



Pyne's university plan

\$300,000 courses

Anna Pha

Forget all the talk about university degrees costing as much as \$100,000. If the Coalition's Higher Education reform bill is passed, then students in some courses could face fees of up to \$300,000. Education Minister Christopher Pyne may have been defeated in the Senate twice, but he has not given up on deregulating higher education fees. "Great reform takes time," Pyne said, following the Senate's rejection of his revamped Higher Education bill last week.

The first version of the bill provided for a funding cut of 20 percent to Commonwealth supported places for deregulation of fees to allow universities to charge whatever they liked.

Claims such as higher student fees will result in the "best education system in the world," show just how out of touch with reality and how little Pyne cares for working people.

Australia's public universities are already starved of funding and any further cuts would see more staff sacked, even larger class sizes, less student contact with staff and course and campus closures.

In Victoria, the deregulation of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system resulted in the proliferation of shoddy training operators, leading to almost 10,000 qualifications being recalled in February this year.

Access for privileged

The bill that was defeated last Tuesday (March 17), differs slightly from that thrown out by the Senate on December 2, 2014. In particular, it abandons an increase in interest rates on HECS/HELP student loans, and requires domestic fees to remain lower than international fees.

International fees are far higher than the regulated fees for local students. Arts degrees are the cheapest, and do come in under \$100,000 for international students. But the fees for a Bachelor of Science at one of the more expensive ("prestigious" G8) universities are over \$100,000. Other courses such as medicine, law, fine arts are much more expensive.

For example, international fees for a Bachelor of Medicine at Monash or Melbourne are over \$300,000. If the higher education bill is passed, then these universities could raise their fees to that level for domestic students if they felt the market could stand it. Not many can start life with a debt of \$300,000 or have parents who can pay it.

In a desperate attempt to win cross-bench support in the Senate, Pyne backed off on his



Photo: National Tertiary Education Union.

threat to sack 1,700 scientists from world-renowned research programs if the legislation was not passed. He also deferred the cut in funding and is pushing ahead with deregulation of fees with the bill likely to resurface mid-year.

With each fee increase, more students are denied an opportunity to undertake higher education and for those who do gain access, the debts are mounting. Higher education is returning to the pre-Whitlam days where it was a privilege not a right, and a few of the brightest working class students were given scholarships.

Graduates are already facing large debts with little prospect of affording a deposit for a home, let alone paying off a mortgage.

Education markets

Pyne wants to adopt a "performance based" system of government funding. One of the indicators of a university's performance would be an estimate of the likelihood of its graduates repaying their debts in full and published for potential students to compare universities – sounds a bit like MySchool rankings.

Universities are increasingly becoming businesses competing for international and domestic students on local and global markets.

For example, RMIT University in Melbourne, boasts that "with three campuses in Melbourne (CBD, Brunswick and Bundoora), two in Vietnam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City) and a centre in Barcelona, Spain, RMIT is a

truly global university. RMIT also offers programs through partners in Singapore, Hong Kong, mainland China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Spain, Belgium and Germany, and enjoys research and industry partnerships on every continent."

Standards threatened

A university with a high rate of passes is more likely to attract foreign students on a global market. Parents or a student paying \$100,000–\$300,000 for a degree, plus accommodation, travel and other expenses expects a degree at the end of the course.

There is anecdotal evidence that staff in some universities are being directed to pass a certain percentage of students (eg 90-95 percent) regardless of the standard of their work so as not to deter prospective students.

While entry to the most prestigious universities and courses still remains highly competitive, in other instances entry requirements have been lowered to questionable levels, which only adds to the difficulties of staff on semester or annual contracts to retain standards.

Privatisation

Pyne is most determined at this stage to enact deregulation of higher education. It is central to the process of marketisation of higher education.

And while Pyne attempts to cut funding to

public universities, the bill contains provisions to fund student places in private universities at 70 percent of public university rate. This would make it more attractive for the entry of more private providers, including for-profit outfits along the lines of the US and UK where the outcomes have been disastrous.

It is also another step towards the federal government withdrawing its responsibility for higher education funding and complete autonomy of universities.

Pyne is determined to keep pushing for fee deregulation and has for the time being deferred the 20 percent cut.

It is important to show your support for cross-bench Senators Nick Xenophon, Ricky Muir, Jacqui Lambie, Dio Wang, David Leyonhlehlm who have indicated they will oppose the legislation, and urge John Madigan who appears to be undecided to join them. The Greens are strongly opposed to the bill and Labor so far is also opposed, although there are Labor figures who support some aspects of it.

In an increasingly hi tech world, it is important that all Australians have access to higher education – not just for employment but their own personal development. This can only be achieved through a centrally funded (no fees) and universally accessible public higher education system with the necessary support for students. ✚

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Issue 1678

March 25, 2015

Racist land grab

In November last year Wangatha Elder, Pastor Geoffrey Stokes, journeyed 600 kilometres from Kalgoorlie to speak at a rally on the steps of Parliament House in Perth to call for the protection of remote communities in WA. This was in response to Premier Colin Barnett's announcement that his Coalition government intended to close down up to 150 of 274 remote communities.

Barnett had resorted to scaremongering and lies about child abuse and substance abuse to justify the closures. Elders and advocates pointed out that 90 percent of the communities are not affected by suicides or by substance abuse or any pronounced social dysfunction. The vast majority of the communities are poor and are neglected by government.

The move is hand-in-glove with the Abbott government's savage cuts to funding for Indigenous services, including cutting agencies back to a bare minimum of five.

"It's just all lies by Premier Barnett about what is happening in our communities," said Pastor Stokes. "Kick the people out of the communities and they will finish up homeless. Kick the people off their Country and you will break them further."

"For nearly two centuries here in Western Australia the Black man and the Black woman have been trodden on, smashed, even had the white man trying to bleach out the Black from us. It does not stop. They drag us off Country in chains, relocate us, dump us, then move us again and they see the impacts, the despair and suicides and now they are going to do it to us again."

In concert with this strategy is mining magnate Andrew Forrest's report "Creating Parity", announced last year. The report, commissioned by the Abbott government, is a recipe for wiping out Native Title, clearing Indigenous communities off their land and the continued historical push for assimilation.

The report – produced by the mining magnate and his head office team – proposes a radical overhaul of the whole social security system and the introduction of a "Healthy Welfare Card" to replace cash payments.

The larger scenario is the plan for a new state, Northern Australia, which will be a cheap labour and low tax haven for mining companies, with a big part of the workforce imported from the Asia/Pacific. "The focus is on building priority roads, developing water resources, attracting more investment and reducing red tape," said Abbott.

The blueprint for what is being described as the "next frontier" for economic development, is nothing less than a racist-based land grab. Billionaire miners such as Forrest and Gina Rinehart stand to rake in more billions. It will be a land thrown open for plunder.

Workers will be flown in and flown out of this union-free territory. Land rights will be the first item of "red tape" to be torn up, along with regulation and oversight of safety and environmental standards. Union awards would be stripped bare.

The so-called "Creating Parity" is a blueprint to drive those already doing it tough into deeper poverty. Said WA Narrunga Elder Tauto Sansbury: "This is ugly racism, not just deplorable; it is evil and cruel, murderous. It is treachery, betrayal, connivance. We, the first people, are betrayed at every turn".

PRESS FUND

In NSW the Baird government has revealed its intention to turn Sydney's Brighton Le Sands beach into "another French Riviera". Translated into plain English, this means they intend to help developers crush as many high-rise apartments onto the foreshores area as they can. That's great for developers, but it's a pity about ruining the beach's quiet charm, filling the air with pollution and robbing anyone behind the foreshores of sea views. What's next? Hong Kong on the Harbour? Dubai at Bondi? Tune into the state elections next Saturday to find out, but in the meantime spare a thought – and a contribution – for the Press Fund, which really needs your help. Many thanks to this week's supporters, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$5, F Rouady \$25, Kuloon \$20, NH \$50, Noel and Allan Cootamundra \$6.

This week's total \$106 Progressive total: \$1,841

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Residents pledge to defend Bulga from Rio Tinto

Residents of Bulga in the Hunter Valley have been overwhelmed with support for their campaign to save their town from Rio Tinto's proposed Warkworth coal mine expansion, with over 2,000 people in four days pledging to help residents defend the town from the mine.

Bulga residents, Wonnarua traditional custodians, and local businesses launched The Bulga Declaration, in response to a NSW Planning Assessment Commission review of Rio's project which found it was "capable of being approved", despite having been knocked back twice already in court. The Commission found that changes to mining regulations implemented by the NSW government in response to the legal victories by Bulga residents have paved the way for approval of the controversial project.

The Declaration pledges to use "all peaceful means" to stop the mine going ahead. Within 24 hours of its launch the Declaration had been signed by over 1,000 NSW residents, and within four days it had passed 2,000 pledges.

John Krey, of Bulga Milbrodale Progress Association said: "With our

government working hand in glove with Rio Tinto to force this mine on our community, it's great to know that we have such strong support from people around NSW.

"It's abundantly clear that mining regulations in NSW have been designed to give coal companies every approval they ask for. If the system ever fails to deliver an approval, the rules are changed in favour of mining companies like Rio Tinto.

"We launched our Bulga Declaration because we realised that the NSW government is not on our side. Our government is working with Rio Tinto to destroy our town, and this is our only hope for survival. We have drawn a line in the sand, and called on our supporters around the Hunter and NSW to help us save our community.

"We've been overwhelmed with support. Thousands of people around NSW have pledged to join with Bulga residents, Wonnarua traditional custodians, and local businesses, and fight to save Bulga.

"After five years of struggle our community remains determined to stop Rio's mine expansion. Our survival depends on it. With such strong

support from around NSW, we know that we can win."

Lock The Gate's Regional Coordinator for the Hunter, Steve Phillips, said: "Residents across NSW are sick of the power of the mining lobby and state governments kowtowing to it. We are still waiting for the Coalition to deliver on its mining promises from the last election, and when it comes to coal the silence from Labor is deafening."

With the completion of the Planning Assessment Commission Review of the Warkworth expansion project, it is back in the hands of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment. The Department – which is known to have frequent closed-door meetings with Rio Tinto to facilitate approval – will now complete its second review of the project. After that, final determination will rest with a new incarnation of the Planning Assessment Commission.

While the previous approval for the Warkworth mine expansion was overturned in the NSW Land and Environment Court – a decision that was upheld on appeal to the Supreme Court – the state government has removed that legal option for the new assessment process. ✪

Fighting for auto members

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) has clawed back gains on two fronts in the auto industry with a final enterprise deal for Toyota workers and a back down by the Abbott government.

More than 90 percent of Toyota workers nationally voted to approve two final enterprise agreements for manufacturing and warehousing, which give certainty and outstanding packages to members when the carmaker departs.

Sustained union and community pressure also led to the government abandoning its \$900 million in cuts to the Automotive Transformation Scheme (ATS).

It gave hope that parts makers would continue to 2017, but was "too little, too late" according to National Vehicles AMWU secretary Dave Smith.

"The government will likely only spend \$100 million of this money, all they've done is recognise they will never get the ATS cuts through the Senate," he said.

"It's a cynical political exercise to dress up their back down."

The money is tied to Australian car manufacturing rather than helping more components makers to diversify into export markets.

"If the government had chosen to support the industry and its 50,000 workers 18 months ago, the falling dollar would have resulted in the industry being export competitive again," Mr Smith noted.

"The industry would be employing again, not winding down."

The AMWU wants all the ATS \$500 million – plus \$400 million which had been earmarked for after the car maker's closures – re-directed back into component makers,

after-market services, the truck industry and other auto areas which can grow and create jobs.

The union says this reform would help make them more viable and able to absorb a bigger portion of the thousands of jobs likely to be lost when the carmakers close.

On Toyota, Mr Smith said he was confident the AMWU had secured 2,000 members certainty to 2017 with a package giving them the best possible chance to plan and train for their employment future.

"Now that the union has secured certainty over the closure arrangements, we will be putting all our efforts into working with governments and industry to create alternative jobs," he said.

"Jobs mean everything to our members and we won't let them down." ✪

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, labour 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

Refugees attacked on Nauru

An Iranian refugee couple was hospitalised last week after being attacked by rock-throwing Nauruans. Around 10pm, Nauru time, the married couple was riding their motorcycle past the Menon Hotel when they were hit by a shower of rocks.

The motorcycle crashed after the male driver was knocked unconscious when one rock struck him on the head as they rode past the hotel.

The husband had regained consciousness a couple of hours later in the hospital and was able to talk to other refugees. The full scale of his injuries and those of his wife are not known.

The attack is the latest in a series of physical attacks by locals on refugees. In a similar incident last November, an Iranian refugee was blinded in one eye after being hit by one of the rocks thrown by locals.

Ten days ago, a six-year-old asylum seeker lost two teeth when a Nauruan guard threw rocks at children inside the family camp.

Following protests last week, the refugee camp was stoned by around 25 Nauruan locals. "We fear for the safety of the refugees on Nauru. There is no sign that the police take these attacks seriously. In some cases, the police do not even come to the scene of the attack," said Ian

Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

"We fear that anti-refugee feeling in the Nauruan community is being encouraged by the Nauruan government's use of force to repress peaceful protests. There is a minority already willing to physically attack refugees.

"Nauru is a hell-hole for asylum seekers and is unsafe for refugees. Australia's offshore policy of dumping asylum seekers on Nauru has created an impossible situation. The refugees have no future; Nauru has said they will not allow resettlement. But Australia is paying tens and tens of millions to the Nauruan government to keep them on the island."

On March 11 up to 300 refugees, women, men and children, from all refugee camps across Nauru defied the Nauruan government and police attempts to ban refugee protests and staged a peaceful protest.

The protest was held at the Nibok camp on the western side of the island, as plain-clothes police and Connect staff looked on.

The protest came just one week since Nauruan police staged mass arrests on the island in a bid to stifle the campaign of non-cooperation being waged by the refugees. The Nauruan government had distributed notice on Nauru warning that

protesters could be punished by up to three years jail.

One hundred and eighty-three people including children were arrested on March 4, and held for 24 hours without food and without water in some cells.

"We have just one slogan," refugees on the island told the Refugee Action Coalition, "Freedom and Justice".

Banners at the rally appealed for the UN to intervene on Nauru. The UNHCR has condemned Australia's offshore processing regime, while the report of the UN Committee Against Torture found Australia exposed asylum seekers to "torture and inhuman treatment".

Conditions on Nauru have also been condemned by the Australian Human Rights Commission and by medical staff recently on the island. ☹



"Australia's offshore policy of dumping asylum seekers on Nauru has created an impossible situation. The refugees have no future; Nauru has said they will not allow resettlement."

Failure to address ongoing workloads

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has cautiously welcomed the latest election promise by the Liberal-Nationals Coalition regarding frontline health workers.

General secretary of the NSWNMA, Brett Holmes, said Premier Mike Baird's election pledge to increase frontline nursing and midwifery staff by 2,100 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions failed to address ongoing workload issues in the public hospital system through an expansion of nurse-to-patient ratios.

"It appears to us that 2,100 FTE positions may only keep pace with anticipated growth in our public health system, as a result of population growth and the increased demands of our ageing population," Mr Holmes said.

"Any effort to boost overall nurse numbers in our state's public health system must be matched with a commitment to improve nurse-to-patient ratios using the 'nursing hours per patient day' model and mandated statewide through the introduction of legislation.

"In recent weeks, the Health Minister has again been caught up in her own semantics argument, despite 'nursing hours per patient day' equating to a nurse-to-patient ratio – they are the same thing.

"Our 60,000 strong members have been lobbying the Liberal-Nationals Coalition repeatedly to improve and mandate ratios throughout our public hospitals to ensure the delivery of safe patient care.

"Our members in regional NSW have no guarantee that the

additional nurses announced today would improve the nursing hours allocated to their patients, compared to city patients who receive up to one hour per day more of nursing care."

Following the 2011 election, the Liberal-National Coalition honoured a commitment to introduce nurse-to-patient ratios into the medical and surgical wards of metropolitan and large regional hospitals, as part of negotiations over the public health system wages and conditions Award.

Since then, the Liberal-Nationals have refused to discuss any expansion of nurse-to-patient ratios, let alone legislating the existing ratios to prevent them being removed by future governments.

"It's a shame the Liberal-Nationals don't listen directly to

the needs of their frontline nurses and midwives and seriously put patient safety first by expanding and improving mandated nursing hours," Mr Holmes said.

"According to the Liberal-Nationals announcement 320,000 extra patients will attend an emergency department over the next four years, yet there is currently no nurse-to-patient ratios guaranteed in those emergency departments to keep patients safe."

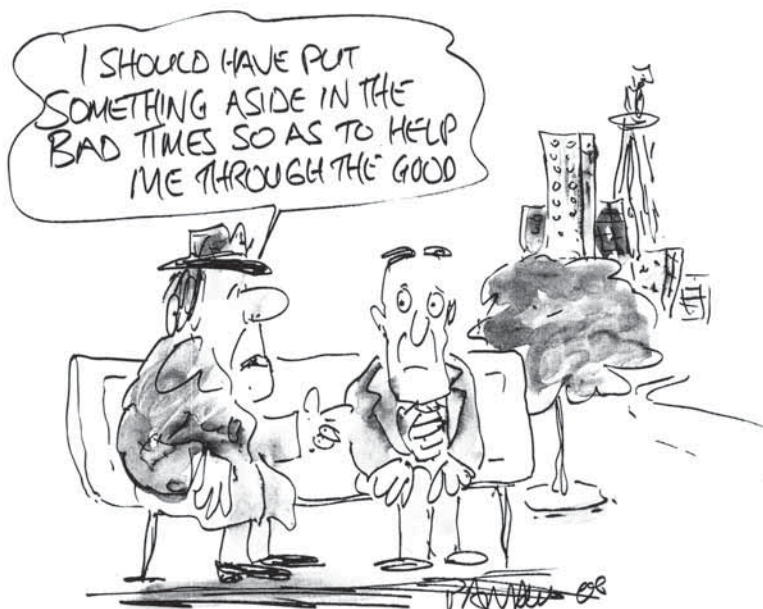
He noted that given the millions of dollars in cuts to federal health funding identified in the federal budget last year, health workers are sceptical about how the Liberal-Nationals intend to honour all of their health and hospital commitments, particularly in 2017-18 when the full impact of the federal health funding cuts take effect.

"At the end of the day, our nursing and midwifery members are passionate advocates for the delivery of safe patient care across our health system, regardless of their postcode," said Mr Holmes.

"They want reassurance that their employer, NSW Health, is doing all that it can to ensure public hospitals are staffed appropriately and are delivering the best possible outcomes for patients.

"Last week, the NSWNMA challenged the Liberal-Nationals Coalition to match or better the election pledge by NSW Labor in providing mandated nurse-to-patient ratios or nursing hours and enshrining them into law, clearly the Liberal-Nationals have ignored our members calls," said Mr Holmes. ☹

Pete's Corner



Sydney

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World War I and the Russian Revolution

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What's wrong with the ANZAC commemoration?

Introduced by Comrade Denis

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



Perth: CFMEU members rally outside the Federal Court in Perth earlier this week to defend civil and democratic rights of 76 members charged for participating in a 5,000-strong rally for jobs and training for young people.

Journalists cannot allow sources to be revealed

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), the union and industry advocate for Australia's journalists, cannot support the Prime Minister's proposal for government "agencies to obtain a warrant in order to access a journalist's metadata for the purpose of identifying a source".

The Prime Minister's plan still permits an outrageous attack on press freedom and would have a chilling effect on journalism in Australia leading to whistleblowers being fearful that they risk exposure if they seek to reveal instances of wrongdoing, corruption, waste, illegal activity and dishonesty.

MEAA believes the lack of understanding of what is at stake requires the proposed Parliamentary Inquiry into press freedom to go ahead for the concerns of journalists and media organisations to be heard and acknowledged by MPs.

MEAA CEO Paul Murphy said: "What

needs to be understood is that no journalist, anywhere, can ever allow the identity of a confidential source to become known – that is a guiding principle of journalism the world over. It is a principle acknowledged by every Australian journalist in clause 3 of MEAA's Journalist Code of Ethics: 'Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances'."

Murphy added: "Accessing metadata to hunt down journalists' sources, regardless of the procedures used, threatens press freedom and democracy. It means important stories in the public interest can be silenced before they ever become known, and whistleblowers can be persecuted and prosecuted. It means journalists can be jailed for simply doing their job."

"The so-called 'safeguards' recommended by the Parliamentary Committee were no safeguards at all because they still allowed government agencies to hunt down journalists' sources. Similarly, the Prime Minister's

proposal also allows those agencies to trawl through a journalist's metadata in order to expose a confidential source.

"Putting a hurdle like a warrant in the way will not change the outcome: using a journalist's metadata to pursue a whistleblower. Why does the government not understand that no journalist can breach their fundamental ethical obligation to never allow the identity of a confidential source to be revealed?"

MEAA has consistently explained this principle of press freedom in every submission to Parliament on the national security laws. MEAA also repeated those concerns when it was visited by representatives from the Prime Minister's, Attorney-General's and Communications Minister's offices and the AFP (Australian Federal Police) Commissioner Andrew Colvin.

During that meeting, the AFP confirmed it has been repeatedly asked to hunt down

journalists' sources by accessing journalists' metadata and he confirmed that it is doing so. The Data Retention Bill will simply formalise these activities with no regard to the press freedom implications and presumably encourage at least 20 government agencies to go trawling through journalists' metadata.

Murphy said: "Journalists cannot allow the relationship they have with a confidential source to be breached, under any circumstance – that is their ethical responsibility. If the surveillance continues and is formally adopted in the Data Retention Bill with or without a warrant, then journalists will be forced to use the tools of counter-surveillance such as anonymisation and encryption to protect their sources. It remains our fundamental position that this Bill should not proceed at all and that the press freedom concerns of the previous two tranches of national security laws must be addressed." ✪

Report shows privatisation doesn't work

Shared services between the public and private sector, Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), or leasing or selling public services or assets to the private sector – these are all different names for privatisation in Australia. Under the title of PPPs, a new international report released today adds to the steadily growing pile of research showing that whatever the name, privatisation does not deliver for the community.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) has been campaigning against privatisation in its many guises for many years. More recently, research has been able to examine extensive patterns of privatisation over long periods of time, thus adding to the weight of evidence against moving public services and assets into private hands.

The new report from Public Services International (PSI) released last week, "Why Public Private Partnerships don't work: The many advantages of the public alternative", will play an important part in this debate. "We welcome this new report

from PSI and it will form part of our resources to fight privatisation in Australia," said ASU assistant national secretary Greg McLean.

"This high level and independent report from academic David Hall, who I know has visited Australia a number of times and is familiar with our experience, is tremendous support for the ASU to receive for our work, as it has independently arrived at the same outcomes: that privatisation does not deliver the promised benefits."

The report assesses the experience of privatisation in both industrialised and developing countries and contains a combination of 30 years of research by David Hall, who is a former Director of Public Services International Research Unit at the University of Greenwich in the United Kingdom.

The many case studies analysed show that privatisation has failed to live up to its promise. In most cases, it is an expensive and inefficient way of financing infrastructure and services, since it conceals public borrowing, while providing long-term

state guarantees for profits to private companies.

"The report is very timely with privatisation having been such a significant factor in the Queensland election with the Newman government's dramatic loss and currently in the NSW election campaign – politicians need to prick up their ears and listen," said Greg McLean.

Voters are becoming much more informed about matters such as the ownership of public assets and the implications of selling those assets. They understand how revenue from publicly owned utilities, for example, is used to fund community services, education, hospitals, etc.

The public now asks questions about asset sales and they see that short term gains that one government may get don't compare favourably to the long term benefits of retaining assets and the revenue streams they generate for the relevant community.

Privatisation is no longer done in private! The recent election results have sent a loud and clear message that Australians want a say about who provides our public services. ✪

ABCC Bill

The Coalition government's bill to re-establish the construction policing body the ABCC looks doomed in its current form, with two cross-bench senators already telling Parliament they will vote against it and at least one more set to do the same.

The Senate's second reading debate of the Building and Construction Industry (Improving Productivity) Bill 2013 resumed this month, with independent Senators Jacqui Lambie and John Madigan both telling the Upper House they opposed it.

Senator Madigan said he did so because he believed in "equality before the law" and did "not believe one industry should be singled out simply because of the actions of some of its members".

"I believe the majority of unionists and employers in this country are reputable, that the reputable employers and reputable unionists should hold the disreputable ones to account," he said. Senator Lambie said she had "serious concerns and reservations" about the legislation, and it was clear its intent was "to target and punish unions and organised labour groups, while neglecting to impose

the same set of rules and standards on corporate Australia".

Given the Coalition needs six out of the eight cross-benchers to pass any legislation that the ALP and Greens both oppose, only one more in the "no" camp will defeat the bill and a spokesperson for Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party Senator Ricky Muir told Workplace Express he "remains opposed to the Bill and is unlikely to support it in its current form".

Even in the event one of the three changes their mind, the bill's compulsory examination powers are a probable stumbling block for other senators, particularly Liberal Democratic Party David Leyonhjelm, given his advocacy of a minimalist role for government.

The Coalition's construction legislation would establish the ABCC with significantly broader powers than its initial incarnation, and extend its reach into offshore construction, the transport and supply of goods to building sites, and picketing.

The government introduced the Bill into the House of Representatives in November 2013, as one of its first major pieces of legislation. ✪

Target Venezuela

"Electoral Integrity Project" brings the cold war to Sydney

Tim Anderson

A multi-million dollar Australian government-funded project at the University of Sydney, linked to spin doctors in Washington, is using a biased and secretive method to help discredit elections in a range of "enemy" countries. The Electoral Integrity Project (EIP) joins the United States Studies Centre (USSC), established in 2007, as another heavily politicised initiative which compromises the independence of Australia's oldest university.

A key target is Venezuela, which is facing yet another destabilisation campaign, backed by Washington. The recent rounds of violence began in early 2014 and recently led to the arrest of several opposition figures for murder and coup plotting. The pretext for the violence has been that the government of President Nicolas Maduro is somehow democratically illegitimate.

However the radical, popular "Bolivarian" governments have won 12 of Venezuela's last 13 elections. Further, 80 percent of the voting age population participated in the 2013 election, won by Maduro. That is a massive increase on 1990s levels, when the Chavez phenomenon effectively sidelined the old and moribund two party system. And the electoral system is secure. Even the political journalist for anti-government paper *El Universal* described Venezuela's electoral system as "one of the most technologically advanced verifiable voting systems in the world", with protections against fraud and tampering and scrutinised random recount mechanisms.

Sydney University's "Electoral Integrity Project" tells a very different story. According to their 2015 report, Venezuela's Presidential election in 2013 was one of the worst in the world, ranking 110 out of 127. They corroborate their data with a survey claiming President Maduro only had a 24% popularity rating, with "85% believing that the country was heading in the wrong direction". The EIP did not mention the Hinterlaces Polls, which have had Maduro's popularity (during the recent crisis) ranging from 39% to 52%; nor do they cite polls showing overwhelming rejection of the opposition's violent attempts to remove the elected president.

The EIP produces an impressive forest of data to form its rankings on the legitimacy of elections worldwide; but what is the basis for all these numbers? Though it is not so easy to find, the method involves selecting a range of criteria and then seeking "expert opinion", from a group of unnamed people. That is, the numbers and rankings rely on "expert opinion", and those experts are anonymous. There is only anecdotal recourse to more standard methods, such as actual opinion polls, or actual participation rates.

Yet popular and expert perceptions are a curious thing. As most mass media remains in the hands of a tiny oligarchy, for whom Venezuela has long been a "black sheep", image shaping is often distorted. Surveys by

the Chilean-based company *LatinoBarómetro* illustrate this point very well. The image of Venezuela's democracy from *outside* the country is rather ordinary (seen as 41% and 47% favourable, between 2010 and 2013), whereas *within* Venezuela it is very different. Venezuelans rate their democracy at 70%, the second highest (after Uruguay) in Latin America. *LatinoBarómetro* itself is surprised by these results, saying: "The five countries which most appreciate their own democracy are countries governed by the left: Uruguay, Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador and Nicaragua ... the democracy of which citizens speak is clearly not the democracy of which the experts speak".

Yet surely any democracy is best judged by those who are able (or unable) to participate in it? The opinions of expert outsiders seem of little relevance. That is an elite approach. The *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* describes democratic rights this way: "the right and the opportunity ... to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives". That refers to the right of citizens in a particular body politic. Gauged against this principle, the method of the EIP project, relying on outside expert opinion, seems poorly conceived.

Yet an elitist approach is consistent with the model promoted by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), a US government funded body launched by the Reagan administration in the second cold war of early 1980s. The NED (usually through intermediaries) funds a range of organisations in attempts to shape democracies or "civil societies", to make them more friendly to or compliant with Washington. One of the founders and first President of the NED, Allen Weinstein, said in 1991, "A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA".

Indeed, as with the "psy-ops" of the CIA, the NED has been implicated in coups and destabilisation plans in a range of Latin American countries, including Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela. The NED idea of democracy has been described as "[a] top-down, elite, constrained (or 'polyarchal') democracy ... [where] the elites get to decide the candidates or questions suitable to go before the people". French researcher Olivier Guilmain (in Teil 2011) says that the NED finances opposition parties in numerous countries and provides special aid to exiles and opponents of regimes targeted by the US State Department.

Eva Golinger, whose book *The Chávez Code* exposed the Bush administration's involvement in the failed coup of 2002, has documented the NED's contribution to destabilisation and coups in Venezuela. In the last year or so the NED has spent many millions on Venezuelan opposition groups "including funding for their political campaigns in 2013 and for the current anti-government protests in 2014". She calls this "the same old dirty tactics" of a coup in motion.

It might not come as a surprise



Hands off Venezuela – protest in Sydney

Protests were held across the globe over the past week in support of the independence of Venezuela. They took place in the wake of an Executive Order issued a fortnight ago in which US President Barack Obama spoke of the "unusual and extraordinary" threat Venezuela posed to the national security and foreign policy of the US. The statement dramatically underscored growing threats being made against the people, their democratically elected government and the revolutionary process begun in 1998.

In Sydney, a protest organised by the Communist Party of Australia outside the US Consulate in Martin Place in Sydney on Saturday was well attended and was supported by a wide range of solidarity and political groups. The Australia Cuba Friendship Society in Sydney, the Australia Venezuela Solidarity Network, the Circulo Bolivariano, the FMLN in Sydney, the Communist Party of Australia, the Guatemala Human Rights Committee, the Grupo Ibiray-Fondo Raul Sendic, the Latin American

Social Forum (Sydney), the Salvador Allende Monument in Sydney Inc and the Socialist Alliance endorsed the protest. Representatives from most groups spoke at the event. Speakers from the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition and the Communist League also spoke. Bob Briton, General Secretary of the CPA was MC. It was a great display of unity and solidarity.

Speeches stressed that Venezuela threatens no-one; the real threat posed to the US administration is that of a good example. Despite an economic blockade, sabotage and political interference orchestrated by the US, the Bolivarian Revolution has achieved remarkable improvements in living standards for its poorest people. Previous coup and other attempts to destabilise the country have failed due to the strength of the resolve of the Venezuela people to continue along the path to socialism. Further protests and solidarity actions in Australia are being planned.

(Photo: Anna Pha)

then, to find that there are indeed NED and other US government links to Sydney's Electoral Integrity Project. Chief investigator Professor Pippa Norris proudly lists her work as a consultant for the NED, and at least six of the project partners (without whose support the EIP "would not have been possible") have direct US government funding. The EIP method of relying on expert opinion seems quite consistent with that "elite, constrained ... democracy".

Worse, the EIP relies on anonymous opinion. A member of the project clarified this to me in these words: "We have to maintain the confidentiality of our sources as part of our legal obligations ... revealing the names of the experts could potentially risk putting them in harm's way in several states which do not respect human rights and which suppress critics". Be that as it may, the opinions of anonymous people provide no way to assess the legitimacy of an independent state.

It contradicts the principles of openness and transparency, values the EIP claims to both assess and promote. Who are these anonymous experts? Do they include opposition figures in the countries whose governments are under attack? Do they include the Washington insiders who advise on destabilisation and coup plans? There is little indication the EIP takes seriously the

well-established principle of avoiding conflicts of interest.

It is also alarming that the EIP, as an Australian government funded academic project, whose subtitle ("Why Elections fail and what we can do about it") suggests a measure of praxis, shares the Washington phrase "failed elections [which] raised major red flags", mentioning several states, including Syria. It is well known that a major military intervention in Syria was narrowly averted in September 2013, after false claims that the Syrian government had used chemical weapons against children. Does the EIP seek to associate itself with "red flag" military interventions, if countries fail to meet its dubious criteria?

The project rated Syria's 2014 presidential elections near the bottom of its chart (125 of 127), on the basis of its anonymous expert opinions. The only rationale for this can be seen in a brief note which observes "the election was deeply flawed because some areas of the country were not under government control, so polling did not take place in the regions where insurgents were strongest", and the fact that "National Coalition - the main western backed opposition group" boycotted the election. While these are correct statements, they do not tell the whole story.

Conflict in other countries did not seem to bother the EIP or its

experts quite so much when they ranked the Ukraine election at 78 of 127. Yet the election monitoring group International IDEA (2015), an EIP partner, puts participation rates in the Ukraine's 2014 presidential election at 50%, while in the Syria's 2014 presidential election it was 73%. Clearly the US foreign policy factor is at play. Washington arms the "opposition" in Syria and the government in Ukraine. Similarly the NED has directly funded the Syrian opposition while urging military support for the Ukraine government.

Finally we might observe that Israel's 2013 elections were duly reviewed by the EIP, leading to a very healthy 17/127 ranking. Apparently being a racial state, with several million effectively stateless Palestinian people, held in military-controlled territories and with virtually no civil or political rights, has little impact on the EIP assessment. Yet this is consistent with what the Washington-Tel Aviv axis has long told us about Israel as "the only democracy in the region". The double standards are breath-taking. With the Electoral Integrity Project's US links and its elitist assumptions about democracy it seems the project has little sense of conflict of interest, let alone appropriate research method.

Pravda.ru ✪

32nd Southern Cross Brigade to Cuba

Southern Cross in Cuba

Richard Titelius

In the wake of President Obama's "normalisation" speech with Cuba on December 17, 2014, the participants in the 32nd Australian and New Zealand Southern Cross Brigade began arriving in that tropical socialist republic to the south of the USA.

Of more significance as an outcome of the speech was the release of the last three of the Cuban Five; Ramon Labanino, Gerardo Hernandez and Antonio Guerrero. So close to the Brigade's arrival in Cuba was the release of the prisoners that the T-Shirts which had, "We will celebrate when the five heroes are free in Cuba", became joyously prescient.

The Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People or ICAP made a small change to the program due to the circumstances over the release of the Cuban Five – instead of seeing relatives of the Cuban Five as was customary on all past Brigades, we were to see only one of the Cuban Five that had previously been released, Fernando Gonzalez – now the Vice President of ICAP itself.

It was a smallish Brigade of 18 people lead by Sydney Australian Cuban Friendship Society member Maria Hilario, which included one New Zealander and one Spaniard with the ages ranging from 23 to 77 years of which six were male and 12 female. The Australians came from NSW, Queensland, WA, Tasmania and Victoria.

ICAP put on a unique and outstanding program for the three and a half weeks of the Brigade, which involved six days of agricultural and kitchen work followed by several informative and exciting presentations on Cuban social, cultural, political and economic life.

The city chosen to be our host away from the International Camp of Julio Antonio Mella at Caimito, was the Pearl of the South, Cienfuegos. Included in this trip was the stopover at the central Cuban city of Santa Clara where Brigadistas were able to see the impressive

monument to Cuban Revolutionary leader Che Guevara, listen to experiences of the veterans of the Revolutionary War and subsequent struggles in western Africa and the armoured train exhibit – also a reminder of the pivotal role in the campaign played by the Rebel Army in Santa Clara.

Cuban stars of Sport

One of the first of many intriguing presentations occurred at the International Camp (CIJAM) following the annual two kilometre friendship race from the nearby town of Guayabal (the author finished 3rd) when the Cuban Stars of Sport which included Javier Sotomayor (Olympic and World Champion – Current World Record Holder), Estela Rodriguez (World and Olympic Judo Champion), Feliz Savon (three times Olympic and seven times world champion), Ismael Carbonell Remo (Rowing), Hermes Ramirez (Olympic Silver Medal 1968 and National Record 100 metres), Luis Sotolongo (Hammer Throw), Norma Renae Garcia (Sports Official) and Juan Luis Velasco (Sports Director) gave a presentation of sport in Cuba.

The Cuban Stars of Sport provided an invaluable insight into why a nation of 11.5 million people can punch so far above its weight despite its financial and economic hardships.

Most recently this was demonstrated by Cuba's outstanding success at the Caribbean and Central American Games held in Vera Cruz, Mexico, where Cuba finished on top of the medal table with 123 gold medals followed by Mexico with 115.

Javier Sotomayor explained that this program begins at school where the potential of children for competition is keenly sought. From there children are placed in a sports college of which there is at least one in every province in Cuba. There children train regularly and are given access to all types of resources from physiotherapists and psychologists to coaching and other staff. Cuba said Sotomayor did not

have the resource riches of Mexico, Argentina or Brazil but it had the riches of humanity.

At the other end of their sporting life, Cuba also looks after its sporting heroes in retirement where they receive a pension and access to a special hospital dedicated to retired athletes.

In Havana there is a drug testing laboratory that is also available to athletes from other Latin American countries. During the recent 2014 Caribbean and Central American Games Cuba tested all their own athletes and 700 athletes from other Latin American nations.

Cuban Music and Dance

As part of our appreciation of Cuban culture we were treated to the National Ballet on one night where, following a special appearance by the Director General of the Cuban Ballet, Alicia Alonso, we were treated to a gala performance on the 56th Anniversary of the Triumph of the Revolution entitled "The Magic of Dance."

There were colourful and spellbinding presentations of *Giselle*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Nutcracker*, *Coppelia*, *Don Quixote* and last but not least, *Swan Lake* which opened with all the ballerinas standing crouched in a V formation with their arms spread back behind their bodies in the image of a formation of airborne swans.

The following night the Brigadistas were treated to a two-hour performance of Cuban song and dance at the famous Club Tropicana where the most beautiful and talented (not to mention tallest!) Cuban men and women went through a number of outstanding and joyous dance routines – and as many costume changes including the most extravagant and colourful headpieces.

What is Cuban democracy?

Most people around the world who haven't been to Cuba and have been fed a diet of news from the capitalist media have the notion that Cuba is a dictatorship and undemocratic – this archaic and unfounded notion was most recently promulgated in President Obama's

"normalisation" speech. It was then timely for the Brigade to receive an unprecedented presentation from an elected representative of Cuba's National Assembly, Professor Enrique Champonet of the District of Caimito, which includes the area of the Camp. Unlike politicians in Australia – and Mr Champonet for the record, sees himself as a politician – he also has a day job as a Chemistry Professor: he receives no salary for his work as a politician.

Champonet stated that the Cuban electoral process is an expression of our democracy – and is based on the constitution drafted by Fidel Castro. The first article of this Constitution is, "Cuba is a socialist state organised for and by the people."

Champonet described the electoral process in which the people select and elect all the candidates for the elections. Every electoral district must select at least two candidates; the first two candidates with the highest votes are elected to the National Assembly.

In Cuba there are 612 deputies of whom 299 are women and the average age is 48 years signifying 70 percent were born after the triumph of the Revolution. The next election for the National Assembly will be in April 2015. Though electoral law prohibits candidates from campaigning, the government assists each candidate to publish a statement in the national paper *Granma* and show a slide on national state TV.

Once elected the representatives must face the people who voted and serve them by responding to their needs; they can also be recalled and a new representative elected. The National Assembly is also the only law making body of the country.

The Cuban Five

The following day the Brigadistas visited the Museum of the Revolution followed by a meeting with Cuban Hero, Fernando Gonzalez at the ICAP Head Office where Fernando reiterated what many experienced political observers

Once elected the representatives must face the people and serve them by responding to their needs; they can be recalled and a new representative elected. The National Assembly is also the only law making body of the country.

Claudia Jones: Communist, anti-racist and

Mary Davis

It is surprising that not more has been written about Claudia Jones given her stunning achievements as an activist, freedom fighter, ideologist and theoretician. The fact that she is buried next to Karl Marx is an appropriate but not an adequate epitaph.

The bare bones of her all too short life – she died at the age of 49 – is relatively well known.

She was born in 1915 in Trinidad and emigrated with her parents, an aunt and three sisters to the US where they settled in Harlem; and where she and her family, like most of the black population, experienced appalling racism and great poverty.

These experiences, together with the trumped-up case against the Scottsboro "boys" (1935-6), led Claudia, aged 18, to join the Young Communist League (YCL).

This is how she put it: "It was out of my Jim Crow experiences as a young negro woman, experiences likewise born of working-class poverty that led me to join the Young Communist League and to choose the philosophy of my life, the science of Marxism-Leninism – that philosophy not only rejects racist ideas, but is the antithesis of them."

This quote indicates that very early on in her life she understood the relationship between exploitation and oppression and in particular the connection between class, race and gender.

This was something that informed her politics throughout her life both in the US and later when she was deported to England.

Although she rose swiftly through the ranks of the YCL and the party this did not stop her retaining a critical view of what she perceived as a gender-blind and colour-blind

approach to women's and negro oppression (she always used the term "negro" as it was in common parlance at the time).

She was supported on the issue of oppression, however, by William Z Foster, who served as general secretary of the CPUSA from 1945-57 after the expulsion of the former general secretary Earl Browder.

In the bitter struggle against Browderism, Jones supported the Party's rejection of the "revisionist position on the national character of the negro question."

In a long discussion article entitled *On the Right to Self-Determination for the Negro People in the Black Belt*, she argued that the CPUSA had always understood that the negro question was a special question taking on the character of a national question.

She made a distinction between the position of negroes in the north and in the Black Belt where they constituted a majority of the

population. She argued that self-determination was not the same as separation and argued that the former had to be seen as a "programmatic demand" and a "guiding principle."

She quoted Lenin, who argued that the negro people in the US constituted an "oppressed nation." She was informed by his teachings which is why she opposed Browder from 1944.

The latter by now envisaged a rosy future for "peaceful capitalism" which would end racism, imperialism and exploitation.

Jones was imprisoned for writing and delivering an International Women's Day address in which she strongly supported the fight for peace against imperialist aggression.

Furthermore she castigated the left and the party for failing to uproot male supremacist ideas. Such ideas ensured that the stated aim of building a mass party was unlikely to be achieved given that women constitute half

in Cuba have stated, that the new US position is in many ways the same as the old US position on Cuba: "They still continue the same policies with Cuba – to try to destroy the Cuban government and Revolution."

In regard to his unjust incarceration, Fernando said that he didn't take it personally as did none of the Five Cuban Heroes which helped to keep them emotionally strong. But added Fernando, "Just because we didn't take it personally doesn't mean that it stopped us from critically analysing what was happening to us and also what the US wanted to do with Cuba." Fernando concluded by observing that the blockade is still here and the US base in Guantánamo has not been given back to Cuba.

Santa Clara and Cienfuegos

The Brigade next went to Cienfuegos via Santa Clara where the Brigade had the privilege of hearing from and meeting with several of the hundreds of foreign medical students which Cuba trains each year from all parts of the world. Listening to what and how the medical students learn about the Cuban health system brought a realisation that the Cuban health care system is radically different, more effective in cost and treatment outcomes than the western capitalist health care model because it operates on very different premise.

At the beginning of the doctor-person relationship he or she is a patient rather than a client which infers a more personal interest in those seeking the care of the doctor. There is greater emphasis on "consultas" or preventative consultations than what happens in the West where it is often so expensive that we only go to the doctor when we can no longer function rather than for a regular check up.

Three other policies of the Cuban health care system demonstrate further how far behind the West is to Cuba; preventative health care happens at the local level, alcoholism is an



Josephine Donnelly, Keith Headland, Richard Titelius and Maria Hilario during the 2014/2015 32nd Australian and New Zealand Southern Cross Brigade to Cuba.

illness and treated as such and there is no such thing as medical negligence in Cuba.

In Cienfuegos, the Brigade were welcomed by the local and national media and made the news that night around the country and in the *Granma* newspaper and Radio Rebelde. Two Brigade members also laid a floral wreath at the statue of the Cuban national hero, Jose Marti in the main square of Cienfuegos.

The program which followed as provided by the ICAP office of Cienfuegos was varied, comprehensive, stimulating and informative. It included a visit to the Camilo Cienfuegos Oil Refinery which has an outstanding industrial relations set up – the installation is a joint venture between Venezuela and Cuba and the chief management position alternates between the two countries. The board of management included representatives of the unions and the Communist Party of Cuba.

Visits were also made to the Naval Museum, the only one of its kind in Cuba which has natural history exhibits as well as naval history and Revolutionary history exhibits.

Also the Vilma Espin Special School of Autism – one of only five in the country and for which parents can have their children receive the finest and most comprehensive attention free of charge. An agricultural co-operative patriotically named after the Martyrs of Barbados 1976 in reference to the Cubana Airliner downed by Venezuelan terrorist Luis Posada Carriles. A visit to the Benny More Art School where the students provided Brigadistas with

outstanding performances of the dance, song and paintings, a visit to a General Hospital or Policlinico (more disturbing evidence of how cruel and heartless is the effect of the economic blockade) and general practice and last but not least a visit to meet officials from the Federation of Cuban Women, Federation of Cuban Students and the Communist Youth League.

Federation of Cuban Women (FMC)

The FMC (Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas) has primary task the promotion of the role of women at all levels of society, their health and equality of education and opportunity.

The FMC was set up by Vilma Espin in 1960 as a revolutionary organisation to help redress the inequalities that had existed up to the time of the triumph of the Revolution.

The results today speak for themselves; 60% of workers in the health sector are women and more than 60% of workers in the education sector are women while wage equality has been achieved in Cuba it has not been achieved in Australia.

The Brigade returned to the camp where there were a few more activities which still awaited us including a comprehensive statement from ICAP President Kenia Serrano on the role and purpose of ICAP. The presentation by Ms Serrano included many statistics not only on the achievements of ICAP such as having 2,032 friendship associations in

152 countries but also the achievements both nationally and internationally of the example of Cuban socialism and unity from the peace process in Colombia with the FARC guerrillas through to more than three million Cubans being connected to the internet either through cell phones or computers and the ongoing medical brigades around the world and scholarships for medical students.

The Brigadistas went away with the experience of Cuba as a special country on the world stage with a socialist system of economic and societal development which is progressive.

The Australians and New Zealanders on the Brigade saw that Cuba relies therefore on the support of the progressive people of the world including of people from those countries with capitalism as their base system, for Cuba's ongoing status as a beacon for freedom, justice and egalitarianism.

With the Cuban Five home, the world needs to redouble its efforts to push the US government to lift the harsh and cruel economic blockade which has been in effect for over 50 years and for the US to return the territory it illegally annexed at Guantánamo Bay, and delete references to Cuba being defined as a terrorist nation.

Viva Cuba!
Viva los lideres de la Revolucion!
Viva Cuba Socialismo!

Richard Titelius was Brigade member of 30th and 32nd Southern Cross Brigades ✳

... who voted ... also be ... Assembly

d feminist

the population and that while working-class women are doubly oppressed, black women are triply oppressed.

Further, echoing Clara Zetkin, she criticised bourgeois feminism, which instead of seeing women's oppression as founded on class exploitation, viewed it as stemming solely from men, substituting "the battle of the sexes" for the class struggle.

Jones quotes Engels, citing his work on *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in which he said that within the family the man is the bourgeois and the woman the proletarian.

Thus: "Marxist-Leninists fight to free women from household drudgery, they fight to win equality for women in all spheres, they recognise that one cannot adequately deal with the woman question or win women for progressive participation unless one takes up the special problems, needs and aspirations of

women as women" (from *We seek Full Equality for Women*, 1949).

In the same article she wrote that the CPUSA was the first party to demonstrate to white women and to the working class "that the triply oppressed status of negro women is a barometer of the status of all women."

After several periods of imprisonment under the viciously anti-communist Smith and McCarran Acts, she was eventually deported.

She suffered bouts of serious ill health as a result of her prison experiences, in particular, a heart problem which was untreated. Because she was not a US citizen she was eventually deported to England because Trinidad was still a British colony.

In Britain she continued her activism. She founded the *West Indian Gazette* and the Notting Hill Carnival and remained a communist until her dying day.

Morning Star ✳



Claudia Jones – activist, freedom fighter, ideologist and theoretician.

Real unemployment double the official rate

Pete Dolack

How many people are really out of work? The answer is surprisingly difficult to ascertain. For reasons that are likely ideological at least in part, official unemployment figures greatly under-report the true number of people lacking necessary full-time work.

That the “reserve army of labour” is quite large goes a long way toward explaining the persistence of stagnant wages in an era of increasing productivity.

How large? Across North America, Europe and Australia, the real unemployment rate is approximately double the “official” unemployment rate.

The “official” unemployment rate in the United States, for example, was 5.5 percent for February 2015. That is the figure that is widely reported. But the US Bureau of Labour Statistics keeps track of various other unemployment rates, the most pertinent being its “U-6” figure. The U-6 unemployment rate includes all who are counted as unemployed in the “official” rate, plus discouraged workers, the total of those employed part time but not able to secure full-time work and all persons marginally attached to the labour force (those who wish to work but have given up). The actual US unemployment rate for February 2015, therefore, is 11 percent.

Canada makes it much more difficult to know its real unemployment rate. The official Canadian unemployment rate for February was 6.8 percent, a slight increase from January that Statistics Canada attributes to “more people searching for work.” The official measurement in Canada, as in the US, European Union and Australia, mirrors the official standard for measuring employment defined by the International Labour Organisation – those not working at all and who are “actively looking for work.” (The ILO is an agency of the United Nations.)

Statistics Canada’s closest measure toward counting full unemployment is its R8 statistic, but the R8 counts people in part-time work, including those wanting full-time work, as “full-time equivalents,” thus underestimating the number of under-employed by hundreds of thousands, according to an analysis by *The Globe and Mail*. There are further hundreds of thousands not counted because they do not meet the criteria for “looking for work.” Thus *The Globe and Mail* analysis estimates Canada’s real unemployment rate for 2012 was 14.2 percent rather than the official 7.2 percent. Thus Canada’s true current unemployment rate today is likely about 14 percent.

More are out of work

The gap is nearly as large in Europe as in North America. The official European Union unemployment rate was 9.8 percent in January 2015. The European Union’s Eurostat service requires some digging to find out the actual unemployment rate, requiring adding up different parameters. Under-employed workers and discouraged workers comprise four percent of the EU workforce each, and if we add the one percent of those seeking work but not immediately available, that pushes the actual unemployment rate to about 19 percent.

The same pattern holds for Australia. The Australia Bureau of Statistics revealed that its measure of “extended labour force under-utilisation” – this includes “discouraged” jobseekers, the “underemployed” and those who want to start work within a month, but cannot begin immediately – was 13.1 percent in August 2012 (the latest for which I can find), in contrast to the “official,” and far more widely reported, unemployment rate of 5 percent at the time.

Concomitant with these sobering statistics is the length of time people are out of work. In the European Union, for example, the long-term



Across North America, Europe and Australia, the real unemployment rate is approximately double the “official” unemployment rate.

unemployment rate – defined as the number of people out of work for at least 12 months – doubled from 2008 to 2013. The number of US workers unemployed for six months or longer more than tripled from 2007 to 2013.

Thanks to the spectre of chronic high unemployment, and capitalists’ ability to transfer jobs overseas as “free trade” rules become more draconian, it comes as little surprise that the share of gross domestic income going to wages has declined steadily. In the US, the share has declined from 51.5 percent in 1970 to about 42 percent. But even that decline likely understates the amount of compensation going to working people because

almost all gains in recent decades has gone to the top one percent.

Around the world, worker productivity has risen over the past four decades while wages have been nearly flat. Simply put, we’d all be making much more money if wages had merely kept pace with increased productivity.

Insecure work global norm

The increased ability of capital to move at will around the world has done much to exacerbate these trends. The desire of capitalists to depress wages to buoy profitability is a driving force behind their push for governments to adopt “free trade” deals that accelerate the movement of production to low-wage, regulation-free countries. On a global basis, those with steady employment are actually a minority of the world’s workers.

Using International Labour Organisation figures as a starting point, professors John Bellamy Foster and Robert McChesney calculate that the “global reserve army of labour” – workers who are under-employed, unemployed or “vulnerably employed” (including informal workers) – totals 2.4 billion. In contrast, the world’s wage workers total 1.4 billion – far less! Writing in their book *The Endless Crisis: How Monopoly-Finance Capital Produces Stagnation and Upheaval from the USA to China*, they write:

“It is the existence of a reserve army that in its maximum extent is more than 70 percent larger than the active labour army that serves to restrain wages globally, and particularly in poorer countries. Indeed, most of this reserve army is located in the underdeveloped countries of the world, though its growth can be seen today in the rich countries as well.” [page 145]

The earliest countries that adopted capitalism could “export” their

“excess” population though mass emigration. From 1820 to 1915, Professors Foster and McChesney write, more than 50 million people left Europe for the “new world.” But there are no longer such places for developing countries to send the people for whom capitalism at home can not supply employment. Not even a seven percent growth rate for 50 years across the entire global South could absorb more than a third of the peasantry leaving the countryside for cities, they write. Such a sustained growth rate is extremely unlikely.

As with the growing environmental crisis, these mounting economic problems are functions of the need for ceaseless growth. Once again, infinite growth is not possible on a finite planet, especially one that is approaching its limits. Worse, to keep the system functioning at all, the planned obsolescence of consumer products necessary to continually stimulate household spending accelerates the exploitation of natural resources at unsustainable rates and all this unnecessary consumption produces pollution increasingly stressing the environment.

Humanity is currently consuming the equivalent of one and a half earths, according to the non-profit group Global Footprint Network. A separate report by World Wide Fund For Nature in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London and Global Footprint Network, calculates that the Middle East/Central Asia, Asia-Pacific, North America and European Union regions are each consuming about double their regional biocapacity.

We have only one Earth. And that one Earth is in the grips of a system that takes at a pace that, unless reversed, will leave it a wrecked hulk while throwing ever more people into poverty and misery. That this can go on indefinitely is the biggest of fantasies.

Information Clearing House

Britain arms brutal regimes: report

Paddy McGuffin

Britain is continuing to arm some of the world’s most brutal regimes while hypocritically boasting of its commitment to human rights, a damning report has revealed. Ministers have repeatedly claimed that Britain has among the most rigorous arms exports controls in the world.

But the latest report from the influential parliamentary committee on arms export controls found that Britain continued to arm regimes with appalling human rights records including Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia in 2014 despite them being officially listed as countries of concern.

The committee found that, in contrast to its public stance, the government had reversed decisions to provide greater public transparency and rewritten its own rules to

smooth arms sales to blood-soaked regimes.

The committee stated: “There is an inherent conflict between strongly promoting arms exports to authoritarian regimes while strongly criticising their lack of human rights at the same time.

“The government should apply significantly more cautious judgments when considering arms export licence applications for goods to authoritarian regimes which might be used for internal repression.”

Amnesty International arms program director Oliver Sprague said: “In the year that international law tightening up the trade of arms came into force, the government has woefully failed to improve its monitoring and controls.

“It’s time for the government to be address these concerns if it wants to avoid accusations that it’s

prepared to put profits before people lives.”

Campaign Against Arms Trade spokesman Andrew Smith said: “What the report shows is that the government is still putting arms sales above human rights.”

“They are talking a lot about the importance of human rights but at the same time selling arms to some of the most brutal regimes in the world. These regimes are not just buying arms but also the silence and complicity of the British government.”

The committee also found that Britain had failed to implement the core provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty, repeatedly failed to police and enforce its own laws at British arms fairs and failed to close loopholes in laws to prohibit the trade in torture equipment.

Morning Star

Brazil

Demonstrations amid coup talk

Emile Schepers

Mass demonstrations took place on March 14 in a number of Brazilian cities in support of President Dilma Rousseff of the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, or PT). This was a pre-emptive action against very large demonstrations the following day against Rousseff, in which her impeachment was demanded by the right. By some estimates over a million marched.

Rousseff squeaked through to re-election late last year in the context of an economic slump and a corruption scandal involving kick-back schemes at Petr lio Brasileiro or Petrobras, Brazil's huge public petroleum company, which are said to have siphoned off US\$3.8 billion.

The scheme, which seems to have gotten underway before the first Workers' Party president, Luiz In cio Lula da Silva, took power, involves a "pay to play" arrangement whereby companies bidding for contracts with Petrobras slipped money to officials of the state enterprise to get ahead of their competitors.

Also there are accusations that some Petrobras officials siphoned money to the Workers' Party. Several people in Petrobras, in the contracting companies and in government are probably headed for prison, including the speakers of both houses of Congress. During part of this time, and before she was elected president for the first time in 2011, Rousseff had been chair of the board of Petrobras, though she is not accused of complicity.

Nobody but the grafters is in favour of corruption, an endemic problem in Brazilian government for many years. But the right-wing, losers of the 2014 presidential election, who have a strong presence in the legislature, seem to think that they can use the economic travails and the Petrobras scandal to remove Rousseff from the presidency by unconstitutional means.

The working class and the left, and especially the poor and former poor who have greatly benefited from the Lula-Dilma presidencies, fear that the agenda of the right is to impose a full blast neo-liberal program of austerity and privatisations.

Things the right has said and written create a worry that if Dilma

goes, Brazil might pull out of the Bolivarian system of alliances and find itself once again under US domination. Rousseff herself has proposed some austerity measures to deal with the current crisis, and has been criticised for this by some working-class and labour circles, but the right would go much farther.

Recent new arrests for corruption related to Petrobras have added fuel to the fire. Hauled in this time are the presidents of the Senate, Renan Calheiros, and of the Chamber of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha. These two and some others are not members of Rousseff's Workers' Party but of the Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), with which Rousseff has had to work because the Workers' Party and its ideological allies (such as the Communist Party of Brazil, the PC do B) do not have a majority in either house, a situation that was exacerbated in the 2014 legislative election results. But some Workers' Party officials have also been implicated.

This is why the right, and chiefly the so-called Social Democratic Party of Brazil, went all out to bring out its base behind a slogan of impeaching President Rousseff (an action not contemplated in the Brazilian constitution) and fighting corruption. But among the banners and slogans carried by the almost entirely white and economically upscale protestors were some that raise eyebrows:

- "Less state, less taxes."
- "Military intervention NOW!"
- "The communist idealism took our money, health, education and our respect! Get out Dilma, get out PT" (this and several other signs were in English).
- "We won't be another Venezuela" (also in English).
- "My country is Brazil, not Cuba or Venezuela."
- And "enough with Paulo Freire!" (Paulo Freire wrote the well-known 1968 book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" as part of the Latin American liberation movement.)

These slogans are the more shocking because they did not fall from the sky. They are inspired by declarations by some military people and others on the right. Highest ranking is General Paulo Chagas of the Brazilian Army Reserve, who issued



President Dilma Rousseff shakes hands with supporters during a rally in Porto Alegre.

a call last year for a military takeover to save Brazil from "communism". Similar slogans were used by the military in the 1964 coup, abetted by the US, which set up a dictatorship that lasted decades. Both Rousseff and Lula cut their political teeth as opponents of military rule, which may have left some residual resentment among the officer corps.

Although Brazil's government is one of the least left-wing of the Bolivarian group, Brazil is, with its 200 million inhabitants, by far the largest and the most industrialised. Currently there are destabilisation efforts going on in Venezuela and Argentina, the second and third largest of the Bolivarian countries. So if someone wanted to destroy the whole "pink tide" of governments moving away from US domination in Latin America, Brazil would certainly be a target. Brazil also plays a major role in the BRICS group of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) which have been instrumental in creating a multipolar world power framework.

President Rousseff took a conciliatory line with the demonstrators and promised dialogue. The Communist Party of Brazil warned of the coup danger as very real and called for greater unity and action among the left-wing sector in the ruling coalition, as well as support for the elected government.

People's World



Region Briefs

Japanese Communist Party Vice Chair Ichid Tadayoshi recently attended a memorial ceremony in Tokyo to mark the 70th anniversary of the Great Tokyo Air Raid, calling for world peace. The US planes bombed downtown Tokyo in March 1945, leading to the death of 100,000 people. The two-hour bombing was disastrous, as the city was crowded with wooden houses. At the memorial, participants opposed the Japanese government's series of motions aimed at militarising the country.

Russia and China will co-celebrate the 70th anniversary of the end of WW2 and victory over fascism and Japanese militarism, upholding real wartime history and commemorating war veterans. The announcement came after a recent meeting between Russian President Putin and Central Committee member and Secretariat of the Communist Party of China's Politburo, Li Zhanshu. Putin said that he expected Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow in May for the celebration. He stressed that the two countries together "would help safeguard world peace against attempts to distort history and glorify invaders". Li said that his office would work closely with Russian counterparts to make the celebrations a success.

Chinese President Xi Jinping recently pointed out "Four Comprehensives", guiding the country to build a prosperous modern socialist society. The Four Comprehensives included to "comprehensively build an overall moderately well-off society, comprehensively deepen reform, comprehensively govern the country according to laws, and comprehensively supervising the Communist Party of China". Moreover, the Four Comprehensives were viewed as a key to raise up people's living standards, China also made it clear that pursuing high GDP growth was not a priority of its modernisation, but instead the priority was to improve people's living standards.

On March 16, 1968, American soldiers murdered 504 unarmed villagers of Vietnam's Tinh Khe commune in central Quang Ngai province. Victims included elderly people, women and children. American soldiers also burned hundreds of houses and thousands of livestock. American Vietnam-war veteran, Roy Mike Boehm, recently attended a ceremony to apologise for his wartime deeds and commemorate the lives that were lost in the massacre. Forty seven years after the massacre, the commune's production value in 2014 reached more than A\$30.1 million and its annual food production reached 4,100 tonnes. At the same time, the Vietnamese Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs held a labour-safety workshop in Vung Tau city. The workshop reviewed the national program on improving employees' health and safety, and then it set up new tasks for the following five years, aimed at reducing accidents at work and improving health services especially for workers in construction, electricity, mining, chemical and metalwork industries.

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



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Israeli elections – My view

My position on the election result is that all the Zionist parties have the same agenda; that is the same aims and policies of dispossessing, repressing and getting rid of the Palestinians and continuing to strengthen and build the Zionist state of Israel. The different

Zionist factions, right or “centralist” or “left” Zionist just use different tactics to achieve that purpose.

So whatever Zionist party is in power the situation of the Palestinians will be unchanged, they will continue to suffer the same level of brutal oppression. It's just that some Zionist parties will be more subtle than others and pay lip service to “peace talks” and the “two state solution” while continuing the occupation and building more settlements. Whereas, Netanyahu is more blatant and open about it and this will mean the world will see Israel more clearly, without the illusions of peace a partner it has tried to maintain over the years. This will accelerate the isolation of Israel and the eventual falling apart of the Zionist, colonial settler state project.

Netanyahu is just one leader of a bad bunch of Zionist fascists, but at least he is more honest about Israel's treatment and intentions towards the Palestinians. He is the most unashamed, and therefore best able to expose the real character of Israel to the world.

Jericho Shopkeeper Mahmoud Rweished, 28, said he wanted Netanyahu to win and explained his attitude stating, “You might find this strange, but actually Netanyahu is the ugly face of Israel, I want the world to see only this face of Israel. Any other face is fake and unreal.” (*The Australian* 19/03/2015.) I think this statement expresses well the true situation in Israel and the bearing Israeli elections have for the Palestinian people.

Steven Katsineris
Vic

Labor's Pilliga promise

The Lock the Gate Alliance welcomes the ALP's promise to permanently ban coal seam gas in the Pilliga forest in North West New South Wales. It is a hugely significant and welcome commitment. We call on the Baird government to give North West farming communities certainty by matching the pledge.

The Pilliga Sandstone is a recharge aquifer for the Great Artesian Basin, and drilling for coal seam gas should never have been approved there. It is simply irresponsible to allow a risky venture like coal seam gas to put this ancient water source at risk when so many communities are utterly dependent on it.

We welcome the Labor Party's commitment that the Pilliga will be

safe if they win the election, but the farming communities of the North West need the certainty that no matter who wins government, coal seam gas will not proceed in the Pilliga.

Santos have all but pulled out of the project. There's no reason to press ahead with it, and so much to lose. We're asking Premier Mike Baird to match this promise and make the Pilliga off limits to CSG.

Lock the Gate Alliance

Something to say?

Write to
the Editor!

email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Culture & Life

by
Rob Gowland



Higher education denied

One of the most popular acts of the Whitlam Labor government in the 1970s was the abolition of university fees. It met one of the most general (if often least recognised) demands: that education should be free, secular and universal.

As capitalism developed during the Industrial Revolution, it quickly became clear that modern production methods required at the very least a literate workforce. Equally clear were the profits that could be made by exploiting the discoveries and achievements of scientists and inventors. Education (including higher education) was thus good for business!

Governments took on the responsibility of providing that educated workforce and research community that capitalism needed. And although the ruling class used their wealth to provide themselves with the “best” schools and access to the best universities, working class people increasingly saw education as their ticket to a better future, as the key to escaping from poverty.

In the decades after WW2, capitalism in the industrialised countries boomed. But it was a boom based on exploiting the resources and – to a limited extent – the market provided by the developed countries' colonial possessions. However first the Russian Revolution and then the anti-fascist coalition of WW2 led to an upsurge in the national liberation struggle and former undeveloped countries began to develop.

With development came economic competition and complexity. Industrialised countries lost their monopoly on industrialisation. Capitalists began to seek out production centres with lower wages (and fewer safety regulations, etc).

The educated population in the former industrialised countries was now largely redundant. Their governments lost interest in mass education, viewing it as a drain on government finance. Education would still be provided, but for a price. Education would once again become a privilege to be enjoyed by the wealthy.

Almost from its inception, capitalism had relied on the state to provide necessary infrastructure and services (including education), and even to provide actual businesses that facilitated other businesses, such as banks, oil refineries, cement production, to name only a few. However, for the last hundred years the general crisis of capitalism has left fewer opportunities to locate sources of profit. In response, capitalists both large and small (but especially large) have pressured governments to reduce corporations' costs, to make the system ever more profitable. The way to do this, they said, was to cut corporate tax and privatise public enterprises. Capitalist governments were eager to comply.

Reducing corporate tax and disposing of government-owned enterprises means, inevitably, reducing government income. But that didn't matter any more. So what, if governments could no longer afford to provide education or health services, or public transport or even sporting or cultural facilities? Private enterprise, desperate to find those elusive new sources of profit, would satisfy the community's needs – for a price, of course.

Capitalism today has more workers available to it than it knows what to do with. It certainly does not have work for them all. Neither does it need all their scientific or technical expertise. This does not mean that the world's

problems have diminished. Far from it! It simply means that capitalism cannot profitably find a way to tackle these problems and hence sees no point in “wasting” money on educating the masses.

Accordingly, the free tertiary education offered by the Whitlam government has been progressively curtailed over the years since, by the introduction of various fees and charges, until today a university education burdens every graduate with a hideous debt. The political advisers to capitalist governments are not disturbed, however. The ruling class can afford to pay for their children's education and the children of the poor are simply no longer considered relevant.

But if capitalism has no use for people with a university education, humanity definitely does. The world is facing very significant crises to do with sustainable energy, pollution and environmental degradation, climate change, food security – not to mention recurring wars and civil violence. The human race needs the collective wisdom of its best brains to solve these problems while we still have time. But capitalism is crying poor and limiting the intake into universities, denying higher education to large sections of the working class.

At the same time, government research facilities are being starved of funds, scientific staff laid off (except in defence industries) and research increasingly narrowed down to business-linked topics. Knowledge for its own sake no longer has currency: profit is the only arbiter now.

In Australia, the Liberal Party government of Tony Abbott and his collection of philistines and religious cranks, education is

a privilege that is not to be squandered on the undeserving. If that sounds like something from another age, that's because their attitude is just that: a hangover from an earlier period of social development, when the “lower classes” were expected not only to know their place but to keep to it.

The Australian people may view this country as egalitarian, but its leaders do not. Nor do the leaders of any capitalist country. Capitalism is a system based on inequality and the private appropriation of the product of the collective labour of the mass of the people. To expect such a system to support equality and progress is surely fanciful.

Meanwhile, under the leadership of these troglodytes the children of the working class are being systematically denied the opportunity to learn and develop at the highest intellectual level. We are being forced back to a level of social development not seen since the middle of the 19th century, when the rule of privilege was so outrageous it had to be challenged by enlightened people fired with enthusiasm for the “rights of man”. In Europe and America, progressive ideas were being fought for, in civil wars and revolutions and working people were demanding more rights all the time.

The Abbott government's attempts to “deregulate” university fees is simply an attempt to make higher education subject to market forces, to place it at the mercy of the same drive for profit as any other capitalist enterprise. Those are not the forces that should be allowed to determine the nature and availability of higher education to the Australian people. ☘



Sunday March 29 –
Saturday April 4

In the two decades after WW2, the imperialist governments of Britain, France and the USA fought covert and overt wars to “roll back Communism”, especially in Asia; the USA in the Philippines, Indonesia and Indo-China, France in Indo-China, Britain in Malaya and Borneo, and all of them in Korea. Millions died, as imperialism succeeded in some countries but was defeated in others.

The defeat that most caught the world’s attention was that of the USA in Vietnam. The ignominious spectacle of hundreds of Vietnamese who had thrown in their lot with the US invaders desperately queued up on the US Embassy roof hoping to cadge a lift out on a USAF chopper as Saigon fell to the national liberation forces is one that resonates still. American spin doctors have spent the intervening years devising stratagems to somehow change that painful image of a rich-people’s army brought low by a poor-people’s army. In *Last Days In Vietnam*, presented in the *SBS Remembers* skein (SBS ONE Sunday March 29 at 8.30pm), they present their version of the fall of Saigon.

Having killed several million Vietnamese in gruesomely horrible ways, “American soldiers and diplomats” – according to the film – confront “the same moral quandary: whether to obey White House orders to evacuate US citizens only – or to risk punishment and save the lives of as many South Vietnamese citizens as they can.” So from the people who tried to destroy the country, they have been turned into its would-be saviours!

Last Days In Vietnam received predictably positive reviews from most US critics and has been nominated for the Best Documentary Academy Award in the 2015 Oscars. US historian Nick Turse demurred however, pointing out that the film is

“all about well-meaning Americans – with nothing about the indiscriminate US firepower that destroyed much of the country”.

Another documentary that studiously resists illuminating the truth is *The Unknown Known* (SBS ONE Sunday March 29 at 10.25pm), also part of *SBS Remembers*. Also known as *The Unknown Known: The Life And Times Of Donald Rumsfeld*, this 2013 film by Academy Award-winning filmmaker Errol Morris (*The Fog of War*) turns the camera on former US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld and seeks his thoughts about the US involvement in the Iraq War.

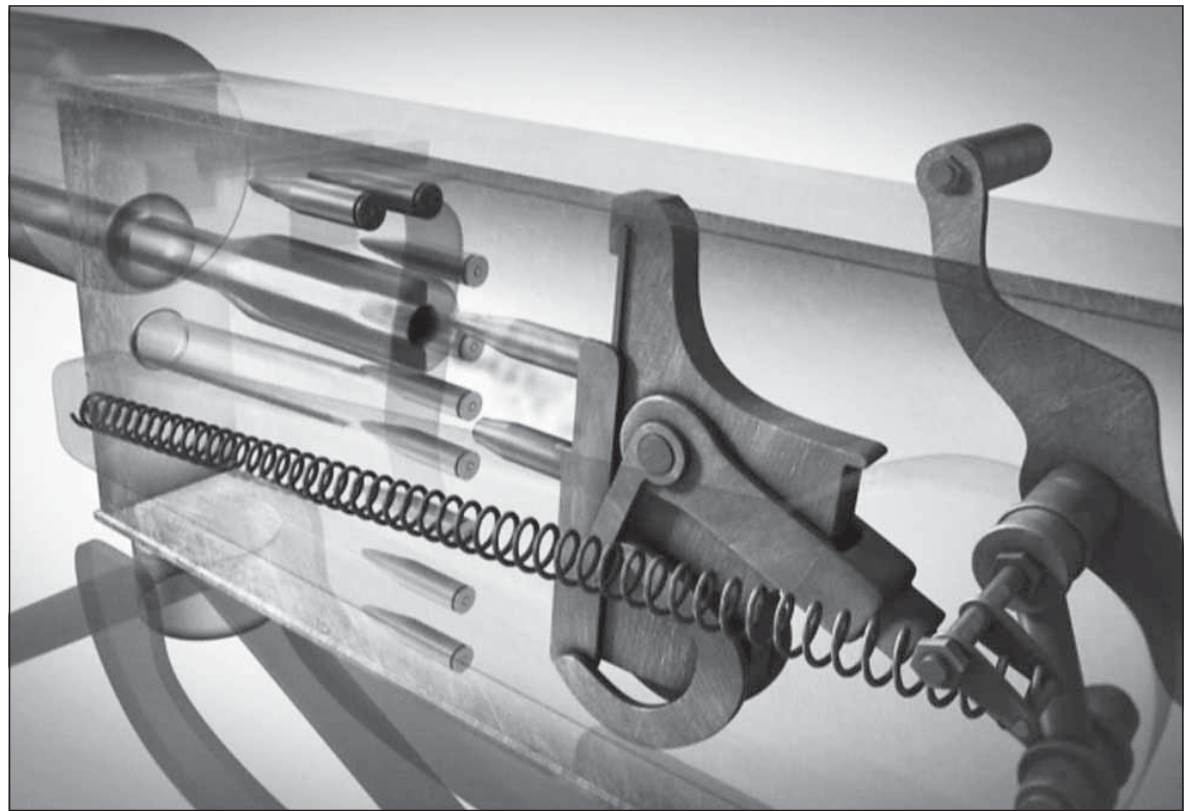
In the review for Philly.com, Tirdad Derakhshani said, “Morris tries to hold Rumsfeld to account for the blunders, cover-ups, and atrocities critics say were committed during his watch ... Yet we get little in response from Rumsfeld but a demonstration of his cunning at parrying, dodging, and twisting queries.”

In the documentary *Neil Oliver: Skye’s Band Of Brothers* (SBS ONE Tuesday March 31 at 7.30pm) screening in the *SBS Remembers* skein, Neil Oliver looks at the development of the machine gun as a weapon of mass destruction through the prism of a small community ripped apart by the weapon’s devastating impact: of the 23 men from Portree on Skye who fought in the first world war, only eight returned.

UK critic Sam Wollaston, writing in the British *Guardian*, notes that “this isn’t about single bullets. It’s about the Maxim gun that can fire 666 rounds a minute – the devil’s weapon. ... It’s also about its victims. Because of the nature of recruitment in the First World War, a single blast from a German Maxim would often take out several members not just of the same company, but also of the same community back home. ... One night in northern France alone had claimed 10 young men from one tiny community [Portree]. ... It was a community ripped rudely apart, just as its young men had been by the invention of Mr Maxim – Sir Hiram Maxim, in fact – in the mud, a long way from home.”

WWI was a war between the imperialist Great Powers to rearrange the division of the world’s colonies and markets. As Lenin said, it was essentially a trade war. The diplomatic manoeuvring that led up to the outbreak of hostilities is largely secondary. However, when bourgeois historians cover the causes of the war, it is frequently all they talk about.

The documentary series *Tony Robinson’s WWI* (SBS ONE from Wednesday April 1 at 7.30pm), still in the *SBS Remembers* skein, attempts to tell the full story of the Great War in four episodes. He has an advantage over the makers of other documentaries on the subject: the recent discovery of thousands of 3D stereoscopic images taken at the time. Proudly boasts the publicity: “These



Neil Oliver looks at the development of the machine gun as a weapon of mass destruction through the prism of a small community ripped apart by the weapon’s devastating impact – *Neil Oliver: Skye’s Band Of Brothers* (SBS ONE Tuesday March 31 at 7.30pm) screening in the *SBS Remembers*.

incredible images have never been broadcast before in their original format and many have been sourced from private collections all over the world.” In Britain the series was shown in 3D on the Sky 3D Channel.

In the first program, Tony uses them to tell the story of how the war started and how it destroyed Britain’s professional army in less than five months.

Apocalypse Now Redux (SBS ONE Saturday April 4 at 8.30pm) is a 2001 extended version (an additional 49 minutes) of Francis Ford Coppola’s epic 1979 war film *Apocalypse Now*. For the re-edit they cut the original negative leaving *Apocalypse Now Redux* the only version now available.

The response from the critics was largely positive, the consensus being: “The additional footage slows down the movie somewhat (some say the new cut is inferior to the original), but *Apocalypse Now Redux* is still a great piece of cinema.” AO Scott of *The New York Times* wrote that it “grows richer and stranger with each viewing, and the restoration of scenes left in the cutting room two decades ago has only added to its sublimity.”

Critic Owen Gleiberman, on the other hand, wrote “*Apocalypse Now Redux* is the meandering, indulgent art project that [Francis Ford Coppola] was still enough of a craftsman, in 1979, to avoid.”

The film remains a movie about the madness of war that war-hawks get a kick out of, with romanticised images of helicopter gunships going into battle to Wagner’s *Ride of the Valkyries*. ☺

Sydney

POLITICS IN THE PUB

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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THE MARKET POWER OF THE DUOPOLY OF COLES & WOOLWORTHS; THE GROWING COST TO CUSTOMERS, SUPPLIERS AND COMMUNITY; CONSUMER ACTIVISM EFFECTIVE AND NOW ESSENTIAL

Chris Zinn, Independent Consultant & former Director of Campaigns and Communications for CHOICE;

Adrian Cameron, Dr, Senior Research Fellow, Faculty of Health, Deakin University;

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BIG COAL – AUSTRALIA’S DIRTIEST HABIT

David McKnight, Professor, School of Arts and Media, University of NSW;

Peter Colley, National Research Director, Mining & Energy Division, CFMEU, Sydney;

April 30

AMERICAN BASES IN AUSTRALIA: TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT – MORE OF THEM, MORE IMPORTANT, BINDING US MORE TIGHTLY – STILL A TARGET

Dennis Doherty, Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition;
Richard Tanter, Professor, Senior Research Associate, Nautilus Institute, & Professor, School of Political & Social Studies, University of Melbourne;

May 7

LESSONS FROM SPAIN: GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY AND THE MOVEMENTS AGAINST CAPITALISM

Simon Tormey, Professor, School of Social and Political Sciences, Sydney University;

Dick Nichols, Europe correspondent for *Green Left Weekly*;

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

Printed by Spotpress
24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl Marrickville 2204

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

US weapons to ISIL

A commander of Iraq's popular forces disclosed that wiretapping of ISIL's communications has confirmed the reports that US planes have been dropping food and arms supplies for the Takfiri terrorists.

"The wiretapped ISIL communications by Iraqi popular forces have revealed that the US planes have been dropping weapons and foodstuff for the Takfiri terrorist group," said Commander of Iraq's Ali Akbar Battalion.

He noted that tapping on ISIL disclosed the terrorist group's regular contacts with the US army, and said, "They exchanged sentences like if they would have a share of the ammunition dropped near [Spiker Military Base] or responses such as 'you will also receive your share'.

"The US forces by dropping weapons and ammunition for ISIL, especially in Yassreb, Al-Ramadi and near Spiker Base in Hay al-Qadessiya have provided a lot of help to the ISIL," he added.

Many similar reports by Iraqi officials and forces have surfaced in the last few months. In February, an Iraqi provincial official lashed out at the western countries and their regional allies for supporting Takfiri terrorists in Iraq, revealing that the US planes still continue to airdrop weapons and foodstuff for the ISIL terrorists.

"The US planes have dropped weapons for the ISIL terrorists in the areas under ISIL control and even in those areas that have been recently liberated from the ISIL control to encourage the terrorists to return to those places," coordinator of Iraqi popular forces Jafar al-Jaberi, said.

He noted that eyewitnesses in Al-Havijeh of Kirkuk province had witnessed the US planes dropping several suspicious parcels for ISIL terrorists in the province.

"Two coalition planes were also seen above the town of Al-Khas in Diyala and they carried the Takfiri terrorists to the region that has recently been liberated from the ISIL control," Al-Jaberi said.

Meantime, Head of Iraqi Parliament's National Security and Defence Committee Hakem al-Zameli also disclosed that the anti-ISIL coalition's planes have dropped weapons and foodstuff for the ISIL in Salahuddin, Al-Anbar and Diyala provinces.

In January, al-Zameli underlined that the coalition is the main cause of ISIL's survival in Iraq.

"There are proofs and evidence for the US-led coalition's military aid to ISIL terrorists through air [dropped cargoes]," he said at the time.

He noted that the members of his committee have already proved that the US planes have dropped advanced weaponry, including anti-aircraft weapons, for the ISIL, and that it has set up an investigation committee to probe into the matter.

"The US drops weapons for the ISIL on the excuse of not knowing about the whereabouts of the ISIL positions and it is trying to distort the reality with its allegations."

He noted that the committee had collected



Supply pallets being airdropped to a remote camp in Afghanistan. (Photo: US Air Force/Senior Airman Ricky J. Best)

the data and the evidence provided by eyewitnesses, including Iraqi army officers and the popular forces, and said. "These documents are given to the investigation committee ... and the necessary measures will be taken to protect the Iraqi airspace."

Also in January, another senior Iraqi legislator reiterated that the US-led coalition is the main cause of ISIL's survival in Iraq.

"The international coalition is only an excuse for protecting the ISIL and helping the terrorist group with equipment and weapons," Jome Divan, who is a member of the al-Sadr bloc in the Iraqi parliament, said.

He said the coalition's support for the ISIL is now evident to everyone, and continued, "The coalition has not targeted ISIL's main positions in Iraq."

In late December, the Iraqi Parliamentary Security and Defence Commission MP disclosed that a US plane supplied the ISIL terrorist organisation with arms and ammunition in Salahuddin province.

MP Majid al-Gharawi stated that the available information pointed out that US planes are supplying the ISIL organisation, not only in Salahuddin province, but also other provinces, Iraq TradeLink reported.

He added that the US and the international coalition are "not serious in fighting against the ISIL organisation, because they have the technological power to determine the presence of ISIL gunmen and destroy them in one month".

Gharawi added that "the US is trying to expand the time of the war against the ISIL to get guarantees from the Iraqi government to have its bases in Mosul and Anbar provinces."

The Salahuddin security commission also disclosed that "unknown planes dropped arms and ammunition to the ISIL gunmen Southeast of Tikrit city".

Also in Late December, a senior Iraqi lawmaker raised doubts about the seriousness of the anti-ISIL coalition led by the US, and said that the terrorist group still received aids dropped by unidentified aircraft.

"The international coalition is not serious about air strikes on ISIL terrorists and is even seeking to take out the popular (voluntary) forces from the battlefield against the Takfiris so that the problem with ISIL remains unresolved in the near future," Nahlah al-Hababi said.

"The ISIL terrorists are still receiving aids from unidentified fighter jets in Iraq and Syria," she added.

Hababi said that the coalition's precise air-strikes are launched only in those areas where the Kurdish Pishmarga forces are present, while military strikes in other regions are not so precise.

In late December, the US-led coalition dropped aid to the Takfiri militants in an area North of Baghdad.

Aid to terrorists

Field sources in Iraq told al-Manar news agency that the international coalition planes dropped aid to the terrorist militants in Balad, an area which lies in Salahuddin province North of Baghdad.

In October, a high-ranking Iranian commander also slammed the US for providing supplies to ISIL, adding that the US claims that the weapons were mistakenly airdropped to ISIL were untrue.

"The US and the so-called anti-ISIL coalition claim that they have launched a campaign against this terrorist and criminal group - while supplying them with weapons, food and medicine in Jalawla region (a town in Diyala Governorate, Iraq). This explicitly displays the falsity of the coalition's and the US' claims," Deputy Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Massoud Jazayeri said.

The US claimed that it had dropped weapons and medical aid to Kurdish fighters confronting the ISIL in Kobani, near the Turkish border in Northern Syria.

The US Defence Department said that it had dropped 28 bundles of weapons and supplies, but not one of them made it into the hands of the Kurdish fighters.

The Iranian commander insisted that the US had the necessary intelligence about ISIL's deployment in the region and that their claims to have mistakenly dropped weapons to them are as unlikely as they are untrue.

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"The international coalition is only an excuse for protecting the ISIL and helping the terrorist group with equipment and weapons."



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