

All hands have been called to the fore in this nauseating exercise, led appropriately by Phillip Ruddock, former Howard government Immigration Minister, who imposed the first raft of refugee bashing legislation, and who intoned “We must stop state-sponsored killing”.

Just as Abbott announced another 300 Australian troops were being sent to Iraq.

The entire PR exercise bordered openly on farce when Abbott offered Indonesia a prisoner exchange, a process that takes place between two countries at war with each other, followed by the ludicrous and (to Indonesia) insulting claim that they were beholden to Australia because of Australia’s aid after the Indonesian tsunami in 2004.

Of course, the death penalty is abhorrent and morally unacceptable. But it should be recalled that it was Australian law until a relatively short time ago when Ronald Ryan became the last person to be executed in this country, hanged in Pentridge Prison, Melbourne on February 2, 1967, a state-sponsored killing authorised by Liberal Premier Henry Bolte. He was later awarded a knighthood for services rendered.

PRESS FUND

Federal Treasurer Joe Hockey says everyone must work longer and pay more taxes, because we’re living longer – up to 150 years old, according to his earlier statement. It’s work till you drop, for the Liberals! Hockey carefully avoided the idea of eliminating areas of waste like our massive military expenditure, increasing the tax rate for rich individuals and corporations, and making them actually pay their taxes. But enough of this big-money talk, let’s turn to the Press Fund, which has, alas, fallen on hard times this week. We really need you to help us play our part in defeating Abbott and Co’s very nasty plans for working families, so please send us something for the next issue if you possibly can. Many thanks to the following loyal contributors for their support this week:

Mark Mannion \$5, “Round Figure” \$10, Sylvia \$5

This week’s total \$20 Progressive total: \$1,690

Arrested Nauru refugees held

Almost 200 refugees including up to 80 women have been held in detention overnight after mass arrests on Nauru, throughout March 4. The underage children being held by police, including one seven year old who had been arrested early Wednesday morning, were removed from police cells by case workers. However, many then spent the night without their parents who remained in custody.

More information emerged about the draconian police action, including that the police had arrested refugees inside the family compound as early as 4am.

The police action continued throughout the day with a further 50 refugees being arrested outside the police station at Yaren, in the

afternoon, as they waited for news of those arrested and demanded their release.

The Nauruan government seems determined to push all those arrested through the court although it is not clear what charges could be laid against them.

“Independent legal and human rights observers are urgently needed on Nauru. The Nauru government is trying to criminalise the refugees. This kind of action is straight out of the Australian Immigration detention handbook”, said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

“Service providers Connect say they cannot help those arrested. The Nauruan judicial system cannot be called fair or independent given the history of Nauruan governments

sacking magistrates and legal officers that defy their wishes.

“This is not the first time that Nauruan police and the courts have been used to trample on the democratic rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Scores of asylum seekers were wrongly arrested and held on trumped up charges after the so-called riots in July 2013.

“The Nauruan government is perpetuating the persecution of refugees who came to Australia seeking protection. It is being paid tens of millions of dollars to maintain a Pacific penal colony on behalf of Australia.”

Refugees at liberty on Nauru have told the Refugee Action Coalition that their campaign of non-cooperation will continue until they get their freedom. ☘

Competitive market ruining TAFE

Australian Education Union (AEU) Victorian branch president Meredith Peace said the continued rotting in the system by private for-profit providers highlights the fact that the market model is not working and has failed the public TAFE system.

This year alone, around 2,500 students have had their substandard qualifications recalled, highlighting the need to dramatically improve quality assurance for government funded training. A further 3,000 students may face a similar outcome with investigations currently underway into their qualifications.

“The recall of training certificates is a clear indication that the competitive training market has been an absolute failure,” says Peace.

“The damage done to TAFEs

in the pursuit of competition policy in education is continuing to have significant impact on the quality of courses delivered to Victorian students.

“This funding must look at avenues to ensuring there is guaranteed funding for the TAFE sector to uphold and protect high standards of education and training.”

The AEU is calling for 30 percent of the \$1.2 billion funding for the sector to be made available to the contestable market, and the other 70 percent to be protected and dedicated to the public TAFE system.

“This review must also take the opportunity to examine the need for a minimum standard of hours required, which needs to be delivered by qualified teachers,” said Peace.

“Unscrupulous providers are decreasing the face-to-face teaching time with students, delivering qualifications that are not worth the paper they’re written on and will not get them the jobs they need. Students often do not understand they are being sorted until the damage is done.

“The push for contestability has also seen an increase in the substandard practices of third-party delivery, which should be investigated and immediately stopped by this review.

“The review must regulate for quality outcomes so that Victorian students have the skills they need and are job-ready when they gain their qualifications. This is significantly hindered by the contestable system we are currently in,” says Peace. ☘

Philippines

Workers and Peoples Unite: Fight Neoliberal Attacks on Wages & Trade-union Rights International Solidarity Affair (ISA)

April 27 - May 6

An annual gathering of workers, trade-union activists, labor rights advocates, friends and supporters of the working class from all global regions.

The 31st ISA will hold the two main activities: exposure program and forum to educate participants regarding neoliberal attacks on wages and trade-union rights.

The objective of the exposure program is to enable international delegates to witness the situation and struggles of Filipino workers and exchange experiences.

Contact: Kilusang Mayo Uno (host): kmu.intl@gmail.com

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Sydney
MARCH in MARCH

Rally – Belmore Park
1pm March 22

Govt blackmails Senate with science cuts

Peter Mac

Last week the Abbott government announced that \$150 million funding for the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) research program would not be delivered unless the Senate approved the deregulation of university fees.

NCRIS, which commenced activity in 2004, provides collaborative funding for private and public projects that are too expensive or complex for any one institution.

It has invested more than \$2 billion in scientific infrastructure, including high end microscopes, high-precision GPS radio telescopes and processes for developing new products. Its facilities are now shared between universities, research institutes and private businesses, and are used by 35,000 Australian and international researchers. It was expected that the facilities would become involved in the international development of extremely large telescopes.

The announcement has appalled the scientific community. The NCRIS program involves hundreds of long-term scientific experiments being carried out by 1,700 staff in 27 different facilities, the majority of which are now at risk of closure because of the cuts.

Research institute IMOS has stated that without the NCRIS funds it will have to sack its 80 staff and close, ceasing production of data from \$40 million of equipment that is now used by PhD students and research organisations involved in hundreds of projects.

If IMOS collapses, others will follow, including the National Fabrication Facility, which is now developing needle-free immunisation patches. The nation's scientific endeavours will take years to recover, and Australia will lose its enviable lead in many areas of research.

Science fights back

The National Research Alliance, which brings together private and public research organisations, has

written an open letter to the government, stating:

"The damage to Australia's domestic and collaborative research effort that will result from such closures is immense. Continuity and productivity of critical research programs will be set back several years ... some innovative Australian companies will be forced to take their operations offshore [and] many profitable international research collaborations will cease.

"The facilities underpin much of Australia's \$30 billion annual spend on science, research, and development at an operational cost of just \$150 million per annum [0.5 percent of the total ...]".

If the government ceases funding NCRIS it will blame the Senate for the inevitable collapse in scientific research. The government was fully aware new funding was needed when it drew up the budget, but following its tradition of blaming someone else, it now says Labor caused the current crisis by not allocating long-term funding.

And that's not all

The NCRIS program is not the only area now threatened by the government's \$500 million science budget cuts. The CSIRO lost \$111.4 million, as well as the Australia Research Council (\$74.9 million), Cooperative Research Centres (\$80 million), the Australian Institute of Marine Science (\$7.8 million), the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (\$27.6 million), and Geoscience Australia (\$36 million).

The \$45 million grant to National Information Communications Technology Australia will cease in July next year.

After its election the government immediately attacked any government agency concerned with tracking climate change or helping to reduce carbon emissions. It eliminated the Climate Commission (now salvaged by dedicated private individuals), the Climate Change authority and the Department of Climate Change, and tried, but has so far failed, to



wind up the Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

It even made a savage cut to the budget of the Bureau of Meteorology, whose daily reports bring news about the impact of climate change.

The way to go

Science is at the heart of the national economic development. Without it, Australia would slide into poverty.

Historically Australia has scored some remarkable scientific achievements, from the clinical trials of penicillin to the development of Wi-Fi by CSIRO astronomers, the first cancer vaccine, Google maps, the bionic ear and the first frozen embryo baby.

However, in 2011-12 Australia spent only 2.19 percent of its budget on research and development, compared with the OECD average of 2.34 percent. Sweden, with a comparable economy and standard of living, spent 3.39 percent.

Australia's science budget has been cut over the last three years, and more cuts are to come. When the Abbott government was elected,

the cabinet did not include a science minister, and Trade Minister Ian MacFarlane sneered about protests from "some of the precious petals in the science fraternity".

This year Australia's spending on science will probably fall to \$8.5 billion, the lowest in five years. When told of the cuts, Australian-born Professor Elizabeth Blackburn, 2009 joint Nobel Prize winner for medicine and biology, exclaimed: "How could Australia not think of investing heavily in science? This is just insanity."

Nor is it possible, or desirable, for the private sector to make up the deficit. Peter Doherty, co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Prize for medicine and physiology commented: "Everywhere you look, basic science is through public funding. It can't be left to the magic of the market, it doesn't work in innovation".

Almost all areas of government spending are now being slashed. The government claims it must pay billions of dollars in interest on government debts every year, and that the only way out is for most areas of expenditure to be cut, and for average

Australians to pay more tax and work until they're at least 70.

That's nonsense. The real answer is to reduce those areas of government spending which are currently rising, particularly defence. It was allocated \$24.2 billion in 2012-13, and in 2016-17 the figure will rocket to \$30.8 billion.

That insane increase arises mostly from the astronomical sums the government is spending on new multi-billion dollar submarines (which it wants to have built in Japan), and the astronomically expensive new US jet fighter aircraft, (which won't be ready for ten years, by which time they'll be out of date) – not to mention the cost of sending our troops into whatever war Uncle Sam dictates.

The solution to the debt problem is for wealthy citizens and major corporations to pay a greater tax rate (as they did 40 years ago), for tax loopholes (like the transfer of profits to low tax countries) to be slammed shut, and for our obscenely high defence expenditure to be cut.

That's the way to go. ✪

Pete's Corner



Sydney

CPA Port Jackson Branch

invites comrades and friends to join us for our

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Tuesday 17 March 5:30pm

The Greek elections – the revolution that wasn't

Introduced by Comrade Stratos [We apologise that an earlier date for this talk had to be cancelled due to a medical emergency.]

Tuesday 7 April 5:30pm

World War I and the Russian Revolution

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Tuesday 21 April 5:30pm

What's wrong with the ANZAC commemoration?

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Tuesday 5 May 5:30pm

Where did Australian manufacturing go & why?

Introduced by Comrade Stratos

Tuesday 19 May 5:30pm

Why you should be afraid of the TPP

Introduced by Comrade Stratos

All classes are held at 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills

Enquiries: Hannah 0418 668 098

Protest in Perth against Abbott govt's attacks

Richard Titelius

On Wednesday March 4, around 2,000 workers rallied at Parliament House in Perth to protest against the Abbott government's Productivity Commission enquiry into the minimum wage, penalty rates, workplace conditions and union right of entry - the latter which has already been significantly restricted.

The colourful flags of most of Western Australia's trade unions were represented at the rally to show their solidarity and unity on fighting this issue which is pivotal to the strength and future of the organised working class.

Unions WA secretary Meredith Hammat opened the rally outlining

the underlying agenda of the enquiry by the Productivity Commission. "You can forget about penalty rates, forget about unions...as the Abbott government goes about creating a polarised society divided into the haves and the increasingly have nots.

"They are going after pensioners and other retirees, young people who will have average weekly take home incomes reduced from the abolition of penalty rates and students who will be paying up to \$100,000 for a degree," added Hammat to illustrate how this government was using the Productivity Commission to take down the edifice of a decent, caring society.

The attacks on Medicare will continue as part of an ongoing push of health services into the private

sector where working class people would have to dip into their pockets every time they needed to see a doctor, said Hammat.

Hammat also added that although an election was still some way off for WA Liberal Premier Colin Barnett, his government has a similar agenda to the federal Liberal government of making cuts to the public service and attacks on trade unions.

Jake Whinney from the National Union of Students spoke of how the increased cost of education and other public services will bring about an intergenerational theft creating disadvantage for future generations - which will have less income as more money will be owed to the government by the workers.

Jessie Bowden a young

hospitality worker from Crown Resort and a member of United Voice spoke of how penalty rates can make up to 30 percent of her take home pay and that the penalty rates were compensation for the unsociable hours that workers like Jessie had to work instead of being with friends or family. Bowden concluded by offering the rhetorical rationale for these attacks on workers wages and a decent way of life for all: "How do you make our working lives better when you cut our wages and conditions?"

Brendan, who spoke on behalf of the 76 CFMEU members who are facing the Federal Court in Perth over taking industrial action, said that the action against them was a charade, adding that a worker has a right to

say NO! to an employer's cuts to safety and penalty rates. CFMEU state secretary Mick Buchan added that the 76 were going to court on March 23, and their fellow unionists would be outside the court to offer them support.

Helen Tuck a former Tax Office worker and CPSU/PSU member recently made redundant after 30 years of service spoke of how the cuts to the public service reduced services to the public and increased work for those who are left with no increase in pay.

Carolyn Smith state secretary of United Voice concluded the rally by urging workers to sign up for the beginning of a campaign to fight back against the Abbott government's "vision".



The protest outside Parliament House in Sydney March 4, in defence of union rights and against budget cuts. (Photo: Linda Knowles)

Youth detention system "failing"

A review of youth detention facilities in the Northern Territory has found the entire system is failing Aboriginal young people. The report by former Long Bay Prison superintendent Michael Vita also called on Aboriginal legal and justice agencies to do more to support vulnerable young Indigenous people, who make up 96 percent of the juveniles in detention in the NT.

"The NT youth detention population has risen steadily, particularly over the last two years," Mr Vita says in the report. "This has placed pressure on the infrastructure and capacity of its detention facilities."

The report found that Indigenous offenders are more likely to have committed their first offence at a younger age than other detainees; more likely to have been charged multiple times; and more likely to have been placed in detention

for serious offences, such as acts intending to cause injury.

On average, over the past three years 90 percent of juvenile detainees are male. The report said the NT Youth Detention Centres (YDCs) were battling to cope with the increased number of young people in detention and an increase in violent offences.

"Youth detention facilities in the NT are struggling to maintain service level standards in the absence of a coherent operating philosophy, staff training, direction, appropriate infrastructure and leadership," Mr Vita said.

The report said it costs \$700 a day to keep a young person in detention. It suggested that Aboriginal legal and justice services consider reorganising their budgets to spend more time at YDCs and with young offenders.

It also criticised NT legal and

justice agencies, including the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS) and NT Legal Aid, for not being more active and public about advocacy for Aboriginal juvenile detainees, saying they should publish their submissions on their websites and contribute more positive ideas to keeping Aboriginal children out of detention.

Funding cut

CAALAS acting chief executive Mark O'Reilly said funding to its youth justice advocacy program had been cut, and he called on the NT government to reinstate it.

"NAAJA and CAALAS provide high quality legal and justice services to Aboriginal young people," he said. "We have dedicated, specialist youth justice teams that have been nationally recognised for the high quality, holistic services we provide

to Aboriginal young people."

NAAJA chief executive Priscilla Collins said the NT government should commit to reforming the entire youth justice system. "It needs to commit funding for supported bail accommodation to avoid kids being refused bail purely because they have nowhere else to go," she said.

"We need programs and services that are youth-specific - alcohol and other drug treatment, counselling, mental health services and expert social workers.

"The government must commit to providing evidence-based programs to support vulnerable young people and reduce re-offending rates, instead of putting \$2 million into boot camps that have no evidence base at all."

Mr Vita found there were serious problems with the way staff were trained and the way children

in detention were managed and that some children in detention had been mistreated.

He said the new YDC at Berimah in Darwin was an appropriate facility for young people and that the Aranda House YDC should not be reopened.

NAAJA and CAALAS also called on the NT Government to establish an independent custodial inspector.

The review found:

- 96% of young people in detention in the NT are Aboriginal.
- 90% of children in detention in the NT are male.
- It costs \$698.40 per day to keep a child in detention in the NT.
- Over the past three years the average number of juveniles in detention in the NT has increased by 22% from 38 to 42.

Koori Mail

Lock the Gate's election agenda

The Lock the Gate Alliance has released its agenda for the upcoming NSW election, asking political parties to commit to sweeping reforms of mining and planning law to restore balance.

An editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* describes the massive coal expansion proposed in the state's Strategic Assessment and community concern about the impacts of mining as "just as dangerous" for Mike Baird as the privatisation of poles and wires.

"Members of the Alliance were dismayed that the NSW Coalition government walked away from its 2011 election promises regarding mining and coal seam gas after it came to power," said Phil Laird, National Coordinator for Lock the Gate.

"A suite of Liberal-National Coalition promises that encompassed no go zones, ring fences and protections for groundwater and community health were trashed a few months into government.

"Since then communities have had to fight a rearguard action to protect themselves and their environment.

"This election the Alliance is seeking real commitments from the political parties to rein in the extractive industries, providing certainty to regional communities and committing to the protection of land and water," he said.

In order to help its members understand the commitments of the parties the Alliance is seeking responses from party leaders to a



series of questions, including querying the parties' positions on:

"We have fought this project in court, and won twice, but despite this the NSW government changed the rules to push it through, quashed our rights to appeal in court, and worked behind closed doors with mining giant Rio Tinto to ensure its proceeds."

series of questions, including querying the parties' positions on:

- Stamping out corruption-prone approval processes,
- Creating mining exclusion areas for farmland and water resources,
- Introducing health assessment and basic regulations to protect people from air pollution,
- Restoration of community merits appeal rights to challenge mine approvals in court,
- Respecting the will of communities and individuals who choose to say "no" to mining,
- Rectifying the failures of the NSW Gas Plan.

A full list of the detailed questions can be found here: www.lockthegate.org.au/nswvotes

Phil Laird said, "Last weekend, it was revealed that the NSW government has been meeting secretly with 11 coal companies to open up 45,000 hectares of new coal mining areas in the Hunter, suggesting that little has been learnt from the ICAC coal corruption scandals.

"Meanwhile, the NSW Gas Plan

news that the Planning and Assessment Commission has described the expansion of the Warkworth mine in the Hunter Valley as "capable of being approved," despite two court decisions rejecting an almost identical application, local community groups which have fought the project over five years have issued "The Bulga Declaration," promising to use all peaceful means to prevent the mine extension going ahead in future.

The Bulga Declaration, set out in full below, is signed by a broad cross section of groups affected by the mine including representatives of Bulga residents, the local Aboriginal community, local winemakers, tourism operators and environment groups. These groups are today inviting members of the public to sign onto the declaration, which can be found at www.lockthegate.org.au/the_bulga_declaration.

The Planning and Assessment Commission report admits that changes in State Government policy since 2013 which have favoured the coal mining industry have been central to its conclusion that the

mining project is "capable of being approved" now.

John Krey, spokesperson for the Bulga Milbrodale Progress Association said, "Giving the green light to this project today is confirmation that the legal and regulatory system that governs mining is broken and that NSW residents cannot count on it to serve the public interest or protect our precious land, water and heritage.

"With every other avenue to protect our homes and peaceful valley from this massive open cut coal mine

Ian Napier, Broke Fordwich Wine & Tourism Association spokesperson said, "Why sacrifice our fertile wine and local tourism industries for the profits of a multi-national mining company which is blind to the resulting impacts on our beautiful valley?"

Steve Phillips, Hunter Valley coordinator for the Lock The Gate Alliance said, "The Baird Government has turned its back on an iconic Hunter Valley community and sided with one of the biggest mining companies in the world. Instead of battling for Bulga, the government is battling for Rio Tinto, working hand in glove with the company to force this mine on an unwilling community. The PAC report makes clear that it is state government policy changes in the last two years that have made this project approvable. When a government changes the rules to suit a multi-national mining company and ruin a community, then communities have little choice but to issue a declaration of this kind."

The Bulga Declaration

We, the undersigned, make this promise: we will not allow the Warkworth mine to destroy Saddle Ridge and the Warkworth Sands, nor the village of Bulga.

Saddle Ridge and the Warkworth Sands harbour woodlands and wildlife that are vanishing from the Hunter Valley due to open cut coal mining. The area is an ancient pathway and place of harmony, protection, and direction for Wonnarua people. It shields the village of Bulga from noise and dust rising from the super pits of Rio Tinto's Mount Thorley-Warkworth mine. For the Wonnarua, the people of Bulga, and the wildlife, Saddle Ridge and the Warkworth Sands are home; protecting and guiding them. Such things cannot be compensated for. They cannot be sold, or replaced.

The NSW government may have signed the death warrant for Warkworth Sands and the village of Bulga, but the people have not. The government and Rio Tinto are colluding against us, but we are united and we will not be subdued.

The highest courts in New South Wales have rejected the Warkworth mine expansion for the same reasons

we reject it. By siding with Rio Tinto to subvert the people's victory in court, the government has crossed a line. Now we are the ones that will uphold fairness, protect the ridge and restore faith in organised community.

We stand with the village of Bulga and the Wonnarua Traditional Custodians. We pledge to them that we will use all peaceful means to help them protect community and culture from the Warkworth coal mine.

Signed by

Bulga Milbrodale Progress Association;

Kevin Taggart – Wonnarua traditional custodian

Broke Fordwich – Wine & Tourism Association

Hunter Valley Protection Alliance

Our Land Our Water Our Future

Lock the Gate.

Background

Both the Land and Environment Court, and the NSW Supreme Court (Court of Appeal), have rejected Rio Tinto's plans.

Yet in mid 2014 Rio Tinto resubmitted for approval an almost identical project to that already rejected by the courts.

Earlier, the NSW government joined Rio Tinto in its appeal and changed mining regulations to sidestep the Land & Environment Court's judgment.

As a result, the economic significance of a coal resource is now the principal consideration for mining development approvals, above impacts on water, biodiversity, amenity and other land uses.

If the expansion goes ahead it will create severe noise and dust impacts for residents of the small town, destroy a critically endangered woodland and impact on 110 registered Aboriginal cultural sites.

The PAC's approval of the mine extension means the Bulga community will no longer have appeal rights to the Land and Environment Court on the merits of the decision – a right ICAC recommends to prevent corruption. ☘

IWD: Standing side by side with our sisters

Historian **Louise Raw** revisits the New York origins of a day promoting female emancipation since 1909

The first national Women's Day was held a year later, by declaration of the Socialist Party of America. In 1910 the uber-cool Clara Zetkin – feminist, anti-racist, pacifist, Marxist and mate of Rosa Luxemburg just for starters – picked up the baton in style.

Addressing a conference of over 100 women from 17 countries, Zetkin called for an annual day for all countries to celebrate women's struggles and victories.

Delegates from unions, working women's clubs, socialist parties and parliaments – the first three women ever to be voted into the Finnish parliament were all present – greeted her call with unanimous approval.

International Women's Day was born, and first celebrated in 1911.

IWD is now an official holiday in 28 countries, from Afghanistan to Zambia. In some, men and children give gifts to mothers, wives and girlfriends.

Zetkin was the perfect candidate to propose this new venture.

She'd been hugely influential in steering Germany's Social Democratic Party in a feminist, Marxist direction. An active trade unionist, she devoted herself to organising women into both trade unions and the SPD, becoming a member of the SPD's national executive in 1895 and leader of its Women's Office from 1907.

The SPD had been neither feminist nor Marxist before Zetkin, Luxemburg, Liebknecht and the gang got to grips with it and worked to advance the rights of women within the German left, adopting a dual vision of class and gender to explain women's oppression under capitalism.

This was no mere lip service – Zetkin understood the practical realities of working women's lives, and knew the party needed to be reorganised to encourage women's full participation, something she would expand on as a leader of the Communist Women's Movement in the 1920s.

Knowing women faced a "double obligation to be active in both the factory and the home," she issued a demand for a legally fixed workday.

She also understood this affected women's political lives, too, making it hard for many to attend meetings. This sounds obvious, but how many political parties and groups even today

provide crèches or even parent-friendly start and finish times?

One of Zetkin's responses to the problem was to ensure literature appealed to and reached women who couldn't attend meetings.

From 1891 to 1917 she edited the SPD women's newspaper *Die Gleichheit* (Equality). In Britain, meanwhile, the left was not quite the hotbed of feminism it is today.

Our Social Democratic Federation chafed under the leadership of the irksome Ernest Belfort Bax, who thought feminism had gone too far in the 1890s, and wrote an essay entitled *The Fraud of Feminism* in 1913. Had he been alive today, I like to think he'd be merrily trolling me on Twitter.

The British trade union and women's movements had also developed in isolation, if not hostility, to each other, leaving a problematic legacy we're still dealing with today.

Yes, 55 per cent of union members are female for the first time and we have the sterling Frances O'Grady heading up the TUC, but these sisters know they have their work cut out.

The movement is still extremely male at the top and old ideas about "working men" as the paradigmatic trade unionists die hard. British feminism in general made huge strides in 2014, but is being met with an equally strong backlash.

Campaigners like Caroline Criado Perez and MP Stella Creasy were, and are, viciously harassed on social media (initially for the mild suggestion that we have, perhaps, one woman among the boys on our banknotes.)

Pseudonymous women's campaigner Jean Hatchet keeps going in the face of the most astonishing threats and abuse, largely garnered for suggesting – as did many other men and women in the sports world – that convicted rapist Ched Evans should not be allowed back to high-profile football because of the influential nature of the job.

And I can't be the only feminist who was asked the same question a hundred times this time of year: "But when is International Men's Day?!"

I used to simply reply: "Why, every day, of course!" Now I could add that there is an actual day. In November.

Zetkin, savvy to the one step forward, two steps back nature of women's fight under



Clara Zetkin.

capitalism, might be dismayed but would not be surprised.

As she wrote of women's expanding labour opportunities under industrialisation: "As a result of all this, the proletarian woman has achieved her independence. But ... the price was very high and ... they have gained very little. If during the Age of the Family, a man had the right to tame his wife occasionally with a whip, capitalism is now taming her with scorpions."

She wanted women and men to unite in the fight against capitalism, the system which hurt them both – and was clear that women were best placed to be agents of their own liberation.

"A workers' revolution that succeeds in overthrowing capitalism – and the capitalist

family, whose double burden on women ensures their inferior status in society – is the only hope for genuine women's liberation. The emancipation of all women – bourgeois and working class – thus depends on working-class women's collective power as workers."

In 2015 women are still paid less and suffer more from violence, war and economic vicissitudes all over the world.

Our brothers need to lend their support to us if we're ever to make the dream of Zetkin, and women down the centuries, come true.

That's my IWD wish – but while we're waiting, presents and a day off work will be just fine, too ...

Morning Star ✨

Giving so much to so many – For very little in return

An anonymous care worker describes her daily grind of overwork, impossibly timed appointments and insecure employment

7am

It was a struggle to get out of bed today. This is the 15th consecutive day that I have worked. I have to work extra shifts to be able to pay for essential repairs to my car.

Without it I can't travel to see all my clients and would have far less money to live on. Yet the company I work for provides no petrol allowance for the miles I travel or money for the increase in my car insurance.

7.30am

My first call today is to help a lady out of bed. It is a two-person job because she is very disabled.

When I arrive I notice that her commode hadn't been emptied the night before and had been placed right next to her bed. How she has managed to sleep is a wonder.

We have been given one hour to assist her but it usually takes much longer.

8.30am

Mrs M is fast asleep when I arrive. I offer her a drink to help her wake up. Today it takes 25 minutes to get her out of bed and use the toilet.

As this is a 30-minute call this only leaves me with five minutes to give her medicine, get her washed and dressed and make her breakfast.

I hate the fact that we are allocated so little time to spend with people and it is shocking when you read about some care visits being reduced to just 15 minutes.

I would never leave a client because I have gone over their allotted time. I make sure I carry out all Mrs M's tasks as required and leave 20 minutes later.

This makes me almost half an hour late for my next appointment but what choice to do I have? I want my clients to feel cared for and valued.

10am

Mrs C has dementia and often needs more assistance than is currently in place. I offer her breakfast and a cup of tea and check the house is safe. She has no family nearby and suffers from agoraphobia.

The three care calls she receives every day are her only social contact. I make an

effort to sit and chat with her while she has her breakfast.

12pm

As we are very short-staffed in some parts of my region I have been given some new clients to attend 15 miles away. The trip alone takes 25 minutes. So far today I have spent an hour driving and it's only lunchtime – one hour of my day at work that I don't get paid for.

Like many care workers on zero-hours contracts I don't get any money for the time I spend on call and travelling between appointments. This often means that I work for effectively less than the minimum wage.

1.45pm

By the time I arrive at my next client it is 1.45pm and the lady is very unhappy with my timekeeping.

I apologise and explain how far I have come. I can feel my head pounding knowing that I am going to be late for the client I have to see next.

I sit with the lady while her daughter goes shopping. I am half an hour behind schedule

and I know I am going to be late getting back home for my children. I phone around and get my 76-year-old neighbour to sit with my children so that my husband can go to work.

3pm

When I finally get home, it is great to see the kids as they were in bed when I left. I haven't seen my husband since the night before.

Being on a zero-hours contract and on such a tight schedule makes balancing my family life a real struggle. It is the school holidays and I would like to be at home with the children but I can't afford to be.

It is getting harder and harder to be a carer in this country. We need to put more money into the system and treat staff and clients with more respect or services will continue to deteriorate.

Sign the Unison petition to catch the criminal care employers and end the scandal of illegally paid care workers.

Morning Star ✨

Proud to call myself a feminist – You should be too

Shami Chakrabarti argues that backing feminism is indivisible from supporting human rights

He quickly responded, cross and full of indignation, that men could be feminists too. I'm not too big to be corrected – even by my own son – so I quickly agreed, but asked him whether he was a feminist.

He thought for a few moments. "Yes," he finally replied, "but not diehard." I'm going to spend the next few years working on developing the "diehard." More seriously, I struggle to understand why so many in this generation have such a problem with the "F word."

I passionately, profoundly believe in gender equality and my feminism is indivisible from my belief in human rights. Global in reach and millennial in duration, gender injustice is the greatest, oldest and most entrenched injustice on the planet – an apartheid that crosses continents and cultures.

We should, and must, be impatient for change. As we look forward to the centenary of the Representation of the People Act in 1918 I worry that Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters wouldn't be very impressed by the progress of the Chakrabartis in the past 100 years. We've come far – but not far enough.

One of my favourite books of last year was Rachel Holmes's wonderful biography of Eleanor Marx, the great feminist, internationalist and trade union founder who was so much more than her father's youngest daughter.

This tireless campaigner, who was committed to collective rights, believed that feminism was for all women, not just the privileged or the property owners. She died over 100 years ago, 20 years before women won the vote, and her attitude appears more progressive than many today.

My rights are your rights and if yours are diminished, so are mine. In Britain there are some who want to move away from human rights standards.

The Conservative Party's plans to replace the Human Rights Act with a so-called "British Bill of Rights" are clearly intended to diminish the rights of everyone in Britain – and the hardest hit will be the most vulnerable. As history has shown, the most vulnerable are often women, disadvantaged by a lack of wealth, power or agency.



Entertainment at Sunday's Communist Women's Collective public meeting, Sydney. (Photo: Donna McLaren)

This remains true today, where modern slavery, domestic and sexual violence, trafficking, pay inequality and lack of public representation exist within a climate of "everyday sexism" which reaches every woman in the country.

Here at Liberty, we have seen a woman who was repeatedly gang-raped and tortured in the Democratic Republic of Congo locked up like a criminal in an immigration detention centre for almost two months.

We intervened in the case of Joanna Michael, who was brutally murdered after her desperate calls to the police about her violent partner were mishandled.

We represented the sisters of Anne Marie Ellement, a Royal Military Police Officer who killed herself after she alleged she was raped by two colleagues.

We have helped a trafficked woman who was forced to work without pay or rest and was physically and sexually abused by her "employer."

Extreme examples maybe, but these cases highlight the many human rights issues which still disproportionately affect women across the world.

Gender injustice is so embedded in our society that sometimes we stop seeing it. We accept the rows of men sitting in Parliament or the latest gender pay gap figures with a shrug and a sigh. It's time to wake up, give ourselves a shake and confront those content with the status quo.

But despite this I believe that the feminist movement is alive and kicking and that it helps all of us, women and men alike, as my son identified. A healthy awareness of feminism can return the glare of injustice to these common and not-so-common inequalities.

Awareness is just a first step but it is vital if we're to achieve any sort of meaningful change.

We must keep our eyes open and our hands on the tiller, promote supportive networks and rejuvenate our collective energy. Because change must come – we can no longer afford to be complacent.

Women are already extraordinary, powerful campaigners and agents of change. It's just that so often they change things on others' behalf.

You only need to look at Doreen Lawrence or Janis Sharp, mother of extradition-threatened hacker Gary McKinnon, to see that we already own the drive, passion and skills to transform our world.

On this International Women's Day I am proud to be a "diehard feminist" and I believe that saving the Human Rights Act is essential to women's protection in Britain.

This year will be a challenging one for all of us but, as a feminist, I can tell you that I'm up for the fight.

Morning Star ✨

FLOR

Your ear, enclosed tenderly by his mouth.
Surrounded by the sweet odour of living things,
a moment passed in time and place.

Staying lizard-still, stone-still
on a rock outside the execution house
in Singapore, a lizard rolls its eyes at the sun.

Behind the walls of Changi
the barbarian's henchmen lead you
to the trapdoor, the collapsible floor
and the noose.

A maid-servant-slave from the Philippines,
your children locked out,
Singapore police with machine guns and
dogs are on watch at the prison gates
because there are seventy thousand like her in Singapore.

Cheap labour, sex for tourists, bashed, sometimes murdered
with no one brought to book; though there is no blood visible
on the clean city streets
there are tyrants
in the corridors of power.

Thousands come onto the streets
in the Philippines in anger
and with tears of mourning.

The tiny lizard, as though startled, turns its head
then disappears from the rock
as if snatched away by an invisible snare.

Another victim is hanged in Singapore

Tom Pearson



The five speakers at Sunday's Communist Women's Collective public meeting – left to right sitting, Jane Brock, Kat Armstrong, Dr Thalia Anthony, left to right standing Mich-Elle Myers, Veronica Cartaya & Maria Hillario. Exerts from their speeches will appear in next week's *Guardian*.

Sydney
International Women's Day
Rally Sydney Town Hall
11am
Saturday March 14

Western media exploits Nemtsov's death

Bryan MacDonald

Boris Nemtsov's death was an appalling crime, but he wasn't the "leader of the Russian opposition" as many Western media outlets claim. The differences between what Russians regard as the opposition to their government and what Westerners perceive as the Russian opposition was on incontrovertible display last week. All 28 EU ambassadors to the Kremlin attended Boris Nemtsov's funeral but Russia's President Vladimir Putin and his Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev were absent.

Russians divide the opposition into two distinct groups, the systemic opposition, headed by the Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov and the other opposition, arguably now led by Alexey Navalny. However, Westerners see only the – often erroneously designated – "Liberals" as a legitimate alternative to Putin's government. This ignores the genuine support for the Communist Party among many Russians who either pine for the perceived glories of the USSR or are sick and tired of the oligarchy.

Putin's genius has long been to successfully walk a tightrope between the two sides. The systemic opposition favours more totalitarianism and a tougher line against the West. On the other hand, the "Liberals" desire rapprochement with Europe and the US and a return to '90s attempts to introduce a liberal democracy.

Boris Nemtsov's death was

appalling. A native of Sochi, the former deputy prime minister was a gregarious bon viveur, with a reputation as a ladies' man but also one as a thoroughly decent skin. People liked him.

Syria experts turned "Russia experts"

However, before his body was cold on Friday night, "commentators" with very little knowledge of Russia were queuing up to use Nemtsov's murder to fit their own agendas. One, the neocon activist Michael Weiss, completed an investigation into the Moscow killing inside an hour – from New York, something even Kojak or Colombo wouldn't have tried. Excited by his findings, he appeared on CNN to make a, quite bonkers, comparison between the death of Sergey Kirov in 1934 and that of Nemtsov.

Despite there being hundreds of American journalists in Moscow, CNN decided to bring on – via Skype – a pundit who has never lived in Russia (and knows very little about the country) to discuss a breaking news story in the Russian capital. They might as well have asked me to discuss Nevada's current weather – in Irish Gaelic, from Sochi – for all the sense it must have made to their viewers.

On Saturday, the BBC hauled out the former head of MI6, John Sawers, twisting his words to say that Russia has become a "danger to Britain". A great headline and impressive clickbait. Nevertheless, Sawers was actually calling for "increased dialogue...



Boris Nemtsov.

with a Russia which feels very exposed" in his wide-ranging *Today* program interview.

Making a martyr

The "Russian threat" brigade was out in force, calling for more sanctions and blaming President Putin for Nemtsov's murder. I fail to see any conceivable reason why Putin would

want an opposition activist shot a few dozen metres from the Kremlin's walls. The death of Boris Nemtsov is not exactly positive for Putin as it creates instability and provides his adversaries with a kind of martyr.

Not that the government is entirely blameless. My feeling – shared by many others – is that Nemtsov's death might be Donbass coming to Moscow. Some Nationalist elements among volunteers fighting in Ukraine might be frustrated by what they perceive as insufficient Kremlin support for their cause. As an outspoken critic of Crimea's reunification with Russia, who was close to Ukraine's President Poroshenko, Nemtsov would have been an obvious target for their wrath. That said, I am proffering a theory, not stating it as fact.

Of course, this runs contrary to the State Department narrative – slavishly followed by Western media – that Russia has invaded Ukraine. To admit that radical elements in Russia actually oppose Putin because he refuses to invade Ukraine would make them all look extremely silly.

On Sunday, June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated at the northern end of the Latin Bridge in Sarajevo. On Friday, February 27, 2015, Boris Nemtsov was murdered while crossing the Bolshoy Moskvoretsky Bridge in Moscow. The only thing both crimes have in common is that they happened around bridges.

Of course, the Archduke's slaying, at the hands of a Serbian nationalist, sparked the Great War. Reading the hysterical reaction of the western mainstream media to the heinous Nemtsov homicide, you'd think something equally as profound is imminent. Relax, it's not – Nemtsov's days as a political figure of influence expired a long time ago.

The Western press, either through genuine ignorance or calculated misrepresentation, consistently paints an erroneous picture of the composition of Russia's opposition. Fringe activists, most of them conveniently liberal and pro-American, are built up as "leaders" – ignoring reality.

RT ☘

The prying state

BRITAIN: A great deal has been said and written about burgeoning extremism in recent weeks – particularly in connection with the Middle East. The quality of the data provided to MI5 and MI6 to help them counter such extremism has been questioned.

The main responsibility for gathering such data lies with the National Domestic Extremism Team (NDET). The team was established, not by act of Parliament, but by the Association of Chief Police Officers of England and Wales to co-ordinate surveillance operations and work with Crown Prosecution Service specialists.

Thus, there is no direct statutory basis for what is in essence a secret police and judiciary. Indeed, there is no official or legal definition of just what domestic extremism is. But, if there were, legal experts say that it would focus on those who conspire to carry out crimes aimed at changing state policy or legislation, or preventing it from changing.

The problem is that the definition of what might be illicit is entirely subjective. Prosecution can only be justified by finding evidence and this gives the police licence to first carry out widespread surveillance of legitimate organisations and second, deliberately seek to lead such organisations closer to illegality in order to prosecute them.

The effect has been a staggering dilution of the nature of

bourgeois liberal democracy over the last decade. Not only do we now know that there are police officers posing as student, environmental and animal rights activists, but the first undercover officer working as a trade union activist has been outed.

Now John Catt, a 90-year-old pensioner with no criminal record in his long life, has lost a four-year legal battle to compel police to destroy a secret file they have compiled on his political activities.

It is seemingly quite within the law to keep a detailed record of someone's political activities – in John Catt's case his attendance at peaceful protests at the rate of one or more a month.

Like Mr Catt, some 26,000 people have in recent years had their details recorded on the National Special Branch Intelligence System database, although there are claims that this has now been much reduced. This is on a par with MI5's claim in 2000 to have given up spying on British communists. They would say that, wouldn't they?

The British state unequivocally spent most of the 20th century opening the post, listening in to the telephone conversations, recording details of speeches, and bugging the offices of communists and their allies in the trade union and labour movement.

Often the files they kept, most of which have disappeared, were composed of tittle tattle. Even some

MPs, up until the mid-1970s, were treated to a life of surveillance.

All this was kicked into a whole new level of activity when Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for England and Wales complained, during the period of a new Labour government, that a major shortcoming in the effectiveness of Special Branch's work was an inadequate IT system – including the lack of a national database for intelligence management.

Consideration of civil liberties issues at the time the database was founded was entirely focused on the consequences of the invasion of Iraq.

The "evidence" for continuing surveillance of Mr Catt is that he had been "regularly present at events where disorder had taken place," which "at least raised the possibility of association."

He had also expressed support for some who were prosecuted but later acquitted of criminal acts. Data was retained when there was no question of criminal acts having taken place at all.

Whatever the arguments at the Supreme Court, the plain fact is that listing details of political affiliation and activity is completely unacceptable. Arguments that the quality of democracy in Britain is higher than in other states will inevitably be seen as false unless something changes.

Morning Star ☘

Australian Marxist Review

Journal of the Communist Party of Australia



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Nobel chair who oversaw Obama award demoted

The Nobel Peace Prize Committee's chairman has been removed from his post for the first time in the award's 114-year history. He's been criticised over a number of the panel's controversial picks, like US president and the EU.

Ousted Chairman Thorbjørn Jagland, a former Norwegian Labour prime minister, had been in charge of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee for six years before he was voted out last week. He will remain a member of the committee, but the leading role has been passed on to the panel's deputy chairman, Kaci Kullmann Five, a former conservative party leader.

"There's a new committee with new people, and new people can always lead to new considerations," Kullmann Five told journalists. "Jagland has been a good leader for the committee for six years."

Three out of six prize winners chosen under Thorbjørn Jagland have raised controversy.

Jagland's first year as chairman in 2009 saw the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to US President Barack Obama, who at that time had only been in office for nine months.

Obama won the prize "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen

international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples," while the US was engaged in two lengthy wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as heightened US drone strikes on suspected militants in Pakistan and Yemen.

A Norwegian diplomat revealed in 2014, that the Obama administration itself was not happy with being given the award.

"My colleague in Washington received a reprimand from Obama's chief of staff [Rahm Emanuel, at the time]. The word 'fawning' was used," Morten Wetland, who was Norway's United Nations delegate from 2008 to 2012, wrote in an article published in the Norwegian daily *Dagens Naeringsliv* and cited by AFP.

The Nobel Prize Committee's 2012 choice of the European Union as the winner of the award has also raised quite a few eyebrows. Critics pointed out Jagland's other role as head of the European Council as a potential conflict of interest. Many argued the prize was undeserved because of the EU's economic and foreign policy failures.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and two other Nobel Peace Prize-winners protested the decision in an open letter.

"The EU is clearly not 'the champion of peace' that Alfred Nobel had in mind when he wrote his will," the letter read. "The Norwegian Nobel committee has redefined and remodelled the prize in a manner that it is not consistent with the law."

A 2010 award to Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo led to Beijing freezing diplomatic relations with Oslo.

Jagland's removal has led to speculations over how much the prize is influenced by politics, having been replaced by another former party leader.

Nobel Committee members are appointed by Norway's parliament according to the power balance there. Right-wing parties won elections in 2013, which gave them a 3-2 majority over Labour on the Peace Prize panel.

"This can be interpreted as an attempt by the rightist government to exert more political control over the committee than has been customary," Nobel historian Asle Sveen told AFP.

There have been calls for the Nobel committee to be open to foreigners to boost its scope and preserve its independence from shifts in Norwegian politics.

RT



Ousted Chairman Thorbjørn Jagland, a former Norwegian Labour prime minister, had been in charge of the Nobel Peace Prize Committee for six years before he was voted out last week.

US Congress and hypocrisy on Iran

It was a spectacle that had few if any parallels in the modern history of nations: a foreign head of state invited by an opposition party to directly intervene into a debate over a country's foreign policy.

But that is exactly what happened when House Majority Leader John Boehner, deliberately not consulting with the White House or State Department, invited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress.

The insult was obvious and precipitated a boycott of the address by 60 members of Congress along with the president, the vice-president and others in the administration. Not so obvious was yet another challenge by the far-right to the role of government regarding its responsibility for statecraft: One political party in a divided government abrogated the traditional, constitutional right of the executive to conduct foreign policy.

But Benjamin Netanyahu was

brought to Washington to help do just that. The aim was to brazenly derail the Obama administration's attempt, along with four other countries, to reach a nuclear deal with Iran.

Despite the Israeli prime minister's lame and false claim that his address was "not political" – and this from a candidate facing a general election in two weeks – Netanyahu lambasted Obama's negotiations with Iran, insisting that the Iranian government could not be trusted. He claimed further that the 10-year time period for the agreement was far too short and that Iran's nuclear production facilities would be left in place. He implied over and over again that the administration was naive and hadn't a clue as to whom they were dealing with.

And yet in a world in which ever more countries have acquired the technological capacity to produce nuclear weapons, what options are there other than diplomacy and negotiation? While production facilities can be taken off line or

destroyed, the scientific and technological know-how cannot. And even production facilities can be quickly replaced.

And surely an important irritant in the Greater Middle East is the widely known, if not officially admitted, fact that Israel possesses nuclear weapons – the sole nuclear-armed country in the region.

Engagement and negotiation are the only realistic alternatives to military diktat, terrorism and devastating war. As for trusting a problematic government, remember that when our own government first entered the nuclear arms race some 70 years ago, the barbarism of segregation still ruled our land, thinking anti-capitalist thoughts was criminalised here, and so was intercourse between people of different races and same-sex couples. It took a broad based domestic peace and civil rights movement to compel a sea change in public attitudes and prevent further use of nuclear weapons.

So too with other countries including Iran. One thing is sure, military bluster, intervention and a steadfast refusal to find a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict will only make the region and the world less safe.

At the end of the day, negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament are the only sure way to step away from the brink and bring about a sustainable and lasting peace. A majority of Americans, including Republicans, favour a negotiated solution with Iran. Congress would be ill-advised not to heed the public's strong desire.

People's World



Region Briefs

A ceremony was held in Hanoi to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of Vietnam People's Air Force. The Air Force has been modernised rapidly and has been bestowed with many awards. Deputy Defence Minister, Senior Lieutenant General Do Ba Ty, called on the Air Force to be vigilant and ready in order to face complicated and unpredicted situations.

According to China's Vice Minister for Environment Pan Yue, the government plans to set up accounts on Wechat (a popular social media platform), asking people to report polluting practices and help the government to implement the newly enforced Environmental Protection Law. People's supervision is considered as an effective force in China, monitoring local governments and enterprises to be accountable under the law. The Minister stresses that the government will crack down and punish projects that failed to pass Environmental Impact Assessments. In order to enforce the law, the country's Supreme Court has already set up 382 environmental specialist courts in 18 provinces.

According to the Department of Planning and Investment of the Vietnamese city of Can Tho, the city's industrial production value (IPV) increased by 11.7 percent compared to the same period last year. The city plans to become a regional industrial centre, and it will have a capacity of achieving an annual IPV growth of 12 to 14 percent up to 2020. The city will construct new industrial parks and infrastructure, help enterprises to upgrade equipment and technologies, as well as promote local trademarks to maximise their potential.

The Japanese Communist Party recently criticised the government on various issues during parliament sittings. The Party's Chair, Shii Kazuo, criticised Prime Minister Abe Shinzo for glorifying Japan's war aggression in the past and called for the prohibition on ministers to visit the Yasukuni Shrine (the symbol of war glorification), as Abe recently tried to justify cabinet members' visit to the shrine. The Chair also demanded the government reduce Japanese workers' hours. As an example, Japanese workers' overtime hours are eight times more than workers' in the Netherlands. The monthly legal limit for working overtime in Japan is 45 hours per worker, but in reality, the average annual overtime working hours reach 182, and another 300 hours that are unpaid. The number of Japanese workers who committed suicide or died from overwork increased to 196 in 2013 from 52 in 1998.

Cuba

Call for the 10th International May Day Brigade

April 27 to May 10, 2015

The Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples and its travel Agency Amistur Cuba S.A, invites you to participate in the 10th edition of the international brigade, on the occasion of the international workers' day.

For full program see

www.cpa.org.au/whats-on

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

email: tpearson@cpa.org.au



Importance of public transport

I have campaigned in a small way for better public transport in Melbourne and elsewhere in Victoria. So I was very pleased with the election of the Labor government and the prospect of serious efforts being made to upgrade and expand train services and other public transport.

My family, friends and I are pleased with progress so far and are hopeful this will continue. It is a pleasure to finally have a government that is really listening to what the people want and have been asking for such a long time and are seemingly willing to act to repair and renew our transport system.

I know it is not easy to begin work on a long neglected system that previous governments put in the too hard basket, so I thank government MPs for having the courage to take up this worthy and necessary challenge.

I also played a modest part in opposing the former government's proposals to redevelop and redesign the Flinders Street Station, which I and most people in Melbourne thought would ruin the beauty and character of this fabulous city icon.

So I was absolutely delighted that this will not go ahead and instead

Andrews' government have committed funds to repairing and restoring this splendid station. I'm appreciative that we at last have MPs that seem to understand what the community of Melbourne and Victoria want and are working to fix our problems.

Let's hope the new government can keep faith with the people's wishes for much better public transport.

Steven Katsineris,
Vic

Help those facing horror

Humans have an astounding ability to ignore horror. Particularly when it's not happening to us.

How else can we explain the stunning lack of interest in the world's biggest humanitarian crisis? Four years of terrible violence in

Syria, 16 million people needing aid and yet donations to Syria appeals have slowed to a crawl.

Is it that Australians don't care? I hope not. Or maybe we can't see how to make a difference in a crisis this huge?

Two out of three Syrian people need aid, yet Syria's often forgotten here in Australia. Imagine if two thirds of your community, your city or your country needed a hand with the basics like food, water and hygiene items to survive.

The basic health and dignity of Syrian people are unacceptably

compromised. But small practical contributions can help people survive. We're aiming to provide Syrian families with personal care essentials: toothpaste, soap, toilet paper, sanitary pads and much more, complementing other life-saving services that we support.

We may not be able to solve the Syria crisis overnight, but in small ways we can make life more bearable for people trapped in its horror. Please help at redcross.org.au

Peter Walton
Head of International Programs,
Australian Red Cross

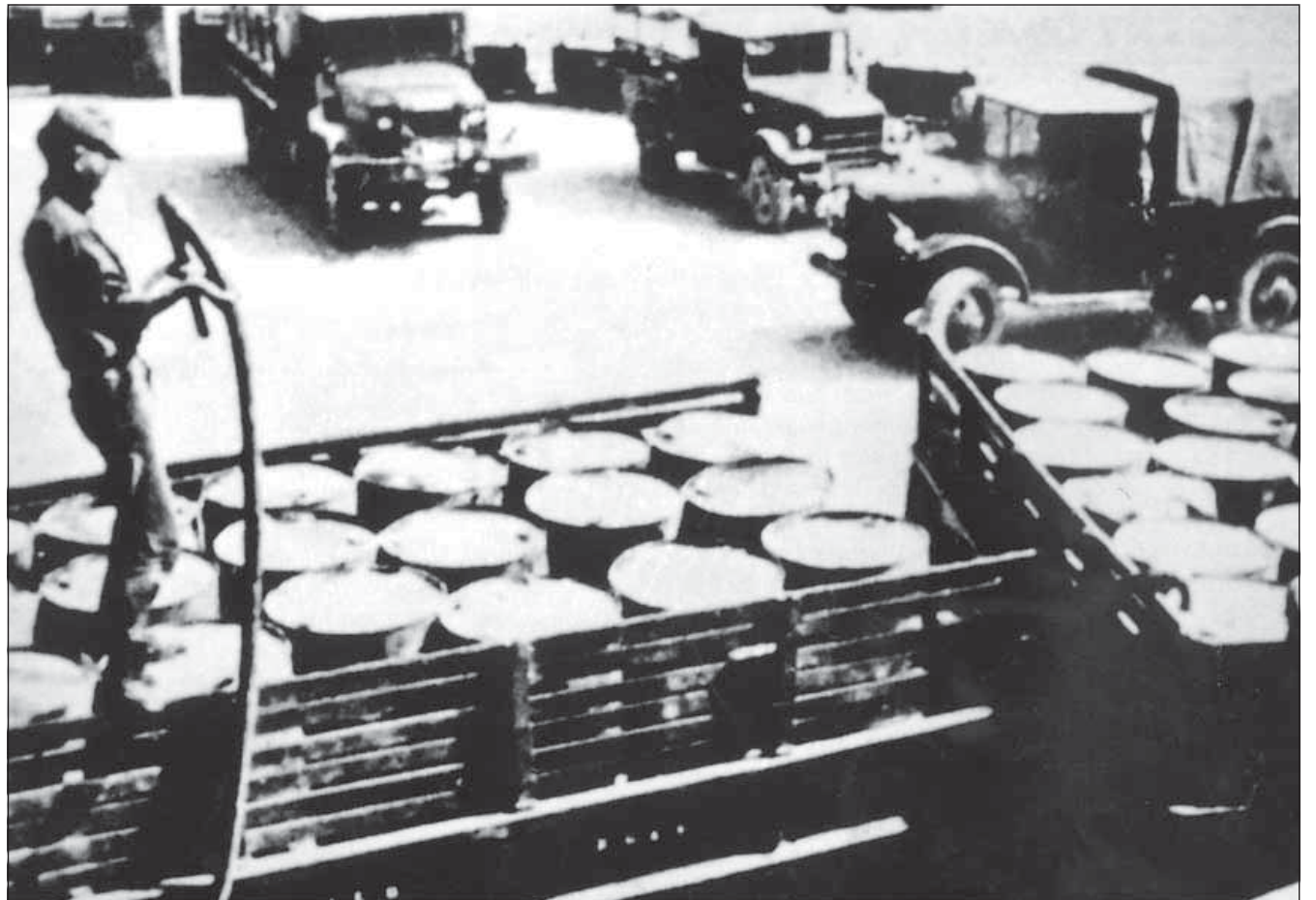
Something to say?
Write to the Editor!

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Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Agent Orange, the Gulf of Tonkin and stealing public ore reserves



The colossal spraying program did not leave the Vietnam exposed and helpless. What it did do, however, was poison the grass and the other plants, poison the soil and crops and poison the people.

To the chagrin of the US military, their troops in Vietnam were safe only in their bases and camps – and not always then. The countryside belonged to the Vietnamese liberation forces. In a desperate attempt to overcome this situation, the US resorted to concentration camps and massive chemical warfare. Vietnamese villagers were herded into “secure” villages where they could be “protected”. That they did not need to be protected from the side they actively supported counted for nothing. It was, after all, not about protection but about separating the villagers from the resistance fighters in the jungle.

What was in effect a policy of turning villages into prison camps no doubt strengthened the resolve of the Vietnamese people to resist the US invaders even more. At the same time, the US brass-hats had unleashed their other brilliant weapon to win the war: unprecedented chemical warfare, spraying millions of litres of the toxic agent dioxin (the notorious “Agent Orange”) over large swathes of the country. Monsanto and Dow Chemicals assured the Pentagon that it would strip the leaves from the trees and leave the black-clad Vietnamese crouched underneath fully exposed to US gunships.

Although it played merry hell with Vietnam's environment, the colossal spraying program did not leave the Vietnam exposed and helpless. What it did do, however, was poison the grass and the other plants, poison the soil and crops and poison the people. Birth defects still appearing in large numbers today are just

one of the effects of this potent chemical pollutant which was dropped with such abandon on “the gooks”. The quantities sprayed are staggering, as are the estimates of the resultant contamination. A general standard is that dioxin levels must not exceed 1,000 ppt (parts per trillion) in soil. Dioxin levels at Da Nang for example have been found to be up to 365,000 ppt.

After much pressure from humanitarian and peace organisations, including US associations of Vietnam veterans still trying to cope with their feelings of guilt, horror and betrayal, the US government – which waged the war and caused the problem after all – has finally and very reluctantly agreed to contribute some money (not a lot and not enough by a long chalk) to the task of cleaning up the worst contamination.

Filmmaker and activist Michael Moore has also given money to the Veterans For Peace organisation for their campaign to clean up Agent Orange residue in Vietnam. Moore did it in memory of his father.

You get some very perspicacious comments from Americans on *FaceBook* sometimes. Noting that “the Gulf of Tonkin Incident was a false flag operation that was designed to accomplish just what it did accomplish: an expansion of the war against a defenceless country”, someone with the *nom de plume* Shamanomaha pointed out that “the US has repeated this pattern several times: Grenada, Panama, Iraq. The only winners in this scheme are Big Defence and Big Military. Grumman and Boeing and Texas Instruments and their

owners make fortunes. The scam drains off trillions of dollars that could provide Universal Health Care for all Americans and free education for all Americans.”

Warming to his theme, Shanomaha says “the Gulf of Tonkin Incident prefigured the attack on the WTC. Big Defence and Big Military have no problem sacrificing a few thousand citizens or a few thousand soldiers on the altar of profits. America has only one religion: Business. It has only one god: profit.” By America he means of course the American ruling class, not the America of laid off auto-workers or the working poor who have to rely on food stamps to survive despite having a job.

After an article in *Truthout* by Alan Grayson, the Representative for Florida's Ninth Congressional District in the US House of Representatives, exposing a move by Senator John McCain and other Republicans to hand over to private hands a swathe of public land – national forest, in fact – sitting on top of huge (and hugely valuable copper reserves, worth an estimated \$130 billion) in exchange for an equal amount of land *not* containing any copper, a number of very pithy comments flew around the Internet.

Someone calling himself *danletras* suggested “we could have left the area in peace, as undeveloped National Forest. The world is sufficiently mined and drilled and paved already. Continuing the trajectory of destroying natural habitats to pillage their resources is leading to the collapse of the biotic systems that support life on the planet. Congressman Grayson knows that, per the numbers, we are currently living

through the Sixth Great Extinction event. It is estimated that 200 species per day are going extinct; this is 20 times the normal rate of species extirpation. Congressman Grayson also knows that, unlike previous mass extinction events, this one is being driven by the actions of one species – Homo Sapiens. Why, under these circumstances, Congressman Grayson merely advocates getting a higher price to destroy part of our national and Earth heritage is the \$130 billion question.” Ouch!

However, according to a post by Clyde McWhorter, there is more value to be got from copper mines than just copper. “Copper is not the only product [extracted from these mines.]. The next best-paying product is gold. The gold produced at all other copper mines pays for ALL EXPENCES in mining and processing.” That means the copper is *all profit*.

There, as here, the battle between the greed induced by the prospect of billions of dollars worth of profits and the desire of ordinary people (regrettably often only the better-educated) to be able to enjoy the natural world and have it enrich their lives in totally non-monetary ways, is waged with vigour and a certain desperation.

An outraged Peggy Conroy, for example, posted: “What will they do about all the animals and plants whose habitat will be destroyed and what will happen to the water situation, as it's in big trouble all over the west. They will say they have to get rid of the rest of the wild horses and other such things as they are in the way. Totally disgusting on all fronts.” ☘



Sunday March 15 –
Saturday March 21

Dateline Presents: Gunned Down (SBS ONE Sunday March 15 at 9.30pm) is the first in a series of documentaries presented by SBS journalists. This first one deals with the power and pernicious influence of the reactionary National Rifle Association (NRA), the lobby group for the very lucrative firearms industry in the US.

When in December of 2012, 20-year-old Adam Lanza entered Sandy Hook Elementary School in the USA and killed 26 children and adults with a high-powered rifle before taking his own life with a handgun, even people in the USA – where there are 30,000 gun-deaths a year – were shocked into calling for gun control. But the calls ran into intense opposition from the NRA.

One of the NRA's top leaders, Wayne LaPierre, reduced the tragedy to a glib cliché: "The answer to a bad man with a gun is a good man with a gun." The fallacy in the argument that if everyone has a gun there will be less shootings is self evident, nevertheless by skilful lobbying the NRA has become a very powerful political force in the USA, presenting any attempt to control the possession or sale of guns as an infringement of Americans' fundamental constitutional rights.

For me, "modern dance" always seems to verge on the ludicrous. However, **Compass: Dancing At 100 (ABC Sunday March 15 at 6.30pm)**, which is about the life and career of dancer Eileen Kramer, still dancing at age 100, is fascinating and oddly charming.

From the avant-garde Bodenwieser Ballet which she joined when it came to Australia from Europe in the late 1930s, to living in India as a dancer and learning to dance the twist from Louis Armstrong in Paris, to moving to the USA and (after the death of her film-maker husband) joining a performing arts collective, she eventually, at the age of 80, re-invented herself once again, as a choreographer.

After working in that capacity in the US for 20 years, and nostalgic for

the smell of gum leaves, at 99, after living overseas for over half a century, she returned to Australia with no more than a couple of suitcases filled with clothes and costumes.

Asked by a café musician to appear in a video clip for his first single, Eileen began a new cycle of creativity at 100.

For the Australian people, our economy is in deep trouble. Manufacturing has largely disappeared and full-time jobs with it. Capitalism, however, is not overly worried: there is plenty of money still to be made by ripping out our mineral wealth and selling it to countries that do have manufacturing industries.

Just how smug capitalism is in Australia is shown by the three-part series with the extraordinary title **Making Australia Great: Inside Our Longest Boom (ABC Tuesdays from March 17 at 8.30pm)**. This piece of official propaganda is a paean of praise for Australian capitalism, and significantly features supportive comment from both Liberal and Labor former PMs and Treasurers. But what else would you expect from a line-up that included Julia Gillard, Kevin Rudd, John Howard, Paul Keating, Bob Hawke, Malcolm Fraser, Peter Costello, Wayne Swan, Ken Henry, Ian Macfarlane, Glenn Stevens, Paul Volcker, Peter Garratt, and Rob Sitch.

The last two in the above list are presumably meant to provide a "left-wing" perspective and the "balance" the ABC craves. I found the series' distorted, and frankly dishonest, viewpoint at once illuminating and nauseating.

The series is presented by "author, journalist and Canberra insider" George Megalogenis who maintains that "We made our own luck through decades of far sighted and challenging economic and cultural reforms" (every attack on working people's rights is always presented as a "reform").

The ABC management is striving to turn our national public broadcaster into another commercial channel chasing ratings, and this series is a pointer towards the future. "This really is a landmark television series," said ABC Head of Programming, Brendan Dahill.

The series is based on Megalogenis' book, *The Australian Moment*, which not-surprisingly won the 2013 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Non-fiction. Sadly, it was also the best-selling non-fiction book in Australia in 2012.

The Words, this week's movie in SBS' *American Hustle Season (SBS ONE Saturday March 21 at 8.30pm)*, is a pretentious mystery/romantic drama starring Bradley Cooper, Zoe Saldana, Olivia Wilde, Jeremy Irons, and Dennis Quaid, about a novel that may or may not



Fascinating and oddly charming – *Compass: Dancing At 100 (ABC Sunday March 15 at 6.30pm)*.

have been plagiarised. Ironically, the film was accused of plagiarism itself, its plot being similar to that of a 2004 Swiss novel *Lila Lila* by Martin Suter (made into the German film *Lila, Lila* released in 2009).

The Words was made in Montreal because that city could pass as both Paris and New York. It received largely negative reviews from US critics, the consensus stating: "Neither as clever nor as interesting as it appears to think it is, *The Words* maroons its talented stars in an overly complex, dramatically inert literary thriller that's ultimately a poor substitute for a good book". Jen Chaney from *The Washington Post* gave the film 1.5 out of 5 stars, saying it "is a well-acted but narratively limp indie that's undermined by a failure to connect emotionally with its audience".

This week's instalment of stand-up comedy filmed at London's renowned Hammer-smith Apollo Theatre, **Live At The Apollo (ABC2 Saturday March 21 at 9.15pm)**, is hosted by the rather endearing Northern UK comic Sarah Millican. When she has finished her own routine, Sarah introduces two other British comedy stars: the quite funny Joe Lycett and the even funnier Russell Kane.

I like stand-up comedy if it's well done, as it is here, and the British have a long tradition of it, thanks to the continuum from the music halls to the extensive circuits of clubs, particularly working class clubs, especially in the North. The popularity of *Live At The Apollo* is attested to by the fact that this is its tenth series. ☘

Sydney

Defend Public Housing Film Night and Sausage Sizzle

6:30pm Wednesday 18 March
Old Fire Station –113 Mitchell Street, Glebe

Max Solling will speak on: Where has the public housing gone vision gone?

Films: Historical and new short films on public housing

Entry \$10, concession \$5

Organised by Hands off Glebe 0418 290 663

Sydney

POLITICS IN THE PUB

March 12

DEREGULATION OF UNIVERSITIES: A RECIPE FOR PERPETUATING INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA?

Nick Riemer, Dr, Department of English, Sydney University;
Richard Hill, Dr, Honorary Research Fellow, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Sydney University;

March 19

THE ABBOTT GOVERNMENT'S NEW LAWS GIVING EXTRAORDINARY POWERS TO INTELLIGENCE SERVICES & POLICE MUST BE RESISTED BY ALL THOSE WHO OPPOSE THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

Stephen Blanks, President, NSW Council of Civil Liberties;
Alison Broinowski, Dr, Former Ambassador and now Visiting Fellow, ANU;

March 26

IS THERE SPACE IN OUR CITIES FOR POORER PEOPLE?

Mary Perkins, Executive Officer, SHELTER, NSW;
Peter Phibbs, Professor, Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning;

April 2

NO MEETING: EASTER

Public holiday;

April 9

ANZACS AND THE MILITARISATION OF AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

David Stephens, Dr, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, UNSW;
Noah Bassil, Dr, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University;

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US war on ISIS a Trojan Horse

Ulson Gunnar

In August of 2013, even as the words came out of US President Barack Obama's mouth regarding an "impending" US military strike against the Syrian state, the impotence of American foreign policy loomed over him and those who wrote his speech for him like an insurmountable wall. So absurd was America's attempt to once again use the canard of "weapons of mass destruction" to justify yet another military intervention, that many believed America's proxy war in Syria had finally reached its end.

The counterstroke by Russia included Syria's immediate and unconditional surrendering of its chemical weapons arsenal, and with that, so evaporated America's casus belli.

Few would believe if one told them then, that in 2015, that same discredited US would be routinely bombing Syrian territory and poised to justify the raising of an entire army of terrorists to wage war within Syria's borders, yet that is precisely what is happening. President Obama has announced plans to formally increase military force in Iraq and Syria "against ISIS," but of course includes building up huge armies of "rebels" who by all other accounts are as bad as ISIS itself (not to mention prone to joining ISIS' ranks by the thousands).

All it took for this miraculous turn in fortune was the creation of "ISIS", and serial provocations committed by these Hollywood-style villains seemingly engineered to reinvigorate America's justification to militarily intervene more directly in a war it itself started in Syria beginning in 2011.

ISIS could not be a more effective part of America's plans to overthrow the Syrian government and destroy the Syrian state if it had an office at the Pentagon.

Having failed to achieve any of its objectives in Syria, it inexplicably "invaded" Iraq, affording the US military a means of "easing into" the conflict by first confronting ISIS in Iraq, then following them back across the border into Syria. When this scheme began to lose its impact on public perception, ISIS first started executing Western hostages including several Americans. When the US needed the French on board, ISIS executed a Frenchman. When the US needed greater support in Asia, two Japanese were beheaded. And just ahead of President Obama's recent attempt to formally authorise the use of military force against "ISIS", a Jordanian pilot was apparently burned to death in a cage in an unprecedented act of barbarity that shocked even the most apathetic.

The theatrics of ISIS parallel those seen in a Hollywood production. This doesn't mean ISIS didn't really burn to death a Jordanian pilot or behead scores of hostages. But it does mean that a tremendous amount of resources and planning were put into each murder, except apparently, the effect it would have of rallying the world behind the US and its otherwise hopelessly stalled efforts to overturn the government of Syria.

Could ISIS have built a set specifically to capture dramatic shots like a flame trail passing the camera on its way to the doomed Jordanian pilot, planned crane shots, provided matching uniforms for all the extras on their diabolical movie set, but failed to consider the target audience and how they would react to their production? Could they have, just by coincidence, given exactly what the United States needed to continue its war on Syria in 2015 when it otherwise had effectively failed in 2013?

The answer is obviously no. ISIS' theatrics were designed specifically to accomplish this. ISIS itself is a fictional creation. In reality the legions of



President Obama addresses the nation about the US air strikes in Syria against ISIS, September 2014.

terrorists fighting across the Arab World under the flag of "ISIS" are the same Al-Qaeda militants the US, Saudi Arabia and others in an utterly unholy axis have been backing, arming and exploiting in a variety of ways for decades.

Just as the "Islamic State" in Iraq was exposed as a fictional cover for what was also essentially Al-Qaeda (as reported by the *New York Times* in their article, "Leader of Al-Qaeda group in Iraq was fictional, US military says"), ISIS too is just the latest and greatest re-visioning yet.

The fighters are real. Their atrocities are real. The notion that they've sprung out of the dunes of Syria and Iraq, picked their weapons from local date trees and have managed to wage war regionally against several collective armies is entirely fantasy. Required to maintain ISIS' ranks would be billions in constant support. These are billions ISIS simply cannot account for from hostage ransoms and black market oil alone. The only source that could prop ISIS up for as long as it has allegedly existed and to the extent it allegedly exists, is a state or collection of states intentionally sponsoring the terrorist enterprise.

Those states are of course the chief benefactors of ISIS' atrocities, and we can clearly see those benefactors are the US and its partners both in Europe and in the Middle East. The US would claim that the threat of ISIS necessitates them to intervene militarily in Syria (when lies about WMDs were flatly rejected by the American and international public). Of course, before the serial headline atrocities ISIS committed, the US attempted to sell this same lie but without affect. Now that sufficient blood has been spilt and the public sufficiently riled, the US is once again trying to move forward its agenda.

Don't be surprised, if the US manages to succeed, that everything in Syria is left destroyed except for ISIS. A Hollywood villain this popular and effective is surely destined for a sequel in neighbouring Iran or southern Russia, coincidentally where the US would like to create strife and carnage the most. ❄

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the untold story

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