



TPP text reveals

Corporate enslavement

Bob Briton

The planners behind the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) have bowed to mounting international pressure and released the text of the trade and investment pact. Revelations from WikiLeaks and the alarm they have caused are the likely cause for the sudden shift towards “transparency”. The architects no doubt believed that few would be able to plough through its 6,147 pages to discern the dangers to their future collective well-being. “The agreements – filled with jargon, convoluted technical, trade and financial terms, legalese, fine print and obtuse phrasing – can be summed up in two words: corporate enslavement,” as US journalist Chris Hedges noted.

The deal comprises 12 signatory countries – the US, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Canada, Japan, Brunei, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, New Zealand and Australia. This accounts for roughly 40 percent of the world’s economy. If and when it comes into effect and combined with the corresponding Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), 85 percent of the global economy will be operating under a new, very different order. The related Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) will complete the transformation to untrammelled corporate dictatorship.

These agreements leave out some very major countries and economies, notably those involved in BRICS – the economic co-operation framework established between Brazil, Russia, India and China. The TPP will enhance competition with this rival bloc by stripping away the rights of previously sovereign countries to legislate in any way that limits transnationals’ profitability. Trade unions will be further sidelined.

Government assurances

The rules set out in the TPP will trump any commitments made at the climate change conference in Paris at the end of the month. There are references to a “low-emissions” future economy but none to climate change. This document was written by and for the big polluters.

Governments, like Australia’s, are giving assurances that they will retain the right to regulate. This is misleading. The agreement will work to lock in any weakening of regulation and this has been the trend with governments covered by the TPP, with their commitment to cutting “red tape”, removing “obstacles to investment” and hiring and firing.

The same governments say that problems with the highly controversial Investor State Dispute Settlement provisions have been fixed. Not so. As the New Zealand *It’s Our Future* website points out, “Most arbitrators are still likely to come from a small club of investment lawyers, with no effective control of conflict



An anti-TPP rally in Martin Place, Sydney, earlier this year. (Photo: Tom Pearson)

of interest rules (though some are promised). There is no guarantee they will apply consistent rules and no way to appeal if they make rogue decisions. There’s no cap on damages or compound interest.”

The case of Oceana Gold versus El Salvador, which has the mining giant suing the Central American country for affecting profits through a moratorium on mining activity, is a foretaste of the sort of corporate bullying to become widespread under the TPP. Nothing will stop the exporting of jobs to low wage centres.

US people lose out

Though the trade and investment regime is designed chiefly to favour US corporations, it will dramatically and negatively impact the people of the United States. Fifty-one percent of working Americans now earn less than US\$30,000 a year. Forty percent are getting less than US\$20,000 a year and the federal government considers a family of four on an income of less than US\$24,250 to be living in poverty. This crippling reality has developed despite official promises of highly paid jobs to flow from the North American Free Trade Agreement, a precursor of the TPP and TTIP, concluded between Canada, Mexico and the US in 1994.

Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has picked up on widespread concern and gone public with her “reservations” about the rash of new trade and investment agreements. The people in countries to be impacted by the TPP

would be wrong to take comfort from these comments. Her Democrat colleague, current US President Barack Obama, has done all he can to limit debate and “fast track” the agreement becoming law. It is estimated that corporations paid US\$200 million-worth of contributions to members of the Congress to vote for a Trade Promotion Authority to negotiate treaties like the TPP. Hillary will change her tune if elected.

The text does nothing to dispel fears of the people of Australia for their public services, including health and education and the viability of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). There is some eyewash concerning “legitimate public policy” but market models will remain the norm. Any new state owned enterprise, such as a public national superannuation scheme can receive no advantage over commercial rivals. People will simply not be able to reverse the neo-liberal agenda.

Threats to food labelling, regulation of mining, fracking and action on climate change are still there. Medicines will be more expensive with pharmaceutical companies’ monopoly over drugs to be extended from five years to eight years. New generation biologic medicines to treat diseases like cancer and diabetes with low side-effects will be more expensive for longer than they need be.

The people fight back

“The TPP creates a web of corporate laws that will dominate the global economy,” as US attorney Kevin Zeese and TPP opponent said. “It is a global corporate coup d’état.

Corporations will become more powerful than countries. Corporations will force democratic systems to serve their interests. Civil courts around the world will be replaced with corporate courts or so-called trade tribunals.”

The people of the world are responding to the threat. Large demonstrations are occurring in the US as the *Guardian* goes to press. Over 250,000 people in Berlin protested recently against the TTIP. Australians must play their part in binning the TPP. The trade unions, which have shown considerable energy in opposing negative aspects of the China Australia Free Trade Agreement, must take an even stronger stand against the much bigger threat posed by the TPP. ✪



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Guardian

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Stripping Medicare

Medicare is on the chopping block and the vultures are circling overhead ready to swoop and take their pickings. Items covered by Medicare are about to be stripped back to "basics" – to a bare safety-net, with access means tested. These and other steps in the Coalition's blueprint for the Americanisation of Australia's health system are spelled out in the government's national Commission of Audit report which was handed down in February 2014.* The private health insurance (PHI) companies are in the driving seat and the right foot is on the accelerator. After a clumsy false start with the Abbott government's attempts to introduce a co-payment, the Turnbull government and Health Minister Sussan Ley are getting down to business.

The Audit Commission calls for those on higher incomes to "take greater responsibility for their own health care needs." It says that they "should be required to [privately] insure for basic health services in place of Medicare." (emphasis added) The Commission set a threshold of \$88,000 for singles and \$176,000 for families. If those earning above the threshold fail to take out private health insurance they will be subjected to a financial penalty through the taxation system.

The government is currently conducting a public "consultation" on PHI on the Health Department's website (www.health.gov.au). It is in the form of a questionnaire which is designed to get the desired results and give the government some insight into what spin to use to sell an unpopular policy – the death of Medicare.

At present PHI funds are not permitted to cover out-of-hospital services such as GP and specialist consultations, diagnostic imaging (e.g. x-rays, CAT scans, MRIs) and pathology (e.g. blood tests). The questionnaire asks people to select three, in order of preference, from a range of services they would like private health funds to cover. It notes that "insurance premiums would need to increase in order to fund these services." Already people are leaving in their droves because premiums are unaffordable.

In effect it will be a two-tier system – public minimal cover for those on the lowest incomes and private cover for everyone else. Even within private cover many would end up slipping through the net as they took risks with their health and selected which procedures and treatments they had cover for and which they would not.

The Audit Commission gives some insight into the objectives of the PHI companies: "The current rules ... prevent private health insurers from covering primary care settings, including medical items and services provided through the Medicare Benefits Schedule. This limits the health funds' ability to assist in improving the health outcomes of the elderly and chronically ill at the point of diagnosis, which is usually when they initially visit their local doctor." What do they mean by "assist"? Insurance companies are not qualified health practitioners!

The Commission continues: "In many cases health funds are not made aware of when their members develop medical conditions and find out only after the member has been treated in a hospital and seeks reimbursement from the fund. Allowing health funds to cover primary care settings would make it possible for them to be more aware of members' health risks. Funds could assist members to manage chronic conditions in out-of-hospital settings. This change is also needed to underpin the requirement for higher-income Australians to take out private health insurance."

Once again, their aim is to undermine the role of qualified medical practitioners. The ultimate aim is control and increased profits. Just as in the USA, they will determine what is "necessary" and will be covered. It will no longer be a decision between health professional and patient. At the same time premiums would be deregulated.

The government's first attempt to introduce a Medicare co-payment and abolish bulk-billing was defeated. Large protest rallies and campaigning by the trade union movement, doctors, the ALP, the Greens, the CPA and other left parties and the broader community saw the Abbott government pull its head in. The then Health Minister Peter Dutton was replaced by a fresh face, the more "consultative" Sussan Ley. But the agenda did not change. A co-payment is being introduced by stealth as doctors are forced to abandon bulk-billing for economic reasons. The government brought in a four-year freeze on Medicare rebates.

Now is the time for campaigning, for building the broadest and largest struggle to defend Medicare.

*See www.ncoa.gov.au/report Phase One February 2014 and Appendix Volume 1, page 95.

PRESS FUND

The international climate change discussions, due to commence in Paris, will doubtless be overshadowed by discussion on the Paris terrorist attacks, yet climate change is one of humanity's biggest challenges. With regard to both terrorism and climate change we must now count the cost of past decisions by governments, ask ourselves how we got into this state of affairs, and decide on steps needed to remedy the situation. The *Guardian* can make a vital contribution to public discussion on these matters. However, we really need Press Fund contributions, and right now our funds are running pretty low, so please, if you possibly can, send us something for the next edition. Our thanks go to this week's contributors, as follows:

June Ayres \$10, B & J Brown \$100, C Greer \$50, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$10, "Rough Red" \$5, Eddie Seymour \$50

This week's total: \$230 Progressive total \$5,860

Yawuru man battles coal seam gas

Rudi Maxwell

Yawuru man Micklo Corpus has been camping at Yulleroo, 70 kilometres east of Broome in the Kimberley, for 18 months, trying to stop coal seam gas mining on his country. Two weeks back, when he blocked Buru Energy trucks by sitting on the road, police issued Mr Corpus with a move-on notice.

Mr Corpus told the *Koori Mail* that he and other Yawuru people had grave concerns about the controversial process of hydraulic fracturing – or fracking – in which a mix of toxic chemicals is blasted into a coal seam to release gas.

"Last year the Yawuru had a meeting and 96 percent of our people out of 152 voted against fracking," he said.

"But we also said if Buru wants to frack they should come and talk with us."

Mr Corpus said he had received a letter from the WA government, telling him that he has to leave because he is camped on a stock route. The

Yawuru people are currently considering filing a native-title claim over the stock route.

"There's a dispute. Yawuru haven't made any agreement on how to use the route. We're sure it doesn't extinguish our native title rights and I'm sure our native title rights are being suppressed," he said.

The Yawuru people had their native title recognised over the area in 2006, but it doesn't give the traditional owners the right to say "no" to mining on their land.

"The Government has a gun to our heads and is telling us we can't say no. My response is that this is my country, we can say no, we can say yes, but we'll do it without a gun held to our heads," he said.

Mr Corpus said he had spoken with native title lawyers, who told him there is no veto to mining for native title holders under Australian law.

But he points out that Yawuru law predates Australian law by thousands of years and he doesn't see

why looking after country is trumped by mining interests.

"Responsibility"

"It's the White man's way and I understand that, but I don't agree with it," he said. "I am a traditional owner. This is my country. I have the right and responsibility under traditional law to look after my country."

"Under the *Native Title Act* we have the right to negotiate for an interest in what's under the ground in our land. But we should be able to say no, and control that gate. We should be able to say who should come in and when. And if there is a catastrophic event, we should be able to lock that gate."

"The government gave approval to Buru, saying that there would be little impact on our country. But tampering with our water should be zero tolerance."

"It's not our place as cultural people to pass on dirty water to our children. We were given clean water and we need to pass that on."

Koori Mail ✪

Sweet outcome

Employers in future will be forced to think twice before they callously try to throw injured workers on the scrapheap after the Australia Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) won a landmark damages case for a Victorian member.

The union last week gained final agreement from Cadbury (now Mondelez) to pay Edmund Dziurbas \$231,000 in damages for lost earnings after his dismissal by management at the company's confectionary factory at Ringwood in 2013.

That payment is on top of \$20,000 compensation already awarded to Mr Dziurbas by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for suffering and humiliation from Cadbury's actions.

Mr Dziurbas worked in production at Cadbury for 30 years but in June 2013 he took sick leave to have a hernia operation.

He was feeling fine and ready to return when the management

told him to take extra weeks off, on full pay, before coming back. In October 2013, the bosses called the 63-year-old into work and told him they considered he was no longer fit to do his job, which came as a huge shock to the outdoor enthusiast and regular bushwalker.

Shortly after his dismissal, Mr Dziurbas used a pickaxe to break up a part of his concrete driveway and lay down a pipe, but this failed to convince Cadbury that he was fit and capable to work.

In a decision in Spring, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal found Cadbury had failed to properly assess Mr Dziurbas's condition, what his job actually entailed, or to try to make adjustments to the job that would have made it easier for him to keep working.

The case sets a strong precedent for recently introduced "reasonable adjustments" provisions in discrimination laws. Employers

must properly consider how jobs and workplaces can be modified to accommodate workers with injuries or disabilities.

Mr Dziurbas, who recently turned 65, will receive his payment early in the new year after the AMWU and Mondelez finalised a consent order covering what he is owed for two years in lost earnings, plus his other leave entitlements.

"I knew I was right all along, I was confident I was going to win with the AMWU's help," he said, with his son Bernie interpreting.

"I'm very grateful for all the work the union has done over the past two years; it's been there for me every step of the way."

AMWU state secretary Steve Dargavel said: "Far too often employers take the easy option and sack workers with minor injuries or disabilities."

"This case shows this is not good enough. Workers deserve more." ✪



November 7 Guessing Competition

Results

Our thanks to everyone who entered the contribution.

If you didn't win this time there is always next time!

Congratulations to the following:

1. Niki
2. Jenny P
3. Noel H
4. Elias A

Sellers' Prize: Dorothy

"Change the Story"

White Ribbon Day - November 25

In a statement last week, White Ribbon Australia commended the release of "Change the Story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and children in Australia". This document is an ambitious and vital tool for transformational cultural change. Developed by Our Watch, ANROWS and Vic Health, and involving extensive consultation with and including White Ribbon Australia and others, the framework captures the vital role of engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence against women and their children.

"Change the Story will continue to drive a more holistic and strategic approach to prevention. We are delighted to see its release today" said John Rosewarne, Chair of White Ribbon Australia. "Importantly, the framework highlights that violence against women and their children is preventable and we need concerted action to continue to drive the cultural change needed to put a stop to the violence. It articulates the relationship between violence and gender inequality, echoing the words of Prime Minister and White Ribbon Ambassador Malcolm Turnbull MP: 'Disrespecting women does not always result in violence against women, but all violence against women begins with disrespecting women'."

This has been the focus of White Ribbon's work with the Australian community over the last 12 years. Men and women have worked tirelessly as part of the White Ribbon Campaign to engage and support men and boys to be drivers of the cultural change that is needed to prevent violence against women. The Campaign, with its strong presence in the community including schools, workplaces, sporting codes, recreational and cultural spaces, across all states and territories, is working to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change.

"But experience tells us that violence prevention is more than just words – in order for prevention work to grow and best practice to be better evaluated and shared, it requires an ongoing commitment to funding. Through this shared framework, we look forward to this vitally important

work supported by the appropriate funding it deserves." Rosewarne said.

Cuts to women's services

In 2014 the NSW Baird government launched a new model for funding homelessness and crisis refuges. The new model has led to the closure and drastic restructure of scores of women's services. At a time when domestic violence has been increasing in NSW, there are less adequate places for women seeking refuge, plus chaos and uncertainty through the sector. Rather than telling the truth, the NSW government attacked its critics by claiming they are misleading the public. Don't believe NSW government's lies.

Here are the facts.

Myth: Funding for specialist homelessness services has been increased by \$13 million; a 9.6 per cent increase.

Fact: Funding for specialist homelessness services has not been increased. The government has taken money out of specialist services and granted funding to generalist services.

This means that rather than a service catering specifically to women, children, the Aboriginal community, migrant women, youth, the LGBTIQ community, and their particular needs, money has gone to generalist service providers that lack experience and specialist knowledge working with these groups.

Myth: More people will have access to homelessness services under these changes.

Fact: Access is more than simply a numbers game. Access also involves services appropriate to need. Aside from the fact that outright closures of refuges are taking place (meaning less beds), transfer to Christian management and to a generalist model means that many people will recognise that these services cannot meet their needs and simply won't access them. Many women escaping domestic violence will simply not access a crisis service that houses men.

Evidence has shown that women and kids escaping domestic violence need a specialised service, not a homelessness service. Early reports



from workers in the sector suggest that fewer staff in services are being asked to carry a far heavier caseload. This does not sit well with a system purportedly set up to improve case management and suggests an emphasis on quantity over quality.

Myth: Every single one of the 1,300 government-owned properties will remain open.

Fact: Any service that goes from being independently run and specialist, to Christian run and/or generalist is a closure. While the government-owned properties will technically remain open, 75 per cent are being handed over to consortiums led by the Salvation Army, Uniting Care, Mission Australia, St Vincent de Paul, and other Christian organisations.

All are under pressure to fit a generalist model. The same building being in use doesn't equate to the same service. For example some will change from a 24/7 service to a more minimal staffing level; and 81 pre-existing community organisations have lost their funding or have changed. These organisations had strong links in their local communities which have been lost.

Maria – frontline worker

I am very angry about the closure of 90% of independent women's refuges in NSW at a time when around 50% of the calls for help to the Domestic Violence line couldn't find beds for women and children. As a worker in one of the Inner West refuges and now unemployed I used to love arriving to work at this beautiful old house in the suburbs and be greeted by mums and children in the front garden and to see them safer after some horrendous ordeals. I was able to give them lots of empathy and support.

Before the announcements of the tendering process I knew we were not going to continue to operate because this government's agenda wants to cut services for DV victims, the poor and the disadvantaged. Business is what the government has in mind: everything run for profit; wars are profitable enterprises; they grab resources from other countries. The Women's Refuge Movement was a collective of strong women in operation for over 20 years empowering women. The independent refuges

used to organise state conferences where discussions and resolutions would take place and it was a very inclusive and secular organisation.

Many times last year during the destruction of the organisation I felt intimidated because we were not allowed to speak to the media or to conduct public demonstrations before the announcements, otherwise our entitlements would not have been paid as most refuges work places have less than 15 workers and they could do as they wanted.

These new changes will bring more divisions and segregation. I asked some women with children escaping domestic violence if they would have gone to homeless service sharing with men and their issues of drug and alcohol and women told me they wanted to escape from all that at home. Places with other men will be the last place they will take their kids. Unfortunately the changes are a return to the past with charities taking over the needs of families for the charities' own benefit. The destruction of services is taking us back to our grandmothers' times. It's time to fight for women's rights and services. ☘

Pete's Corner



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Asylum seekers left without food, water

Around 20 asylum seekers in White 2 compound on Christmas Island have been left without enough food or water for more than 24 hours. The asylum seekers were initially in the "protection compound", Gold 2 and locked in when the disturbance broke out late on the Saturday night.

The doors of the compound were unlocked on the Sunday morning when fires were set from outside the compound. The asylum seekers were taken from Gold 2 to Red 2 (the high security unit), where they were held three to a cell with no mattresses.

Around 1am on the Monday morning, prior to police re-entering the detention centre, the detainees were woken and verbally abused by masked Serco guards who ordered them to move from Red 2 to be locked in the basketball court.

They were moved to the basketball court it seems to make room for other detainees who were placed in the high security Red Compound after the police action to re-enter the detention centre.

Early on the Tuesday morning they were moved from the basketball court and placed in White 2 – another high security area. Before the move they were forced to sign consent forms to be strip-searched.

They have had little food or water since they were locked in White 2 on the Monday morning. They were delivered expired beef lasagne that night on the basket-ball court, but no-one ate it.

On Tuesday morning, after being strip-searched, and moved to White 2, they were given just two packets of bread between 20 people; for lunch

they each got a pie and two potatoes (but no water). On Tuesday night they received no food but their first water in over 24 hours – two litres each. They were only allowed to the toilet twice in almost three days.

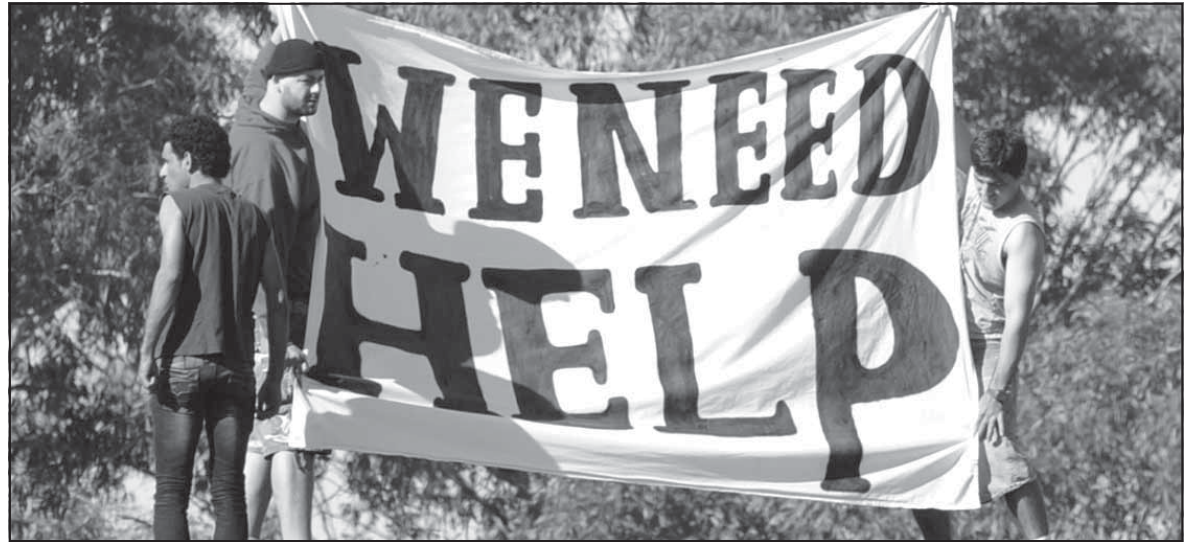
Despite being locked in White 2, there were no guards present in White 2. There has already been one attempted suicide on the Monday night that they were left to try and manage themselves.

"The detainees in White 2 asked me to get help for them," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition. "Why is the government saying the guards are in the detention centre, when it is not true?" they asked.

"More than anything they want water. But the asylum seekers also need justice. They should never have been sent to Christmas Island. There needs to be immediate moves to get all asylum seekers and 501s off Christmas Island as a first step to its total closure. And there needs to be a full inquiry to expose Christmas Island's 'behaviour management regime' that has brutalised all those who were sent there.

"The secrecy with which the government surrounds the detention centres and Serco to violate human rights with impunity. The Minister says that order has been restored to the Christmas Island detention centre, but it is the detainees in White 2 tell who tell us what their 'order' really looks like."

Meanwhile, an Iranian Kurdish refugee, Fazel Chegeni, has died on Christmas Island. The man, in his early 30s, escaped from the North



A roof top protest at the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre, in Sydney's western suburbs, 2011. (Photo: Tracey Nearmy)

West Point detention centre on Friday November 6. Detainees had reported that Fazel was missing.

Detainees in the centre report that police brought the man's body to the detention centre around 9am Christmas Island time, Sunday November 8.

The circumstances of his death are not known. But there was a resident woken around 4am at a house in the Settlement area and the man disappeared down a track known as "The Incline". But it is not known whether this incident is related to Fazel at all.

Fazel arrived in Australia in 2010. He had been found to be a refugee when he was in Curtin detention centre, around two and half years ago. He was unfairly charged with

assault following a fight between detainees at the detention centre. He was later released into the community in Melbourne for a few months but was re-detained in Melbourne even though he was given a good behaviour bond from the assault charge.

He had been in Christmas Island detention for around 10 weeks after being transferred from Wickham Point, Darwin. He had recently been invited by the Minister to make another protection visa application.

At a meeting, detainees were told that Fazel's body was found 'in the jungle' and that he had been dead "for some time". Like so many others, Fazel was suffering the effects of long-term, arbitrary detention. Fazel had attempted suicide when he was in Melbourne;

again when he was in Brisbane, and then again in Wickham Point not long before he was transferred to Christmas Island.

He had told other detainees that he could no longer stand being in detention and just wanted "to go outside".

"This is another needless detention death," said Ian Rintoul. "This time of a refugee who should never have been in detention. His mental health problems were well known. Detention could only exacerbate those problems.

"The delay in processing and releasing him is inexcusable. He is a victim of the punitive detention regime that cares nothing for the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees." ✪

Asbestos awareness month

On Monday November 2, Don Burke OAM, Ambassador for national Asbestos Awareness Month (1-30 November) issued a heartfelt plea to every Australian to make it their business to Get to kNOW Asbestos this NOvember!

Joining the Asbestos Education Committee (AEC), the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute (ADRI) and the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia (ADFA), Don said, "There is no known safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres therefore it's vital that we all learn about the risks of disturbing asbestos, how to identify products and most importantly; how to manage and dispose of asbestos safely.

"The grave concern we share is that without knowing where asbestos might be located in and around homes, and without knowing how to manage it safely, people are playing "Renovation Roulette" and putting their health and the health of families and bystanders at risk if they release asbestos fibres into the air which can be inhaled and cause life-threatening diseases.

"We know that at least 1 in 3 Australian homes contain asbestos in some form or another and with the popularity of renovation programs rising, inspiring a boom in

home renovations, homeowners, renovators, tradies and handymen must make it their business to Get to kNOW Asbestos this NOvember by visiting asbestosawareness.com.au to protect themselves and families from dangerous asbestos fibres," Don said.

Peter Dunphy, Chair of the Asbestos Education Committee heading the national Asbestos Awareness Month campaign said, "Because Australia was among the highest consumers of asbestos products in the world, asbestos-containing materials are common in homes built or renovated before 1987 with a broad range of products still commonly found in and around brick, weatherboard, fibro and clad homes.

"People would be surprised at where they might find the hidden danger of asbestos. It could be anywhere! Under floor coverings such as carpets, linoleum and vinyl tiles, behind wall and floor tiles, in cement floors, internal and external walls, ceilings and ceiling space (insulation), eaves, garages, roofs, around hot water pipes, fences, extensions to homes, garages, outdoor toilets, backyard and farm sheds, chook sheds and even dog kennels.

"By visiting asbestosawareness.com.au people will be able to take the 20 Point Safety Check and easily search to identify the sorts of products to look for, the locations of where they might be found and learn how to manage and dispose of asbestos safely," he said.

Barry Robson, President of the ADEFA and long-time campaigner and advocate for workers and families affected by asbestos-related diseases said, "Renovators risk exposing themselves and families to asbestos fibres if they don't know where asbestos might be in their homes.

"Tradespeople are particularly vulnerable as they can come into contact with asbestos-containing materials on the job every day so they must be doubly aware of where it might be and what to do to prevent releasing fibres that can be inhaled.

"When it comes to asbestos, don't play Renovation Roulette! Don't cut it! Don't drill it! Don't drop it! Don't sand it! Don't saw it! Don't scrape it! Don't scrub it! Don't dismantle it! Don't tip it! Don't waterblast it! Don't demolish it! And whatever you do ... Don't dump it!" ✪

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Write a letter to the Editor

Film review by Peter Mac with K Green

Suffragette

In the early 20th century the long-running struggle to gain parliamentary voting rights for British women gave rise to the formation of the Women's Social and Political Union, led by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia. The organisation, whose members were derisively described as "suffragettes", adopted civil disobedience as a tactic to publicise and gain support for their cause.

The suffragettes have been depicted as violent, eccentric and deeply misguided, but they played a crucial role in gaining the vote for women in Britain, which in turn had a major influence on the struggle for universal suffrage in other countries.

They certainly adopted violent tactics, but as the BBC film *Suffragette* makes clear, their experience convinced them they had no other choice. The earnest requests for suffrage, made repeatedly by women's rights campaigners throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, were inevitably met with polite but disdainful refusals.

Moreover, the suffragettes' civil disobedience campaign was not intended to inflict physical injury on persons, but rather to attack the property of the state, or of organisations or individuals who opposed women's suffrage. The suffragettes chained themselves to iron railings, bombed letter boxes and broke windows, but they adamantly opposed physical violence against individuals. At one stage they bombed the summer home of then Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, but only in his absence.

Indeed, the personal violence that accompanied the struggle for women's suffrage was overwhelmingly directed at the women themselves rather than being carried out by them.

The violence included vicious beating and sexual molestation by police officers arresting women demonstrators. The suffragettes organised squads of women trained in jujitsu to inhibit police attempting to arrest leaders of the suffrage movement.

After 1909, imprisoned suffragettes began a series of hunger strikes in a campaign to gain formal recognition as political prisoners.

At first the government released seriously malnourished prisoners. However, as more prisoners went on strike, the government resorted

to the excruciating practice of force-feeding. This involved several guards holding down the prisoner, forcing a rubber tube down into her stomach through her nose or mouth, pouring in liquid food and then pulling out the tube prior to carrying out the same procedure at the next meal time. Occasionally the liquid entered the lungs rather than the stomach.

The suffragette martyr Emily Davison endured this torture, which invited comparison with mass rape, an unbelievable 49 times without submitting. Working class suffragettes were said to have been subjected to the procedure more often than wealthier women, but the practice was universal.

In 1910 the government made concessions that ended most of the hunger strikes, but they recommenced in 1912 after the imprisonment of Emmeline Pankhurst. To avoid deaths in custody, the government then passed the *Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Act* (soon nicknamed "the cat and mouse act"), under which women who became seriously ill as a result of hunger striking were allowed to return home, only to be returned to prison to complete their sentences when they recovered.

Suffragette examines British women's struggle for the vote in the years 1911 to 1913, through the eyes of the fictional character Maud Watts, a young working class woman employed in an appalling Dickensian laundry who becomes deeply involved in the suffrage movement despite her misgivings.

Maud's political consciousness develops, but she pays a terrible price, losing her marriage and contact with her son, as well as suffering imprisonment.

The film climaxes in 1913, the year Emily Davison threw herself in front of King George V's horse at the Epsom Derby race meeting and was trampled to death. The tide of public opinion subsequently began to turn in favour of suffrage for women, and thousands watched or marched in Davison's funeral procession.

During the War most suffragettes ceased civil disobedience and organised activities in support of the soldiers. In 1918 all British men over 21 were finally allowed to vote, but for women the franchise was restricted to those over 30 who had university degrees or owned property, or whose



Anne-Marie Duff, Carey Mulligan, Helena Bonham Carter and Romola Garai in a scene outside of Parliament House.

husbands had property. Suffrage for all women over 21 was not gained for another ten years.

The film is very important because it examines not only the struggle of women to gain the vote, but also other areas of discrimination and abuse in the home and workplace. As the film points out, it was not until 1925 that British women won the right to custody of their children after marriage breakdown. The appalling working conditions and sexual abuse of female employees at the laundry depicted in *Suffragette* was typical of many 19th and early 20th century British workplaces.

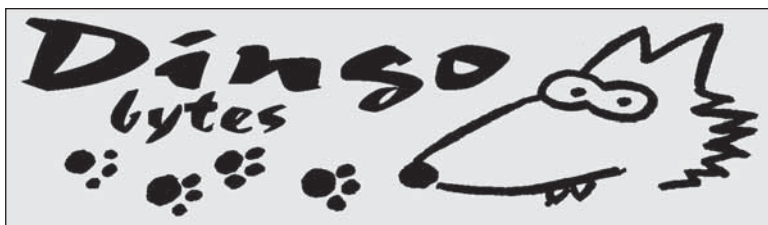
The film is not without faults. It provides a fascinating series of dates when votes for women were granted in various countries (in New Zealand in 1893, in France in 1945, and in Switzerland in 1971). However, it fails to mention that women were first granted suffrage in Pitcairn Island and then Norfolk Island in the 1860s. The Australian government granted it in 1908, but not for aboriginal women. As the film notes, the US federal government granted all women the vote in 1920, but because of intimidation and state laws neither black women nor black men voted in the southern states until the 1960s, after the civil rights campaigns.

The film's story is presented in simple chronological sequence, with no flashbacks. One reviewer described it with an astonishingly bitchy sneer as "a movie of stultifying, spell-it-all-out conventionality", and a "three Panky melodrama", but nothing could be further from the truth.

This gripping and deeply moving film sheds a much-needed light on the historical struggle for a political right which most people in developed nations like Australia and Britain now take for granted, and which forms just one element in the vast global matrix of campaigns for human rights.

The film has great performances from Carey Mulligan as Maud, Meryl Streep in a two-minute cameo as Emmeline Pankhurst, and Helena Bonham-Carter as Edith Elyn, a fictional character based on the suffragette Edith Garrud. (Ms. Bonham-Carter's great-grandfather, HH Asquith, was British Prime Minister from 1908-1916 and opposed the granting of suffrage to women)

Suffragette, now showing in Sydney and other capital cities, is well worth seeing. ✪



Army Chief Angus Campbell admitted in a recent interview that Australia will be involved in Iraq "for a little while yet". Australia has more than 300 regular army troops there, training local forces as well as about 80 commandoes. He said that the mission could evolve as it has in Afghanistan. It's been 14 years since Australian troops were sent to Afghanistan and in both countries the military intervention had destabilised the whole region. Millions of refugees with nowhere to go, destroyed industries and infrastructure, looted cultural treasures, traumatised populations with no foreseeable future – all this thanks to the illegal wars. It is believed that the number of veterans suiciding in the USA has already exceeded the losses during the armed conflict. Many veterans in Australia cannot get the support they need and have to deal or fail to deal with their own war-induced problems. Now General Campbell states that Australia's military must be ready to fight large-scale conventional land wars across the world. Last time I had a look at the map I could not see any country that Australia has a land border with. Isn't it time to learn from deadly mistakes and make sure that Australia is not involved in the military adventures of other countries?

The recent International Mining and Resources Conference in Melbourne heard gloomy forecasts about the future of mineral commodity prices. According to economist Saul Eslake "Australia needs to broaden and deepen its economic development with Asia if it is to prosper from the next phase of Asian economic and social development. That means we need to increase our exports of agricultural commodities and services as well as maintain or improve our market share in minerals and energy commodities," he said. The number of Australians employed in the mining sector has fallen by 50,000 since it peaked in 2012. It is estimated that about 230,000 Australians are now employed in the mining industry but it is expected that that number will decline by a further 40,000 in the next two years.

The Victorian government has banned public schools from offering religious instruction during school class time. It is allowed to run classes before or after school or during lunch breaks. A major provider of special religious instruction (SRI) is Access Ministries. Seeing that lucrative business is slipping away, Access Ministries has zoomed into a new market – childcare. Tooth Fairy and Santa Clause will have to compete with another imaginary creature. Access Ministries is planning to expand into childcare centres and kindergartens. Parents can opt their children out of a religious instruction program called "Explore Christianity". Some parents question the fact that only one religion is taught and prefer their children to be instructed in ethics. Wouldn't it be a novel approach to start children in science in kindergartens?



Meryl Streep in a two-minute cameo as Emmeline Pankhurst.

Veteran Day hypocrisy

Stephen Lendman

Some people confuse Veterans Day with Memorial Day. They're both federal holidays. The latter remembers combat related dead service personnel.

The former honours war and peacetime veterans. It largely thanks living ones. It does so disingenuously.

Veterans Day was formerly Armistice Day. It commemorates the war to end all wars. In 1918, guns on both sides largely fell silent. They did so on the 11th hour of the 11th day of 11th month.

In 1919, remembrance began. Woodrow Wilson proclaimed it, saying:

"To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations."

In 1938, Congress declared Armistice Day a legal holiday. It called it "a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as 'Armistice Day'."

In 1954, Congress changed its name. Dwight Eisenhower endorsed it. He signed legislation designating November 11 henceforth as Veterans Day.

He issued a presidential order. It called on VA officials to form a Veterans Day National Committee. It mandated them to organise and oversee a national remembrance day.

Parades and public ceremonies commemorate it. They ignore what's most important. They glorify wars. America doesn't wage them for peace. Washington considers it abhorrent.

Veterans Day dishonours living and dead veterans. It ignores longstanding US imperial lawlessness. It airbrushes from history decades of what matters most.

It includes militarism, raw aggression, permanent wars on humanity, mass killing and destruction, exploiting resources and people, seeking unchallenged global dominance, and creating unspeakable human misery.

Depravity defines America's agenda. War is a national obsession. It's a longstanding addiction.

It's got nothing to do with national security. It's not about making the world safe for democracy. Americans are systematically lied to. Young men and women are enlisted on false pretences.

Propaganda glorifies wars in the name of peace. Patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels.

Nations are destroyed to liberate them. Plunder is called economic development. Imperial lawlessness is called humanitarian intervention.

Ruthless dominance is called democracy. Monied interests alone benefit. Making the world safe for banksters and other corporate crooks matters most.

Youths are cannon fodder. They're used, abused and ignored. America's imperial appetite is insatiable. One war follows others. Nations are ravaged and destroyed one at a time or in multiples.

Veterans Day should condemn wars. It should feature ways to end them. It should prioritise never again. It should expose America's real agenda.

It should remember Lincoln at Gettysburg, saying:

"We here resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

War raged months longer. Ending one leads to others. A destructive cycle of violence continues.

Remembrance should be contrition. It should pledge peace. It should honour anti-war activism. It should turn swords into ploughshares.

It should back rhetoric with policy. It should combine Veterans and Memorial Days. It should change them to Peace Day. It should pledge never again and mean it.

On November 9, Obama's weekly address ignored what matters most. He didn't surprise. He lied like he always does. He's a serial liar.

He began saying "thank you to that greatest generation who fought island by island across the Pacific, and freed millions from fascism in Europe."

"Thank you to the heroes who risked everything through the bitter cold of Korea and the stifling heat of Vietnam."

"And thank you to all the heroes who have served since, most recently our 9/11 Generation of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan."

He failed to say Korea, Vietnam, and all other US post-WW II wars were lawless. They were premeditated aggression.

They're responsible for crimes of war, against humanity, genocide, and unspeakable human suffering.

No one involved in them has reason to be proud. Past and present administration and Pentagon officials are war criminals. So are complicit congressional members and bureaucrats.

Obama claimed his "top priority" is assuring veterans "never have to fight for a job when (they) come home."



He "made sure" it wouldn't happen, he said. He lied. Unemployment is at Depression era levels.

Labour Department figures are manipulated. They're fake. Most jobs created don't pay enough to live on. Millions struggle to get by. So do vets.

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans estimates around 63,000 homeless veterans on any given night.

Over the course of a year, it says, double that number experience homelessness. Numbers are increasing, it adds.

Uncaring government officials bear full responsibility. Services provided are meagre at best. Nothing is done to address unemployment.

US resources go for war. Helping returning vets doesn't matter. They're replaced with new recruits sent off to fight. They're lied to about reasons why. They're largely ignored on returning home.

A previous article addressed record numbers of US military and veterans suicides. Most people don't know. Little gets reported.

Obama ignores it. He's preoccupied with waging wars. He's got others in mind. He's mindless about shocking numbers of active duty personnel and vets taking their own lives.

Unbearable emotional pain consumes them. Daily trauma builds. So does intolerable stress. Relief is desperately sought. Suicide is chosen. It's a last option. Others were exhausted.

Daily stress is bad enough. Combat exacerbates it. It's intolerable for many. America consumes its own.

Epidemic post traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD) levels affect hundreds of thousands of combat forces and vets.

Official numbers understate the problem. It's huge. Independent reports say up to half of Afghan and Iraq vets have emotional and/or physical combat injuries.

They'll never be the same again. They're traumatised. Many can't cope. Their suffering goes largely unnoticed. Many needing help don't get it.

Left untreated, things worsen. Able-bodied youths become physically and emotionally crippled. War is hell and then some.

Horrible flashbacks persist. PTSD prevents normal functioning. Artificial limbs aren't like nature's.

Damaged emotions aren't made whole. Broken psyches aren't easily repaired. Shattered lives stay that way. Shocking suicide numbers explain best.

So do numbers in poverty, unemployment, homelessness, hunger, and left on their own. Despair defines their condition.

They suffer out of sight and mind. They die the same way. America treats its own with disdain.

Countless numbers of vets are at risk. Suicide levels may increase. Advancing America's imperium matters most.

All federal holidays reflect hypocrisy. Commemorations hide vital truths. America's dark side stays out of sight and mind.

All politicians lie. Obama exceeds the worst of others. He prioritises war on humanity and then some. He sanitises his real agenda. Don't expect him to explain.

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US gambling on war with Russia in

Finian Cunningham

As US Secretary of State John Kerry convened with diplomats from Russia and other nations for a second round of political talks on the Syrian conflict in Vienna the weekend before last, it was becoming clear that Washington was gambling on a two-prong strategy. But the US gamble carries a grave risk of blowing up into a war with Russia.

The *New York Times* reported, "For the first time in the four-year Syrian civil war, President Obama is beginning to execute a combined diplomatic and military approach to force President Bashar al-Assad to leave office and end the carnage".

Forcing Syria's leader Assad "to leave office" is the key objective. That is, regime change. While "ending the carnage" is only a bit of public relations window-dressing.

The *New York Times* explains further what this combined diplomatic and military approach entails. "As 50 Special Operations [American] troops arrive in Syria to

bolster the most effective opposition groups, the [Obama] administration is gambling that Secretary of State John Kerry will have more leverage to push Russia, Iran and other players toward two objectives: a cease-fire to limit the cycle of killing and the establishment of a timeline for a transition of power".

When Kerry met his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov in Vienna earlier, along with diplomats from 18 other states, that summit came with the surprise announcement by Washington that it was planning to send 50 special forces troops into Syria. Kerry said then that the move was merely "a coincidence". We know now, from the above *New York Times* report last week that Kerry was either dissembling or out of the loop, because the military decision is reportedly part of a "combined approach".

Furthermore, Ashton Carter, the US Secretary of Defence, said the weekend before last that it was likely that more American troops would be sent into Syria.

What other military leverage is being contemplated? This week, Turkey's President

Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that a joint ground force was being prepared to set up "safe zones" within Syria. Erdogan said he had discussed this contingency with Obama in a phone call. Of course, Erdogan couched the planned invasion of Syria as a measure to counter the extremist Islamic State group (also known as ISIS, ISIL).

Again, that is just public relations window-dressing since Erdogan's Turkey has been a main sponsor and facilitator of extremist groups infiltrating Syria from Turkish territory.

Erdogan said: "We are insisting on a no-fly zone in Syria as a safe zone. Our allies are getting closer to the idea. Some progress has also been made on conducting a ground operation against ISIL ... Yesterday [Monday, November 9], I had a phone conversation with US President Barack Obama on the issue".

The idea of annexing Syrian territory has long been pushed by Turkey since the beginning of the Syrian conflict more than four years ago. Hawkish pundits and politicians in Washington have also been advocating safe

zones or no-fly zones in Syria. But up to now, the Obama administration has balked at that intervention owing to perceived military risks of large-scale commitment.

According to Erdogan, the White House seems to be finally warming to the idea of annexing Syrian territory. That concurs with the apparent U-turn by the Obama administration to put boots on the ground with the dispatch of special forces and the promise of more troops, as indicated by Carter. The stated purpose of these troops being sent to organise anti-IS local forces among Kurdish and Syrian Arab does not hold water. A recent report by the *New York Times* admitted that this local Kurd-Arab coalition was an American "invention" that "existed in name only".

Besides, such a US-supported ground coalition that bolstered Kurdish militia and their aspirations for a separatist state on the southern Turkish border would be anathema to the Erdogan regime in Ankara.

That Washington is now calculating on throwing its weight behind the Turkish plan to carve out Syrian territory may also account

Another barking mad anti-Russian story

Finian Cunningham

When Western news media react in unison to purvey some negative story about Russia – as they have done again this week – it has the telltale hallmark of a Pavlovian response. Somebody rings a bell and suddenly the Western media are salivating like well-trained hounds.

This week the “story” was of alleged systematic drug abuse in Russia’s sports. And the Western media are full of howling headlines impugning Russia for running a “state-sponsored” doping program among its athletes.

The unverified findings have swiftly led to predictable calls for the Russian authorities to be sanctioned and even for its athletes to be banned from next year’s Olympic Games in Brazil.

This is trial-by-media with an unmistakable political agenda. A veritable show trial by the Western media based on no evidence, stacked up on allegations and prejudice.

Ironically, the response has the quality of knee-jerk inquisition that the West accused Russia of conducting during the rule of Josef Stalin in the former Soviet Union.

By the now the Western formula of running media show trials against Russia is becoming rather clichéd. Over the past year, we saw it applied in the downing of the Malaysian MH17 airliner over Ukraine in 2014, when Western media leapt in unison to level all sorts of allegations to impute Russia as having some dastardly hand in that disaster.

We saw the same formula over the Ukraine crisis generally, when Russia was roundly condemned for subverting that country and “annexing” Crimea. We see it again with regard to rampant allegations of Russian “aggression” towards NATO in Eastern Europe. And the same formula is being applied now in Syria, accusing Russia’s (lawful) military intervention in that country as “propping up a dictator” and targeting civilians and “moderate rebels”.

Virtually, anything that Russia does now is subject to allegations of malign intent. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia is “destabilising the international order” – as US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter charged last weekend – again without the slightest shred of evidence. Allegations brandished, based on bombast and assertions.

That painting of Russia as a Cold War villain worthy of a corny James Bond movie script is then invoked to justify a panoply of Western

economic sanctions against Moscow. It is used to justify a massive military build up by Washington and its NATO allies across Europe – the latest being the Trident manoeuvres.

Russia is bad, evil, sinister, threatening, so the assertion goes. The so-called Free World is once again in danger from the Slavic superpower and only Washington and its NATO allies are capable of “protecting the world”. This is the brainwashing formula that was relentlessly injected into the Western public mind during the old Cold War – now being applied again 25 years after it officially ended. The mass injecting of minds with poisonous prejudice and ulterior political motives should be the real doping scandal.

But alas, this week the usual Western media orderlies were administering the propaganda dope again. CNN, the *New York Times*, BBC, the *UK Guardian* and *France 24* were among the Western media outlets highlighting yet another transgression by the “evil” Russians.

The *Washington Post* headlined: “Top Russian athletes participated in systemic, state-sponsored doping”. While Britain’s *Independent* and *Bloomberg* ran calls for Russia to be “banned from the 2016 Olympics”.

The whole media chorus was based on a report from the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). The agency is a non-governmental organisation headquartered in Montreal, Canada. It is associated with the International Olympic Committee, but it is a private organisation with no legal foundation to “clean up athletics” as its mission statement contends. Interestingly, WADA announced earlier this year in March that it received US\$6.5 million in funding from various governments, including the US. Russia was not among its benefactors.

WADA’s investigation into allegations of doping in Russian sports followed a media report at the end of 2014 carried out by German TV company ARD in conjunction with Britain’s *Sunday Times*. The latter publication is a notorious conduit for Western intelligence.

Russian government and sporting authorities have this week dismissed the accusations as “groundless” and of being issued without any “verifiable evidence”. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: “We can’t comment on allegations when no evidence has been presented.”

That means that the Western media commotion this week alleging Russian state-sponsored drug dealing in sports is based on a questionable media source and conducted by a



Lance Armstrong – an American former professional road racing cyclist stripped of victories in 2012 after a protracted doping scandal.

private organisation which has no governmental, international legal foundation. But based on all that, in turn, are now calls for sanctions against Russia and its athletes.

The story becomes even more ludicrous when we survey the global nature of drugs and illicit performance-enhancing chemicals in sports. Almost every country has been implicated in the abuse of drugs by athletes.

None more so than the United States. Think of some of the most famous and later disgraced stars of international sports: Marion Jones, Tim Montgomery, Carl Lewis. All of those mentioned are American and some have been stripped of their Olympic medals.

The US-based *Huffington Post* published an article last year, entitled “Drugs and the Olympics go way back”, in which it noted that the two biggest offending countries for illegal doping were the United States and Russia.

The problem of illicit drugs in competitive sports has been around for centuries and no nation is free from the vice. It is, sadly, a global problem, requiring a genuinely global solution.

But what is unacceptable is the selective focus by a self-appointed Western-led watchdog, WADA, on allegations of sporting violations in one country – Russia. What is required is an internationally standardised organisation under the remit of the Olympic body to apply verifiable strictures in all countries.

This week, Russia is unfairly and unscientifically being singled out by a Western media campaign, a self-serving campaign from start to finish. It is patently following a political agenda set by Washington and its Western allies to go after Russia, to discredit and vilify, and then suitably slap sanctions on.

Just like selective allegations of financial corruption at FIFA, the world football federation, the purpose is to undermine Russia, and in the latter case to detract from its hosting of the 2018 World Cup finals. Notably, British Conservative Party member Lord Sebastian Coe, who heads the International Athletics Association Federation, is among the outspoken voices calling for sanctions against Russia. Coe was also on Britain’s World Cup bidding team that lost out to Russia for the 2018 tournament.

As noted above, there is a long list of other international issues in which the Western media are acting like a pack of well-trained, obedient hounds.

Just give them a whiff of some other “story” against Russia and off they go, barking and snarling. Ivan Pavlov, the Nobel-winning Russian scientist famed for his work on psychological conditioning, must be having a good old laugh in his heavenly abode.

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Syria

for the recent assignment of US F-15 fighter jets to Turkey’s southwest Incirlik NATO base. As other observers have noted, the F-15s are air-to-air combat planes. They would have no role in launching ground attacks supposedly against Islamic State militants. But the fighter jets would have a role in patrolling the skies over the would-be safe zones annexed by Turkish and US ground forces. That would inevitably pit these US warplanes against Syrian and Russian aircraft.

Meanwhile, in southern Syria the Israelis appear to consulting with the Obama administration over their own annexation plans. The *Times of Israel* reported that during his White House meeting with Obama last week, Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu raised the issue of formally annexing the Golan Heights. The territory has been held by Israel since the 1967 war. Obama reportedly did not mention the matter publicly, but Netanyahu made it clear that he is looking for formal US recognition of Israel’s annexation, according to the *Times of Israel* report.

Note that this de facto break-up of Syrian

territory, in the north and south, is officially contrary to what John Kerry said at the first Vienna summit two weeks ago. Kerry appeared then to agree with Russia’s position that Syria should remain a unified state. However, as argued here, the erosion of Syrian sovereign territory by Turkey and Israel, with US support, appears to be part of the military leverage that Washington is seeking to exert on Russia in order for Moscow to accede to American demands for political transition in Damascus.

Washington’s plans for increasing military leverage in Syria does not end there. There are credible reports that the US is stepping up its supply of greater fire power to the various militant networks. In addition to anti-tank TOW missiles, Washington appears to be moving towards giving the go-ahead for the supply of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). This has long been a request from Saudi Arabia and Turkey, but as with the idea of no-fly zones the Obama administration has reportedly up to now held back on SAMs. The Saudis have been threatening, according to the BBC,

to unleash their US stocks to the mercenaries in Syria ever since Russia embarked on its military air campaign to support the Assad government.

The *Wall Street Journal*, quoting US officials, reports: “In the past month of intensifying Russian air strikes, the CIA and its partners have increased the flow of military supplies to rebels in northern Syria, including of US-made TOW anti-tank missiles ... In addition to the arms the US has agreed to provide, Saudi and Turkish officials have renewed talks with their American counterparts about allowing limited supplies of shoulder-fire man-portable air-defence systems, or Manpads, to select rebels. Those weapons could help target regime aircraft, in particular those responsible for dropping barrel bombs, and could also help keep Russian air power at bay, the [US] officials said”.

The *Wall Street Journal* quotes its US official source further: “Assad is not going to feel any pressure to make concessions if there is no viable opposition that has the capacity,

through the support of its partners, to put pressure on his regime”.

Obama has said, publicly at least, that he has no intention for the US to become embroiled in a proxy war with Russia in Syria. But Obama’s words on other issues do not carry much credibility. He is putting American boots on the ground after vowing not to do so previously. And his avowed commitments to maintaining the territorial integrity of Syria also appear now to be unwinding, as Turkish and Israeli moves to annex northern and southern areas suggest.

The two-prong US strategy of combining diplomatic and military levers to effect its objective of regime change in Syria may not be contemplating a proxy war with Russia – at least as far as Obama and Kerry are concerned. But the hawks in the Pentagon and the CIA, along with the Saudi and Turkish client regimes, seem to be willing to push the risk of a two-prong vice to its logical conclusion – a war with Russia in Syria.

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Blowback or false flag?

Stephen Lendman

Multiple likely well-planned Friday night attacks in Paris had a disturbing aroma to them – including France’s knee-jerk police state reaction. Here’s what happened.

At least seven apparently well-coordinated attacks occurred, gunmen with automatic weapons and suicide belts killing over 150 victims. Many others were injured. Stade de France stadium was struck during a football (soccer) match between France and Germany.

So was the Bataclan theatre during a concert, restaurants full of patrons, a cinema, and pedestrians on Bichat Street, the Avenue de la République and Boulevard Beaumarchais.

Reports indicated other Paris locations were attacked, including the Forum des Halles shopping area attracting an estimated 150,000 daily visitors.

The predictable aftermath so far includes French President François Hollande declaring a state of emergency – effectively suspending constitutional rights under martial law.

“Two decisions will be taken,” Hollande announced. “The state of emergency will be decreed, which means several places will be closed off, and traffic will be limited in certain areas.”

“The state of emergency will apply across the country. The second decision I have taken is to close the borders, so that the people who have committed these crimes can be apprehended.

“We know where this attack came from. We must show compassion and solidarity, but we must also show we are united. There is much to fear, but we must face these fears as a nation that knows how to muster its forces and will confront the terrorists.”

Heavily armed French soldiers were deployed around key Parisian

locations. Five metro lines were shut. Only airport flights were suspended. All city schools and universities were closed.

De facto martial law legitimises repressive police state powers. Constitutional protections are suspended. Following the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, a no-fly zone was ordered over a 3.5 mile radius of the incident.

Swat teams conducted pre-dawn raids throughout the greater area. Residents were terrorised. Helicopters patrolled overhead. Police and FBI operatives were everywhere. Managed news misinformation substituted for accurate reporting.

Post-9/11, President George W Bush claimed unconstitutional “unitary executive” authority to govern extrajudicially in the name of national security.

He declared (phoney) war on terror and hot war on Afghanistan. Iraq, Libya, Syria, Donbass and Yemen followed. Police state laws were enacted – still in force. Repressive National Security and Homeland Security Presidential Directives were announced.

Hollande cancelled his G-20 summit participation, scheduled for November 15 and 16 in Turkey. It’s unclear if Obama will attend. The world’s leading perpetrator of state terrorism offered France “full support,” duplicitously saying America shares the bonds of “liberté, égalité and fraternité.”

US post-9/11 knee-jerk reaction blamed bin Laden and Al-Qaeda for the attack – the mother of all Big Lies, we now know.

ISIS was automatically blamed for the Paris attacks – despite no evidence so far establishing responsibility. Official statements, actions and media hype created an atmosphere of fear, a likely public willingness to sacrifice freedom for so-called security, a rationale for harsh measures to try stemming the human refugee



flood caused by US-led imperial wars, and a desire for revenge.

Perhaps the stage is set for escalated Western wars of terror instead of unity to battle the scourge of ISIS and likeminded groups. Were Friday’s attacks state-sponsored terrorism – a carefully staged false flag for whatever may follow?

Friday Paris attacks were either blowback for Western wars on Islam or a state-sponsored false flag. Odds strongly favour the latter. Western history of false flags for subsequent planned events suggests it.

On September 20, 2001, George Bush lied to Congress and the public, claiming America was attacked

because we are “a beacon of freedom. The attackers were evil. This is civilization’s fight.” He suppressed Washington’s direct responsibility for what happened, perhaps complicit with Israel’s Mossad.

The aftermath of 9/11 is clear – endless US-led imperial wars, a phoney Global War on Terrorism, an assault on fundamental human and civil rights, police state harshness replacing them, an America unfit to live in.

Will France and other European countries become more belligerent and repressive than already in response to Friday’s incident?

Were Washington and perhaps

Israel’s dirty hands involved in what happened?

Daesh (ISIS/ISIL/IS) is such an easy target to blame. It’s simple getting most people to believe it unquestionably.

The Big Lie repeated often enough works the same way every time. ISIS is the new “Enemy Number One.” Its creation by Washington and use as proxy foot soldiers is suppressed.

Was Friday’s Paris incident a prelude to something similar planned for New York, Washington, and/or other US cities?

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Anti-fascist conference in Athens

Bill O’Brien

A conference on the rise of fascism in the Ukraine took place last month in October in Athens. Representatives from many countries took part in this large event: Estonia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, and Sweden. Also among the invited participants were the representatives of the Donetsk People’s Republic and non-governmental movements and other organisations from Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia, and Turkey. The conference was called by the International Anti-Fascist Committee.

The Foreign Minister of the Donetsk People’s Republic, Svetlana Kochetova, gave a detailed report to the conference, pointing out that they were not trying to break from the Ukraine but trying to maintain their national integrity after the fascist coup that took place in Kiev.

She gave graphic details of the deaths and destruction taking place in the Donbass province. Since the beginning of the conflict 5,061 people have been killed, among them 72 children and 306 more wounded. Damage to infrastructure has been enormous, with 4,472 houses destroyed as well as

50 health service buildings, schools, bus stations, and the airport.

Kochetova pointed out that misinformation given in the Western media is the biggest obstacle to truth. This conflict is portrayed as a clash between two rival powers: NATO and the EU on the one hand and Russia on the other. She accepted that they received support from Russia but pointed out that they are an independent people’s republic. She informed us that volunteers from other European countries, including Italy and Spain, as well as countries to the east of them, are fighting alongside them as volunteers. There is an international brigade operating there at the moment.

Donbass has stopped fascism from spreading to the rest of Ukraine and to other countries in eastern Europe. It has allowed a breathing-space for proper analysis of what exactly is happening in this region. Kochetova pointed out that they are more aware about fascism than most Europeans, as the region took a lead in the struggle against fascism and suffered greatly during the Second World War.

Ireland was represented at the conference by four delegates, some of whom are involved with solidarity work and others in collecting humanitarian aid that is sent

to Donbass. All the Irish delegates gave detailed individual reports of their work, which was greatly appreciated by the conference.

It was agreed to set up committees in our respective countries to publicise the position of the anti-fascists in Donbass and the danger of fascism spreading to the rest of Europe. A demonstration will be held at the US Air Force base on the Greek island of Crete on May 9 next year, and it is hoped to have another one in Shannon and one in Germany. The emphasis of these demonstrations will be on anti-fascism and the danger that is imminent.

It was agreed that unity among anti-fascist forces was essential and that other ideological differences should be set aside in this struggle.

The People’s Republic of Donetsk is a socialist republic, established by coalminers and truck-drivers, with the help of other workers, and is very much under workers’ control. These people are putting up a tremendous fight, a fight that may spread to other countries before long.

Solidarity must be absolute, and the need for a support group in Ireland is urgent.

Communist Party of Ireland ✪



Kiev to allow foreign armed forces in Ukraine

The Ukrainian parliament has adopted amendments to state law allowing “admission of the armed forces of other states on the territory of Ukraine.” The possible hosting of foreign weapons of mass destruction is also mentioned in the documents.

Amendments to Ukrainian law were adopted by the Verkhovna Rada, receiving a majority of 240 votes (the required minimum being 226). The bill was submitted to the parliament in May by PM Arseny Yatsenyuk. It focuses on the provision of “international peacekeeping and security” assistance to Ukraine at its request.

Peacekeeping missions are to be deployed “on the basis of decision of the UN and/or the EU,” the bill published on the parliament’s official website says.

Previously, the presence of any international military forces on the territory of Ukraine not specifically sanctioned by state law was only possible by adopting a special law initiated by the president. Implementation of the new amendments “will create necessary conditions for deployment on the territory of Ukraine international peacekeeping and security” missions without the need for additional legal authorisation, the explanatory note to the draft bill said.

The presence of such armed forces in Ukraine “should ensure an early normalisation of situation” in Donbass, the note added, saying that they would help “restore law and order and life, constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens” in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions.

In a comparative table,

published among the accompanying documents to the bill, “potential carriers of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction are permitted under international agreement with Ukraine for short-term accommodation,” with Kiev providing proper control during the period that such forces were stationed there.

Implementation of the law “will not require additional expenditures from the State Budget of Ukraine,” its documents say.

The previous law also required that the length of time temporary peacekeeping forces were to be deployed in Ukraine be stipulated, while the new amendments allow an indefinite period, long enough “to achieve the goal of the stay.”

A separate amendment banned the presence of “armed forces of states that unleash military aggression against Ukraine.” This appears to be a clear reference to the Rada’s January statement calling Russia an “aggressor” – although the body has been reluctant to approve a legally binding law saying exactly that.

Moscow denies being part of the conflict, stressing that Kiev is fighting a civil war with eastern Ukrainians, not Russian forces. The Kremlin has consistently and adamantly denied any presence of Russian troops or hardware in eastern Ukraine, pointing out that there is no evidence proving otherwise.

With violence in south-eastern Ukraine on the rise again, it is “very important to avoid any actions or steps that provoke escalation of tension,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, as quoted by RIA Novosti press. Saying that

there is “no shortage” of provocative actions from Kiev’s side, Peskov said the main point is “to concentrate on implementation of [Minsk] agreements.”

“This is what Moscow expects the most,” he added.

The new bill on international peacekeeping missions in Ukraine contradicts the Minsk agreements, Russian State Duma MP Leonid Slutsky said.

The new legal act is “doomed for inaction,” a member of the Russian Duma’s defence committee, Franz Klintsevich, said, adding that the bill is “pure PR and propaganda. I cannot simulate a situation in which the United Nations will vote to deploy international military to Ukraine,” Klintsevich told journalists, as cited by RIA Novosti.

The Lugansk People’s Republic’s envoy to the so-called Contact Group on Ukraine in Minsk, Vladislav Dainego, commented that the law was adopted to “justify the presence” of foreign military that are “already operating in Ukraine.” “There are some 20,000 [troops], primarily from Hungary and Poland,” Dainego claimed when speaking to Interfax, adding that the status of those forces was unclear.

Kiev came up with the initiative to employ peacekeeping missions in Donbass earlier this year. Moscow has insisted that deployment of such forces in Ukraine would be relevant only after all points of the Minsk agreement have been fully implemented, and only if both sides of the conflict – Kiev and the rebel republics – agree to the measure.

RT ✪



US and Ukrainian troops during military exercises in Ukraine.



Region Briefs

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) Foreign Ministry spokesman said that the recent US-South Korean naval exercise was an open challenge to the DPRK’s proposal for a peace treaty with the US. With the objective of reducing tensions and building a long-lasting peace in the region, DPRK Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong called on the US to sign a peace treaty in September at the UN’s 70th General Assembly. The US turned down the proposal, saying it would not sign a peace treaty with a socialist country that is “pursuing nuclear weapons”.

Myanmar’s political party, National League for Democracy (NLD), claimed a major victory in the country’s recent general elections. The NLD had secured 134 seats out of 149 in the House of Representatives and 77 out of 83 in the House of Nationalities (upper house). The Myanmar president and the military promised to respect the election results and to peacefully hand over political power to the new government. The new government is expected to bring an end to the country’s ruling junta and promote social justice.

A high-level military meeting was conducted by the Laos and Vietnamese military near their shared border areas. They believe that closer friendship, solidarity and cooperation have grown between the two armies, people, states and parties. They agreed to support each other in implementing political tasks, fighting drug crime, smuggling and human trafficking. They will also increase communications and organise more joint-patrols.

Vietnam’s Ho Chi Minh City plans to control new HIV+ infection rates within 0.03% by 2020 and the level of HIV+ cases at 0.6%. The city has set up 14 medical facilities, treating over 3,000 drug addicts, and six more will be built by the end of this year. There are 41,841 known HIV+ cases in the city, and it is planned to use advanced therapy and new technology to ensure 90 percent of them have their condition controlled.

According to a statement from China’s State Council, the country will promote the integration of the health care system with the aged care system. The intention is that this will benefit the increasing number of old people as well as create more jobs. The government is encouraging areas with redundant medical resources to transform some public hospitals into aged care centres.

Chinese President Xi Jinping met Taiwanese leader Ma Ying-Jeou in Singapore, opening up a historic page for cross-strait relations. It was the first time that the head of China and the top leader of Taiwan have had a direct and bilateral meeting since 1945. President Xi said “No force can pull us apart, because we are brothers who are still connected by our flesh – even if our bones are broken – and we are one family”. He called for deepening the peaceful development of the relationship, saying that the two sides should prove to the world that both had the wisdom and capabilities to resolve their own problems.

Funding ISIS without knowing it

Anastasia Churkina

Ancient sites in Syria occupied by Islamic State extremists are being looted on an industrial scale, with cultural artifacts being smuggled into Western countries to fund the terrorist group.

Much of the remnants of Syria’s heritage smuggled into Britain and other Western countries remains highly desirable on the market and ends up in public institutions, museums, and private collections as a result.

Experts say the scale of the problem is much wider than most might assume, with ISIS not only destroying items of cultural value, but also making a serious profit off them.

Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) currently occupies territories rich in archaeological treasures – including coins, ancient manuscripts, and jewelry – and is

illegally exporting them to raise money for its extremist activities.

“Satellite imagery shows that archaeological sites in Syria are dotted by thousands of illegal excavations ... that show there is looting on an industrial scale,” the head of UNESCO said last week.

“Limiting the trafficking in cultural property is a top priority because it finances the actions of the extremists,” she said at a conference.

Syrian cultural artifacts can be easily identified by their shape, insignias, and other diagnostic features, Mark Altaweel, an expert from the Institute of Archeology of University College London explained.

It’s much more difficult to figure out when an item ended up in Britain since there’s practically no supporting documentation, according to Altaweel. By the time an item arrives in Britain, there’s

no way to prevent it from being sold.

“The chances of someone being seized, stopped and prosecuted are almost zero in the UK or anywhere in Europe, frankly.

“We don’t know how much ISIS is benefiting from these objects. We know they are benefiting and we know it’s coming to the West. That’s indisputable... The scary thing is that we can be funding these groups without even knowing it,” he concluded.

The UN Security Council has recently imposed a ban on buying illegally obtained antiquities from Syria and Iraq, which is obviously not being observed by IS. Meanwhile, in an effort to prevent museums from purchasing those items, the International Council of Museums has issued an emergency red list of Syrian cultural objects at risk.

RT ✪

Letters to the Editor
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Fix the problem

I have just retired. I worked nearly all my life doing shift work and being socially disadvantaged. To work weekends I feel it is totally justified to have claimed those conditions.

As far as I see it today things haven't changed. If anything the worker is worse off. There has been no real wage increase over the past four years.

Our standard of living is going down, the cost of everything going up. Our tax system needs overhauling.

Back in 2008 the GFC was bad. Who caused that? Not the unions. It was the unions that got the 40 hour week. Now people work 70 hours to make ends meet. Cutting penalty rates won't fix the problem.

Malcolm Henderson

Call for YSL reunion

Now that Christmas is approaching it brings back memories when as a member of the YSL we would spend 2 weeks down at Scone Valley.

I was wondering if it could be possible to organise a reunion of all those young socialists that spent two weeks in January with leaders like David Moss.

The period of time was during the '60s or '70s. My phone number is 040 620 8222 and I would love to hear from anyone interested in arranging a reunion.

Peter Reed

GST hits pensioners

I am concerned about the imminent increase in the GST and the broadening of its base to include fresh fruit, vegetables and meat.

Pensioners will suffer very badly. With a 5% increase, it will mean that pensioners will lose around \$1,000 per year of their pension.

With a broadened base, it will mean pensioners will lose even more.

Pensioners I know spend almost all their pension each fortnight, often putting off some things until the following fortnight.

To prevent richer people from

“suffering” bracket-creep, pensioners will be the ones who suffer.
Is this fair?

Gail Artley

Protect penalty rates

When bureaucracies and offices work on weekends and evenings then that will become a standard week. It is not fine for people who have a Monday to Friday job deciding that the weekend is part of the standard working week.

Also once penalties are taken from retail and hospitality it is a short step to all other industries losing their penalty rates too. Police, doctors, nurses, ambos would lose their payments for working unsociable shifts. Protect penalty rates.

Teresa Bourke

Deadly silence

Yesterday 100 innocent dead in Lebanon attack, 500 innocent dead in Palestine, 200 dead in Yemen, last year 400,000 dead in Syria, five years ago 1.5 million dead in Iraq, yet no one says a word, The world Stands silent!

And in the Paris attack today, 150 dead and the world goes crazy!

Obama's statement after the

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attack in Paris: "This is an attack not just on Paris...this is an attack on all of humanity".

Mr Obama you foolish liar. Humanity has been getting attacked for many decades.

RIP to all those innocents who

died in the Paris attack, and RIP to all those innocent lives who were never mentioned in the attacks around the world, and still being killed today and not being mentioned!

Ilias Bafas

Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

If it flies or runs or hops or walks, blow it away!



Senator Bridget McKenzie, hunting but not gathering.

Did you see the photo of Senator Bridget McKenzie on the front page of *The Sydney Morning Herald* at the end of October? It was quite fetching: the Senator, in jeans and an open-necked shirt, was smiling, a shotgun broken open and carried nonchalantly over her shoulder. Why a shotgun? Because the Senator enjoys killing wildlife and thinks that people who don't share her view of the "sport" are displaying "snobbery and elitism".

Humans evolved as hunter-gatherers, combining a diet of berries and nuts, fruit and roots, insects and grubs, eggs and seeds, with meat and fish. To obtain the latter two required hunting, the rest could be gathered. But with the domestication of live-stock and the discovery that certain plants that produced grain could be cultivated, the uncertainty of hunting and gathering could be avoided.

Although no longer necessary, humans continued to hunt: to vary their diet, to conserve their limited stock of domestic animals, or with some people, just for fun. Fishing was often indulged in (and still is) for the sheer pleasure of it, although what was caught was generally eaten, if not by the fisherman's family then by friends and neighbours.

When land, and the right to hunt or fish on it became the property of the ruling class, the poor often had to hone their hunting skills if they were to avoid starvation. However, hunting really took off with the invention of the gun. The ability to kill with accuracy from a distance

made hunting almost a leisure sport, and members of the ruling class took it up with gusto. Wherever people of wealth lived, whether in Britain, France, Russia or the USA, they developed a culture – and a mystique – around hunting as a recreational sport.

Whenever the well-to-do held a house party or the like, the entertainment always included some shooting, with state workers employed to drive pheasants and other game birds towards a line of shotgun-toting guests who had a delightful time killing every bird they could. But woe-betide any poor person who shot a bird (or a rabbit) on an aristocrat's land!

Whenever imperialism explored a country they coveted as a colony, the explorers took their guns and happily shot every animal that crossed their path. They were followed by "sportsmen" and big game hunters, who proudly posed for photos with the corpses of the animals they had shot, then they cut off the heads of the animals they had shot, to display on the walls of their homes. If they shot an elephant, they removed its ivory tusks as souvenirs and cut off at least one of its feet to make a novel waste paper bin. If they shot a gorilla, which they did 'till the animals were almost extinct, they severed its hands to make into equally novel ash trays.

Some animals – quite a few actually – were hunted to extinction (most notably the passenger pigeon, the dodo and the marsupial wolf or "Tasmanian tiger," to mention only three). But times have changed. There has been a

growing cultural shift, from killing to conservation, from whale catching to whale watching, from shooting with a gun to shooting with a camera. Even the sport of angling has changed from catch as many as possible and display as trophies to catch and release. The days have fortunately gone when just about every country property in Australia displayed on its front fence by the farm gate the corpses of our magnificent wedge-tailed eagle that the farmer had shot, tacked to the fence with their wings outstretched as grisly reminders of just how superb they had been. They are now protected, but Senator McKenzie can still find plenty of other things to kill, I'm sure.

Clearly, not everyone – not even every country's government – has embraced this new humane approach to wildlife, with its overriding concern for the future of species diversity on Earth and preserving the glories of the natural world for future generations. Those with money – a genuinely privileged elite under capitalism – are still able to ape the aristocrats of the past and to derive enjoyment from killing animals without risk to themselves. In Australia, the reactionary Shooters and Fishers Party made being given *carte blanche* to shoot animals in national parks a condition of its support for the NSW Liberal Party government! A truly extraordinary demand, on par with right-wing demands in the US for example for the right to drill for oil in designated and supposedly "protected" wilderness areas.

In countries that are heavily dependent on

tourism, most tourists come to see the sights. They bring their cameras, and are content to see the wildlife, the scenery, the ruins, whatever the main attractions are, photograph them, enjoy the experience and treasure the memories. In some places, however, the enticement of people offering money in return for being allowed to kill wildlife has proved too much. In South Africa, for example, lions are bred in captivity to be released into enclosures as young adults so that wealthy foreigners (mainly but not exclusively Americans) can – with the help of a guide – "stalk" them and shoot them. They then proudly pose beside their kill for the obligatory photo-op.

Far from being snobbish and elitist as the good senator claims, those who oppose killing wild animals as "sport" are simply expressing the sentiment that is fast becoming predominant all over the world.

We want to enjoy wildlife: enjoy seeing them in films and TV, enjoy observing them from tourist coaches, launches and headlands, enjoy learning about them. Killing wild animals is not something human beings should enjoy. It should be as repugnant to us as killing human beings. Eliminating introduced pests like rabbits, foxes and deer should be carried out by a government agency like the National Parks and Wildlife Service on scientific advice, not placed in the hands of thrill-seeking gun-nuts.

How can we call ourselves civilised if we condone killing things for pleasure? ✪

Taking Issue – Rob Gowland

Capitalism – a killer of a system

Have you ever been moved to ponder the question of just how many people have lost their lives because of capitalism's greed (combined with its complete disregard for the well being of the working stiffs who actually create its wealth)? Even if you leave out the innumerable wars that capitalism has indulged in over just the 19th and 20th centuries, there's still a breath-taking death toll that can be sheeted home directly to capitalism.

It was capitalism that seized on the scientific and technological advances of the Industrial Revolution as a way to boost agricultural production while cutting the numbers of agricultural workers to the bone. The bulk of the rural labouring class were actually forced off the land to move to the towns and cities as an impoverished urban workforce desperately seeking employment, which they found in the new steam-powered mines and mills of capitalism.

Unions were illegal, and employers ruthlessly exploited the labour of not just working men but also – and especially – women and children. Women had nimble fingers and children were quick, but both could be – and were – harnessed to wagons to haul coal and other minerals through the low-roofed workings of mines. Children were made to risk their lives dashing in and out beneath the steam-driven looms of the cloth industry to gather up the waste stuff so the owner could make extra money from it.

Accidents were frequent, and frequently fatal. Even when they were not fatal, the unfortunate injured worker was usually dismissed as unfit to work, turned out to beg or starve. Despair, hunger exposure and cold killed off thousands every winter.

Workers had no option but to fight back against capitalist exploitation and repression. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, employers used not just the police and when pressed, the army, to keep the workers in line, but often they also resorted to hired thugs, spies and death squads. To keep capitalism flourishing, innumerable union organisers, Communists and other progressives

were murdered, and are still murdered in many parts of the world.

Even where they are not actually murdered, workers still die on the job from "accidents" that are usually preventable if employers did not cut corners on safety, constantly press for speed-ups, for increased production and longer hours of work. Worldwide, the death toll from accidents in industry, construction, mining, fishing and transport is huge. It is never the capitalist owner who dies, of course, but the poor bloody worker who invariably pays the ultimate price.

The spin doctors that capitalism employs to protect its interests like to promote the ridiculous notion that we all share the same cake, that capitalists and workers have equal opportunities and equal rights. You don't have to be a graduate of the Harvard Business School to know that isn't so. Any worker can tell you the truth of the relative position of workers and bosses. Equal it ain't.

Take health for example. It's not the capitalist owners of the coal industry who die from dusted lungs. It's not the capitalist owners of Hardies who died and continue to die from asbestosis. On the other hand, it's not the Fukushima power station workers who continue to allow radioactive waste to pour into the Pacific: it's the plant's capitalist owners who are the culprits here. Just as the destruction of the shrimp industry in the Gulf of Texas, and the livelihood of the shrimp fishermen with it, was the work not of the fishermen but of the capitalists who own BP.

Capitalist greed has left a trail of death and destruction all over the globe and is still seeking to extend its reach to even more regions. Witness the push in North America to drill for oil in the Canadian Arctic. As global warming removes the Antarctic ice sheet, watch for capitalist mining companies to start pushing for the right to mine the Antarctic continent. Antarctica could become the biggest moonscape on the planet, to the enrichment of mining companies and their financiers. The rest of us, along with the penguins, would be left to mourn what had been and

would never be again. And of course one of the benefits being held up as a reason for funding a flight to Mars is the anticipated profits from mining the Red Planet, too.

Capitalism is not the only system that humanity has been able to develop, however. Capitalism is a fatally flawed system based on inequality and exploitation and leading inevitably to war, but working people know of a better system, one free of exploitation and war-mongering: Socialism.

In the short history of the world since 1917, the people attempting to build this new form of society inevitably made mistakes (the pollution caused by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor, and the desertification of the area around the Aral Sea, for example).

But none of these, serious though they unquestionably were, was caused by a small clique trying to make themselves rich – or richer. The essence of Socialism as a system is that it endeavours to constantly improve the lives of all its people. Who could possibly be opposed to a system like that, you might ask? Well, capitalists would, for starters.

Their privileged lifestyle is dependent on the majority (working people) being exploited by a minority (capitalists) who appropriate the wealth created by the majority. The capitalists have no interest in giving up their privileges and living like ordinary people. They fight tooth and nail to retain their wealth and the power and social benefits – and the superiority over ordinary people – that it brings them.

The army of spin-doctors they employ devote a lot of effort to portraying Socialism as bloody and militarist. In fact, it is capitalism that exemplifies that type of social system. Only capitalism, already based on exploitation and gross inequality, could envisage tying the world's economies to a concept as barbarous as "constant war". Most of the world's people reject the idea of living under such a regime, so capitalism's propagandists have to lie. Not that they have any difficulty with that. With a perfectly straight



It is never the capitalist owner who dies, of course, but the poor bloody worker who invariably pays the ultimate price.

face they declare that black is white and white is black; that capitalism is benign and Socialism is cruel and oppressive.

In fact, however, it was the capitalist states that attacked the new socialist state, Soviet Russia, within weeks of its creation. The invasion was accompanied by incredibly barbaric savagery on the part of the supporters of the old regime, so much so that the US troops who had invaded Siberia threatened to attack the White counter-revolutionary forces if they did not cease their stomach-turning cruelty. That caused the Whites to circulate the rumour that the leader of the US troops was a closet Red!

The Red Army did not finally throw the last of the invaders out of the USSR until 1922, leaving a country in ruins for the new society to inherit. But the Soviets had learnt an important lesson. As well as making strenuous efforts to resurrect their wrecked mines, factories and infrastructure, they also built up their army, navy and airforce in readiness for the next attack by capitalism. Naturally, this was portrayed by capitalism's already growing army of propaganda specialists as a "threat" to peace-loving capitalist democracies.

Later in the 1920s, well after defeat of the Intervention, the West still funded and supplied arms to bandits in southern and eastern Russia to kill representatives of the Soviet government and to carry out other acts such as raiding convoys of cotton produced on Soviet farms, and so on. Abroad, Soviet trade missions would have their offices destructively raided and their staff assaulted by security services claiming to be searching for evidence of spying.

Also in the 1920s, the Soviet government set about collectivising Russia's myriad small peasant farms, in readiness for the massive program to industrialise the country under the

First Five Year Plan. Agents of capitalism abroad and their remnants in Russia set out to sabotage the collectivisation agriculture by every means possible even telling the peasants to slaughter their livestock before the beasts were "seized" by the Soviets. The result was famine which, along with the deaths it caused, capitalism unhesitatingly blamed on socialism. Although that claim was exposed as lying, anti-Communist propaganda at the time, it has been revived in recent years as people no longer remember the details and it makes yet another convenient club with which to bash Socialism.

It was capitalism that drove the colonialist regimes that resorted to death and destruction on a mass scale to enforce their rule and protect their "investments" in countries regarded as imperial possessions in Africa, Asia and South America.

Fascism arose as a system to protect capitalism from the possibility of Red Revolution. In the countries it took over, mass killing became the norm. German fascism killed millions in a mad quest for "racial purity" and millions more in slave labour camps serving German capitalists.

In the decades since WW2, many thousands – perhaps millions – have died in industrial accidents, mine disasters, the sinking of overcrowded or unseaworthy ships, or simply from over-work. Many millions more have died from hunger, in a world with the capacity to feed everyone! Without a profit in it for the capitalists, the capitalist system is simply not interested in improving working conditions, preventing starvation, eliminating pollution or the destruction of the environment, or stopping epidemics.

Thanks to capitalism's inhuman, destructive policies and practices, millions of people are condemned to suffering and death. And that's without even mentioning wars! ✪

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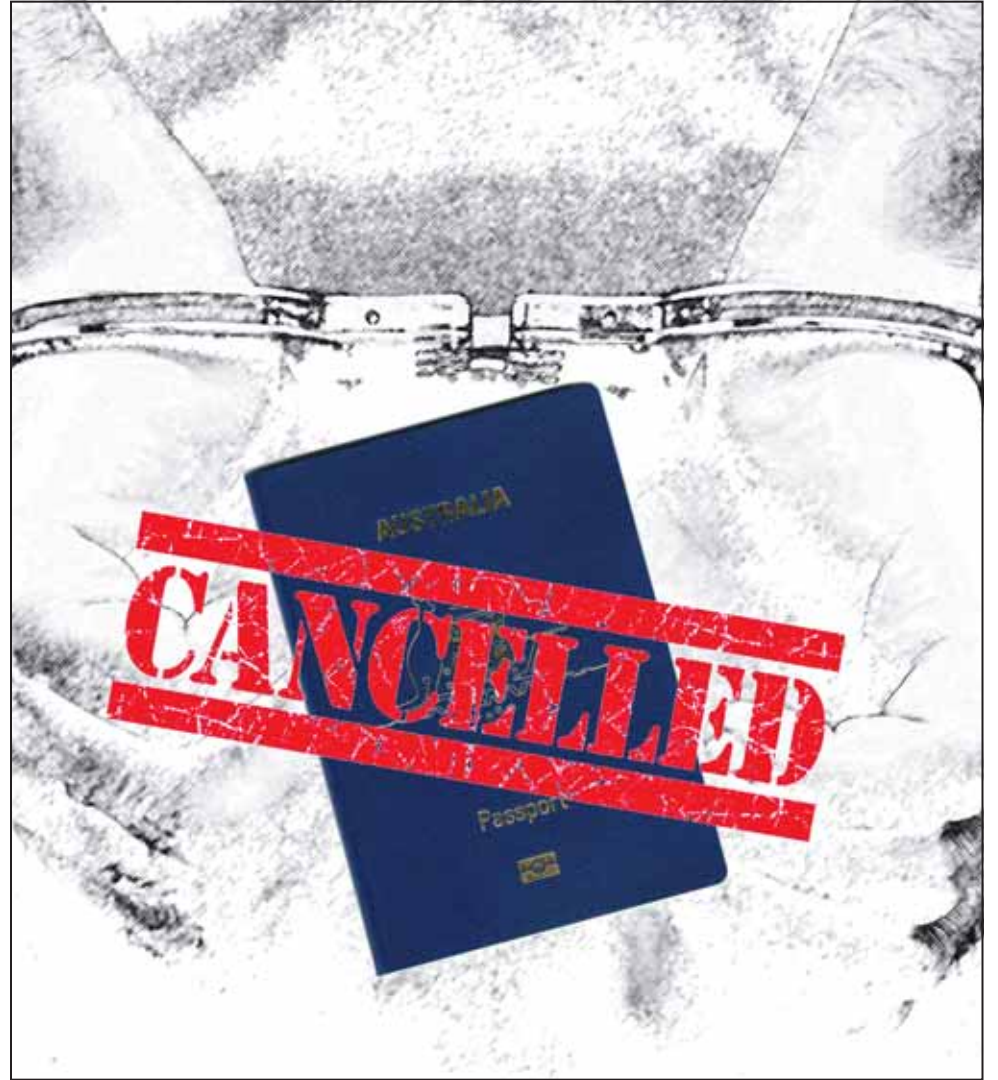
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Massive apparatus of social surveillance

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