



Paris 2015

Climate change moment of truth

Bob Briton

The people of the world took to the streets over the weekend to make their demands on climate change clear. Crowds at marches in Australia were large, noisy and colourful. Protesters in Paris defied a lock-down of the city to have their say on the climate emergency, which is the subject of the highest level negotiations in the French capital as the *Guardian* goes to press. Australia will be represented at the COP21 UN Conference on Climate Change by its plutocrat PM, Malcolm Turnbull. He has a better reputation than his predecessor on the topic. It is unlikely, however, that he will be a force for a much hoped-for breakthrough. It is more likely he will join the line of recalcitrants or outright wreckers to assert the Australian government's position at such gatherings.

Australia, the highest per capita carbon emitter in the world, is considered a laggard on climate change. Nothing proposed by the federal government at this stage will alter that perception. Visiting German Professor Stefan Rahmstorf, of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, was scathing in a piece written for the *Sydney Morning Herald* recently.

"Now, Australia is nearly the only industrial nation that for Paris has pledged emissions reductions that wouldn't even bring down its emissions significantly below the 1990 level by 2030. And it does not have the policies in place to deliver even those. Australia thus has much scope to improve – and it has renewable energy resources that make every German envious," he said.

There is overwhelming good will from the Australian people for bold action on climate change but it is being resisted in the interests of corporate profits. Australians are concerned at the current financial and human cost of climate change. The bill for catastrophes such as storms, droughts and bushfires has almost quadrupled since 1980. The figure now is \$6.3 billion a year and it is set to reach \$23 billion a year by 2050.

If global warming is held to a 2 degree Celsius rise by strong emissions reduction measures, sea levels are predicted to rise by 4.7 metres. This will inundate areas now home to 668,000 Australians. If temperatures rise by 4 degrees resulting in an 8.9 metres rise in sea levels, about 1.9 million people will be displaced. Globally that figure will be 627 million people.



Part of the more than 40,000 crowd in Sydney's Domain. (Photo: Tom Pearson)

Anote Tong, president of the Pacific island nation of Kiribati, was in Australia recently to plead with the government to commit to appropriate action in Paris. He sees a lot of potential for Australian leadership on the issue.

"Indeed, Australia is one of the leading nations in terms of technological innovation for renewable energy. Furthermore, the growing support for a moratorium on coal by the Australian public and around the world is acknowledging that to ensure the preservation of this planet our one and only home, renewable and clean energy is the only way forward. For the sake of our children and grandchildren, let us do what is right for them," the president wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Actions speak louder

The Turnbull government appears deaf to such calls. The Prime Minister has mocked Labor's objectively unambitious target of a 45 percent emissions reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 and to zero net emissions by 2050. He has called the plan "heroic", i.e. unaffordable and unrealistic. And the government's actions speak even louder than its words. It has stood by as the Baird government in NSW approved plans to expand the massive Warkworth coal mine

near the historic village of Bulga. It is encouraging the Palaszczuk government in Queensland in its efforts to extinguish Native Title over land so that Indian resource giant Adani can start building infrastructure for the projected \$16 billion Carmichael coal mine.

The Turnbull government has resisted every international and national call for a moratorium on new coal mines. This includes one from a group of 61 prominent Australians, who placed full page ads carrying an open letter in Fairfax papers recently. It has opposed moves to stop government assistance to coal-fired electricity generation.

The Turnbull government is following in the anti-science footsteps of its predecessor. As Turnbull prepares to take the stage in Paris, CSIRO programs for research into oceans and the atmosphere are under threat from job cuts. Scientists inside and outside the organisation are worried that a new generation of researchers will be lost to the lack of opportunity for their vital work.

Anti-capitalist struggle


The road from the last UN climate conference in Lima, Peru in 2014 to Paris this year has been a rocky one. The "Like-Minded

Developing Countries" group has complained, with justification, that discussion and proposals have been skewed in the interests of developed economies. Pressure has been applied to abandon the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" to act on climate change. This concept takes account of the need for developing countries to industrialise and, thus, require relatively more time to rein in carbon emissions. It also commits industrialised countries to assist with finances and technology.

There has been a struggle over the openness of the proceedings and difficulties in agreeing to the text for discussion in Paris. Unlike previous such conferences, the Paris meeting is not setting itself the objective of a binding, global emissions reduction target figure but, rather, a commitment from governments to meeting their own undertakings. The Turnbull government is setting the bar for itself very low. The job of raising those ambitions to realistic levels will fall to the people of Australia with a mighty campaign against the corporate interests that dominate climate policy at the moment. Here and across the planet, this is a struggle for simple survival of the people and the environment versus heedless profit-driven global capitalism. ✖

3  Private health insurance: **Watching you**

10  Culture & Life **Dying early**

12  Then – And Now **Medicare**

See page 11 for **Gifts with a message**

Guardian

Issue 1713

December 2, 2015

A proactive plan

In 2002 the Australian Medical Association (AMA) initiated an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Report Card Series with the aim of increasing awareness among the general public and politicians about the appalling state of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, and to make practical recommendations about what needs to be done to address it.

Each year, a Report Card brings together the most up to date and relevant evidence and information on a selected topic or special area of urgency in Indigenous people's health.

Among the divides between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous people in Australia, the health and life expectancy gap and the stark difference in the rates of imprisonment are among the most well-known.

It is estimated that, on average, an Indigenous male born in 2010-2012 will live just over 10 years less than their non-Indigenous peers (69.1 and 79.7 years respectively) and an Indigenous female just under 10 years less than her non-Indigenous peers (73.7 and 83.1 years respectively).

Life expectancy is a proxy indicator for overall health and wellbeing. Each year, the Prime Minister reports against "Closing the Gap" targets that include one to close the life expectancy gap by 2030.

The age standardised imprisonment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was 13 times greater than for their non-Indigenous peers in 2015.

The year 2016 marks a grim milestone in the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being held in custody. At the end of the 2015 June quarter, the average daily number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult prisoners was 9,940, comprising 8,938 males and 1,002 females.

Under current projections, for the first time over 10,000 Indigenous people could be in custody on the night of the annual prison census on June 30, 2016. At the 2015 June quarter, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represented 28 percent of all adult full-time prisoners despite being only three percent of the population.

They accounted for approximately two percent of the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

The Report Card examines how the situation is compounded by a health system and prison health system that, despite significant improvements over past decades, remains – in many critical areas – unable to respond appropriately to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners.

Because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples tend to come into contact with the criminal justice system at younger ages than their non-Indigenous peers, a major focus of this integrated approach is on the health, wellbeing, and diversion from the criminal justice system of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adolescents. Culturally-based approaches have been identified as effective in working with this cohort in areas like suicide prevention.

The high rates of health problems among, and the imprisonment of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be a priority social justice and human rights issue in this context.

1. Set a national target for closing the gap in the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment.

2. Adopt a justice reinvestment approach to fund services that will divert Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from prison.

3. Develop service models to support the expansion of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and other services as part of an integrated approach to improving the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the community (including responding to mental health conditions, substance use disorders and cognitive disabilities based on need) and as a preventative measure to reduce imprisonment rates.

4. In partnership with ACCHOs, prison health services, and other services as appropriate, develop a model of health care that integrates ACCHOs, prison health services, and other services to deliver an integrated approach to service provision that aims to improve health and reduce imprisonment rates at the same time.

5. Employ Aboriginal Health Workers and Indigenous health professionals in prison health services to support them to deliver a culturally competent health service.

PRESS FUND

The Paris international conference on climate change commenced last week. Australia's responsibility for climate change is out of all proportion to its relatively small population. The future of our children and succeeding generations depends on action we take now to help the world mitigate climate change. The *Guardian* has covered the issue of climate change ever since its impact began to become evident around three decades ago, and we're intent on contributing to the struggle to avoid a global disaster. However, we really need your help, by way of Press Fund contributions which help fund the *Guardian's* operating expenses, so please send us a contribution for the next edition if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

AJ Fox \$70, Mark Mannion \$5, Todd Nickle \$150, "Round Figure" \$10, RR \$5, N Underdowe \$20, K Manski \$50

This week's total: \$310 Progressive total \$6,260

Perth

Climate Action Rally

Richard Titelius

In the lead up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 21 in Paris from November 30 to December 11, 2,300 rallies were planned in over 150 countries. Rallies were held in all capital cities of Australia and in many regional centres in each of the states and territories.

The rally in Perth was held in Wellington Square where key speakers addressed the four thousand plus crowd. With the action being held on a site that was significant to the local Noongar people, it was only fitting that the rally had male and female Noongar MCs.

The first speaker was Petra Tshakert from the University of Western Australia, where she is visiting from the University of Pennsylvania. Ms Tshakert was part of the Fifth Assessment Panel of the International Panel of Climate Change which delivered its report in 2014.

The Report, stated Ms Tshakert, highlighted four key areas of concern in relation to climate change. Human activity is disrupting the earth's climate with each succeeding decade being warmer than the previous one (the report stating that concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane

and nitrous oxide being at the highest levels for the previous 800,000 years).

The more change that is required the more difficult and expensive it becomes to do anything about the effects of climate change; we have options and solutions to halt the effects of climate change which involve weaning ourselves of fossil fuels – especially oil and shale gas.

Australia, concluded Ms Tshakert, had to lead the world by example.

Climate change and bush fires

The next speaker was Kevin Jolley, a professional fire fighter and member of the United Fire Fighters Union. He warned that Australia is seeing a lengthening of the fire fighting season and an increase in the severity of bush fire events and their frequency which was directly linked to an increase in average temperatures and decreases in rainfall in many parts of Australia.

Farmers around the country are also observing changes in the climate as their growing seasons become shorter or often don't come at all, causing crop failure on top of catastrophic fire events.

Jolley called on governments to

increase funding for extra staff and equipment to fight fires in addition to extreme storm events. He said that when fire fighters are tackling fires in these extreme events, "There are no sceptics at the end of a fire hose."

Les McLaughlin, the state secretary of the Electrical Trades Union called for a doubling of investment in renewable energy to assist in combating climate change.

However, as Australia moves away from a carbon-based energy system it should bring Australian workers with it by helping to retrain them in the manufacture of wind and solar powered energy systems to provide high value jobs.

The final speakers were representatives from the leading religious denominations in Western Australia: Christian, Baha'I, Hindu, Islamic and Jewish faiths who all called for sustainable economies and the reduction of carbon emissions to preserve life and to "take care of this garden as it is the only one we have."

The rally which had now swelled to 7,000 people slowly marched west towards the Wesley Church in the centre of the city to bring their message to the Sunday shoppers. ☘



Part of the rally for Climate Action at Wellington Square in Perth.



Russian government responds to downing of plane, closes all kebab shops for 24 hours

Russian President Vladimir Putin told a packed press conference that last week's controversial shooting down of one of its war planes by a Turkish air-to-air missile was the last straw in relations between the two countries.

"We had no choice but to enact sanctions against Turkey and wanted to strike hard at the heart of the Turkish economy," Putin said.

"I've never liked kebabs, or the garlic sauce that never stops dropping

down your bloody wrist when you get to the bottom," he said.

"And there's no way our plane was in Turkish airspace, it's just rubbish. Now, as a result, no Russian will go within 5 metres of a Doner Kebab store for at least 24 hours."

Putin said the sanctions could be lifted if measures are taken by the Turkish government to address Russian concerns.

"We want to see these serious issues addressed," said the Russian

leader. "A directive must come from my Turkish counterparts to ensure not a single Russian has his pants stained by a leaky kebab packet again."

"Further, we will maintain the closure of kebab shops until the Turks find a way to stop bits of paper bag ending up in people's teeth when they consume these messy things."

The Common Tern flies over the heads of some but beware not to take him too seriously. ☘

Private health insurance Watching you

Anna Pha

Almost every week now the government announces further steps in the destruction of Medicare and privatisation of health care. It has commissioned six reviews covering different aspects of the health system. They include a review of the private health insurance (PHI) sector.

Unlike other types of insurance, PHI is subjected to the principle of community rating. This means that a PHI fund must charge members the same premium for the same cover. Whereas travel insurance companies, for example, charge different premiums according to a person's existing medical conditions, age and also according to the activities they are planning to do on their travels, such as skiing or riding a motorcycle. The premium is based on the likelihood that an individual will make a claim.

PHI funds are not permitted to discriminate on the basis of chronic illness or specific medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, macular degeneration, etc). Nor can they charge different rates on the basis of gender, age, occupation (worked with toxic chemicals, asbestos, etc), lifestyle, alcohol consumption, smoking, obesity, frequency of hospitalisation or other individual characteristics.

The only exception is "life-time cover" which applies to people who join after the age of 30. They are charged an additional loading based on their age when first taking out cover. Again the loading is age-based and not varied on an individual basis.

Funds are permitted to set waiting periods before pre-existing conditions are covered for new members. Again, these waiting periods are applied uniformly. In addition a PHI fund cannot reject anyone who wishes to join.

The private health funds have been lobbying hard for the abolition of the community rating system. This would enable them to adjust premiums according to their assessed level of risk. That is, the likelihood of individual fund members making claims.

Age-based cover

Age is one important criterion for assessing risk. As reported in the *Guardian* ("Medicare privatisation at full tilt", 11-11-2015, #1710), the

average health fund cost per member per annum varies significantly with age:

- \$440 for 20-24 year-olds
- \$630 for 40-44 year-olds
- \$3,360 for 70-74 year-olds

The neo-rationalist bean-counters at the helm of the private funds bemoan the fact that a 74-year-old with diabetes, osteoarthritis and heart disease pays the same premium as a healthy, fit 20-year-old. Older and sicker members are being cross-subsidised by younger and healthier members. Insurance should be sharing the cost across the community – at different periods of our life we have good or bad luck and different needs.

According to their neo-liberal way of doing business PHI funds expect to make a profit out of every individual client. Cross-subsidisation is not on as far as they are concerned. Fund members are customers, sources of profit, but the government with community rating stands in the way of reaping larger profits.

Keeping this in mind, the above figures give an alarming picture of what they might charge older or chronically ill members if the community rating is abandoned. It becomes even more disturbing as the government is planning to deregulate what they can charge. At present they have to gain the authorization of the Health Minister for all increases in premiums.

Socio-economic status is another criteria which is a strong indicator of health outcomes. Funds would use occupation or postal code as a means of assessing risk.

They could make the cost so prohibitive that someone who worked with asbestos or toxic substances would only sign up for the barest of minimum of cover.

Unlike Medicare, PHI is not automatically comprehensive in cover. Members can select which items they wish to exclude from cover to reduce the cost. For example, a young person might exclude heart surgery, major eye surgery or hip and knee replacements. But they take a risk, life is full of surprises – an injury on the football field could result in a knee replacement.

The health and needs of members are of concern to the extent that they might threaten profits. The more

members they can keep out of hospital the better for profits.

Watching you

Life insurer MLC is investigating the use of smart watch technology. These watches measure heart rate, sleep patterns, physical activity (distance walked or run, number of stairs climbed, etc) and calculate calories burnt.

Wearers can go online to enter their height and weight, what they eat and drink, and MLC could read this data from the watch. MLC is considering lower premiums when set activity targets are met. Weekly reports on activity automatically appear on your smart phone, tablet or other electronic device.

Big Brother at Medibank Private, BUPA, HCF are also eyeing smart watches to monitor members.

Imagine what a private health fund would do with such technology if community rating were abolished!

Funds could base premiums on the activity of members. For example, if an obese member were set a target of 10,000 steps a day and reached it a set number of days a week, their premium would be reduced. The reverse is also possible.

If this is beginning to sound far fetched, then visit Medibank Private's website. "Collect flybuys points every day you reach 10,000 steps with a linked Fitbit wireless activity tracker," the site says.

There are links between Coles, Medibank and flybuys. Flybuys, Coles loyalty program, offers Medibank members 10 points for every 10,000 steps. Garmin as well as Fitbit smart watches are linked to its scheme.

A Medibank member can earn triple flybuys points for "healthy eating" when they buy fruit and vegetables at Coles. (Points are based on dollars spent.)

Fitbit and Garmin are just two of the many smart watches on the market. Others include Kogan, Samsung, Sony and Apple. They use wireless transmission to transfer data to your phone, tablet or computer. Data could then be automatically sent to the health fund. You would never know.

With the use of smart watches to monitor heart rate and activity of fund members, privacy would be



the first casualty. The doctor patient-relationship would be the second. And it could prove quite dangerous if inappropriate activity targets were attempted.

At present PHI funds only provide cover for private hospitalisation and "extras" (eg physiotherapy, naturopathy, dental health, spectacles) which Medicare does not cover. But the government has plans to means test access to Medicare and extend the scope of PHI to out-of-hospital items which are now covered by Medicare.

Anyone earning above a specified threshold will be denied access to Medicare and required to take out PHI for items presently covered by Medicare. (See *Guardian*, "Medicare privatisation at full tilt", 11-11-2015, #1710)

If the government succeeds in implementing its plans, the abolition of the community rating will affect in and out of hospital health services. It will open the way for the PHI funds to make bigger profits than ever and take control of patient care.

In line with the failed and costly US system, it will be the private health funds that determine whether someone can have blood tests, a colonoscopy or cataract surgery – not the doctor and patient.

Medicare is an insurance scheme. The concept of insurance is to

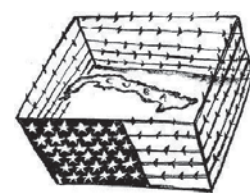
share risk, to share the cost across a community. Medicare is centrally funded, in part through the Medicare levy and the remainder through company and personal income tax. Personal income tax and the levy are based on a relatively progressive scale with those who can afford to contribute more paying at a higher rate.

Universal access means that no one who has the misfortune of being struck with cancer, breaking a leg or having diabetes needs to carry the full burden of the cost. At different times we all draw on Medicare. Health care is a human right, not a privilege.

Any deregulation of premiums and abandonment of community rating would result in a system in which the cost of premiums to individuals would no longer be based on ability to pay. It would be based on age, personal characteristics and likelihood of making claims. Access would ultimately depend on ability to pay, not need.

Universal access with bulk-billing should be available to everyone through Medicare. Community rating must be retained for those who have private health cover. At the same time the government should begin phasing out the \$6 billion annual PHI tax rebate and redirect it to improving the public hospital system. ✪

Pete's Corner



Sydney

Vigil demanding that the USA stop the blockade on Cuba

54 YEARS IS ENOUGH

**Thursday December 17 at 5.30 pm
Outside the US Consulate in Martin Place**

Also to stop the subversion funds against Cuba & to return Guantánamo to its rightful owners – the Cuban people.

**Support *The Guardian*
by donating to Press Fund**

NSW power sell-out

The NSW government is pressing ahead with its privatisation program selling off the people's assets. The latest announcement is the sale of electricity transmission company TransGrid to an 80 per cent foreign-owned consortium.

The Electrical Trade Union (ETU) and United Services Union (USU) which represent workers at TransGrid, have raised serious concerns about the impact on consumers, the loss of long-term tax and dividends, and the corporate history of some of the companies in the winning consortium.

TransGrid runs the high voltage transmission network across the whole state which is part of the national grid and electricity market.

Among the purchasers is Spark Infrastructure, which already owns vast parts of the Victorian and South Australian power networks, where it has been responsible for rising prices, cuts to maintenance, aggressive tax avoidance, a higher rate of disconnections, and blackouts.

ETU secretary Steve Butler said research by the Tax Justice Network revealed that Spark had not paid a cent in company tax during the past decade, despite owning highly profitable monopoly assets.

"We don't need to speculate about what the TransGrid

privatisation will mean for tax revenues, because we've already seen what Spark have done in Victoria," Butler said.

"Prices have steadily risen for consumers, investment in infrastructure has crumbled, regional jobs have been slashed, and revenues that previously came to governments have completely dried up as the profits are aggressively shifted offshore.

"This consortium, which is made up of big banks, foreign governments and well-known tax avoiders, have just been handed the keys to the monopoly electricity transmission network that supplies power to the people of NSW."

Butler said the sale would have a negative impact on the NSW budget over the medium to long term.

"Since 2005, TransGrid have paid \$2.4 billion to the NSW government, money which has been used to fund infrastructure and essential services such as hospitals and schools," he said.

"This sale puts an end to that sustainable, ongoing revenue stream, for a one-off payment that is a fraction of the \$10.26 billion price tag the Premier and Treasurer are crowing about today."

Butler went on to say the net proceeds of the sale would be



Photo: Anna Pha

around \$7.3 billion after liabilities and sale costs were taken out.

"In their most recent annual report, TransGrid's regulated asset base alone was valued at \$6.19 billion, meaning the state will be a measly \$1 billion better off due to this privatisation – or the equivalent of four years of dividend payments," he said.

"Given TransGrid paid \$306.5 million in dividends and tax equivalent payments to the people of NSW last financial year alone, this is an incredibly poor outcome that future generations will pay for in the decades to come."

The people of NSW have lost yet another valuable asset. But there is more to come.

Preparing for next sell-offs

Since becoming Premier of NSW, Michael Baird has overseen the sale of \$10 billion in public assets. He has handed over the Sydney desalination plant (\$2.3 billion), Port Botany and Port Wollongong (\$5 billion) the Port of Newcastle (\$1.75 billion) and Macquarie Generation (\$1.5 billion).

Next in line, apart from electricity transmission and poles and wires, are the Newcastle trains, ferries and buses. Sydney ferries are already contracted out to the private sector. It won't be long before trains and buses follow.

The electricity assets are highly profitable revenue generating operations. They contribute billions of dollars to the public purse.

Workers in the utilities being given to the private, for-profit sector are battling to save their jobs as the government seeks to put them on a more profitable footing or, in the case of government subsidised public transport, have them turn a profit.

In the electricity sector alone around 4,000 jobs are expected to go.

The companies' workforces are taking a haircut to fatten its profits

in readiness for privatisation. The profits that will no longer contribute to government revenue but instead flow into private hands and more than likely go largely overseas.

The struggle to save jobs in the electricity sector is about more than fighting for workers' jobs. It is about the future of reliable energy supplies, higher prices and the loss of government revenue.

The government claims it is about raising funds to build more infrastructure. By that it means more toll roads with private partners and roads to service new coal mines. The last thing the government has in mind is spending on public transport or public housing. Likewise public hospitals and schools will be even more short of funds.

As Baird sells off what remains of public assets the state will be facing sovereign bankruptcy, a situation created by the Coalition government and the Labor government that preceded it.

Unless the union movement and broader community combine to halt these privatisations and sackings, thousands more workers will lose their jobs and the cupboard will be bare. ☘

Landmark victory

Rudi Maxwell

A charity that supports Aboriginal people with a rare degenerative disease living in the Northern Territory has won a landmark case against the federal government. Federal Court Justice Flick has found that Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion did not have the power to revoke an earlier decision by former Minister Jenny Macklin to make a \$10 million grant to the Machado Joseph Disease Foundation (MJDF) from the Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA).

The ABA manages and distributes royalty money generated from mining on Aboriginal land in the NT. The advisory committee is made up of 14 members elected by the four NT land councils and an appointed chair.

However, final approval for how Aboriginal money is spent rests with the minister, as specified in the NT Aboriginal Land Rights Act. In 2013, the ABA committee recommended a \$10 million grant to the MJDF. Ms Macklin approved the money and wrote to the MJDF, saying they had been successful.

However, after the change of government in September, Senator Scullion revoked the decision, advising the MJDF that it was not in line with the policy of the ABA.

In early 2014, the MJDF pleaded with Senator Scullion to change his mind, however, he refused and

the matter ended up in court. Justice Flick ruled that Senator Scullion did not have the power to overturn Ms Macklin's decision.

MJDF chief executive Nadia Lindop told the *Koori Mail* that foundation clients and staff were feeling positive about the decision.

"The next step for us is to work in a collaborative manner with the federal government to get a funding agreement in place," she said.

Senator Scullion said he was "reviewing the details" of the judgment and had not yet made a decision on whether to appeal. Machado Joseph disease (MJD) is a rare degenerative wasting condition that mainly affects Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land, and is particularly prevalent on Groote Eylandt. People with MJD exhibit clumsiness and weakness in the arms and legs, spasticity, a staggering gait, difficulties with speech and swallowing, involuntary eye movements, double vision and incontinence.

It is inherited and there is no cure.

People with MJD retain their cognitive capacity and the symptoms of the disease worsen with each generation. The MJDF helps look after families with the disease and also conducts research.

Ms Lindop said she hoped the Foundation could now act on the plans it had made in 2013 to expand. "We'd committed, made decisions on strategy on how to roll out services for people living on

Elcho Island, in central Australia and other areas and we were really relying on that \$10 million so we could invest and use the earnings in perpetuity," she said.

"We are absolutely thrilled with the decision for lots of reasons. Our board was really brave launching this court action. It wasn't a fight we wanted to have, but we have real obligations to our clients, people who are suffering now and will be affected in the future.

"We're just really moved by the decision."

MJDF chairperson Neil Westbury said the long-term and degenerative nature of MJD meant that individuals living with the disease required care and support throughout their lifetimes.

Long-term

"Today's ruling provides a sustainable, long-term source of funding that will give MJD sufferers who have demonstrated, with dignity and against all the odds, a consistent preparedness to truly help themselves," he said.

"It provides the certainty they need to be able to continue to manage their lives. It also removes an apparent disjunction between the government's constant calls for less welfare dependence and greater self reliance."

Mr Westbury also played tribute to law firm Gilbert and Tobin, who ran the case pro bono.

Koori Mail ☘

Politics in the Pub Perth

*The international situation,
the rise of fascism and
the attacks on the people at home*

Join us to discuss the international situation, its dangers and the attacks on medicare, public education, civil and democratic rights at home.

6-8pm Friday December 11

43 Below Bar & Restaurant

43 Barrack Street Perth CBD opposite Perth Town Hall

Guest speakers

visiting from Adelaide and Sydney respectively:

Bob Briton,
CPA General Secretary

Anna Pha,
former *Guardian* editor, writer and
political commentator on political economy

Will the “drugs war” strategy work?

Peter Mac

In May, before he was ignominiously ejected from office, former Prime Minister Tony Abbott launched a so-called “war on drugs”. Abbott would incite public anxiety to boost support for his policies, and the advertising campaign used horrifying images of attacks on medical staff by people addicted to crystallised methamphetamines, commonly known as “ice”.

The use of ice has certainly increased within the last few years, and users can have violent rages culminating in physical assault. However, some experts who deal with drug abuse believe the ad campaign failed to adequately address the threat from other drugs, and that it will focus on arresting users of illicit drugs rather than helping them change their behaviour.

Moreover, problematic users of ice represent only half of one percent of the population, and not all users engage in violent behaviour. Emergency hospital staff say they have a far more extensive problem with the abuse of alcohol than with methamphetamines.

Smoking still constitutes a major threat to public health – yet tobacco and alcohol are rarely mentioned in government statements regarding addictive substance abuse.

One recent study indicates that alcohol was the biggest threat to the public in Britain, and was the only addictive substance out of 20 studied that caused more damage to the public than the user. Alcohol, heroin and crack cocaine were all found to be more harmful than methamphetamines. (*Drug Harms in the UK, a Multicriteria Analysis 2010*)

The use of ice increased by 28 percent nationwide between 2010 and 2013, particularly among the poorest members of the community, leading to more deaths and psychological problems. They prefer heroin, but ice is cheap and readily available.

Ice certainly poses a real threat to public health and safety, but anti-drug campaigns should cover all addictive substances (including those legally used or consumed), public education campaigns should be based on scientific evidence, and different tactics should be adopted according to the substance involved.

Which way to go?

Some experts argue that criminality should apply to dangerous behaviour resulting from the use of drugs or alcohol, for example drink driving, rather than the act of taking these substances itself. However, illicit drugs like ice, which are known to lead to aggressive, violent behaviour should never be legalised.

A report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute recommends reducing the availability of drugs, disrupting user behaviour and integrating education and health

initiatives into anti-drug programs. Others have pointed out that families should be involved in treatment programs.

In the 1960s the US Nixon administration initiated a widely effective public education campaign about drugs, but in an attempt to gain electoral appeal this approach was later dropped in favour of increasing the number of user arrests. The drug use rate then resumed its upwards spiral.

The Abbott government’s “war on drugs” also emphasised punishment of users, and if other policy areas are anything to go by, the Turnbull regime will do the same.

Some 66 percent of funding regarding drugs is currently spent on law enforcement, and only 2 percent on harm reduction, which has led drug expert Gino Vumbaca to describe the anti-drug campaign as “a war against our own children”.

The interception of drug imports and the local manufacture of drugs are crucial elements in the struggle against drugs, but they must be supplemented by other measures. The NSW Commissioner of Police has likened the recent seizure of a record haul of illicit drugs to “taking a bucket of water from Sydney Harbour”.

Australia has had some very successful initiatives to counter the use of addictive substances, including compulsory plain paper packaging of cigarettes and the legal establishment of hygienic injecting rooms.

There is a cogent argument for decriminalising the use of marijuana, which is now widely recommended for easing the suffering of patients with incurable diseases, and in the short term does not pose the same sort of public hazard as other illicit drugs.

However, marijuana sold illicitly on the street is often laced with speed or other drugs to increase its addictive impact, and there is evidence that even home-grown marijuana may induce paranoia or impotence if used for long periods.

The cigarette industry is eagerly awaiting the legalising of marijuana use, and some experts have predicted a major increase in the use of marijuana if it is ever legalised, as has happened in some US states.

It’s therefore crucial that legalisation should be subject to strictly enforced requirements regarding purity of the product, graphic plain paper packaging and other public education programs warning of the health hazards involved, and assistance for those wanting to kick the habit.

Can the government deliver?

One potentially fruitful method of reducing the extent of drug use is to offer users a medical treatment to break the addiction. A clinical trial of lisdexamphetamine, a substitute



The organised crime squad from Perth Chem Centre Western Australia and Bunbury forensics arrived at a crime scene.

for ice, is currently being conducted by the University of NSW and the Australian National University, and is likely to provide an effective means of helping ice users beat their addiction.

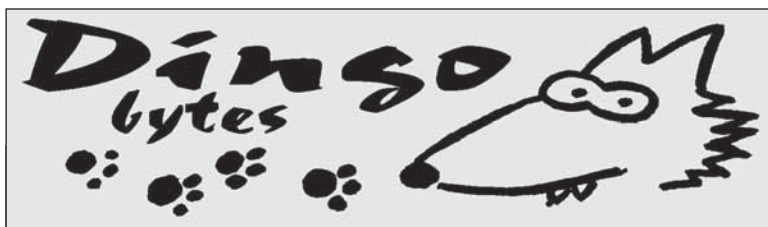
Education and rehabilitation programs are crucial, but their implementation depends on the willingness of governments to provide the necessary funding and support. Organisations dedicated to beating drug addiction are financially dependent on 12-monthly government grants, and are reluctant to criticise government drug policies for fear of losing the grant.

The Victorian government is giving ice users the option of undergoing intensive treatment rather than serving jail sentences. That’s a good idea because illicit drugs are rife in some jails. However, users often have to wait months for treatment in government institutions, and private treatment can cost \$30,000.

Labor’s initiative regarding plain packaging of cigarettes was highly successful. However, tobacco companies have launched an international court action, claiming the packaging law violates their intellectual property rights.

Moreover, under the proposed Pan Pacific Partnership trade agreement the Turnbull government is currently promoting, the tobacco industry could sue the government for loss of profits because of the packaging legislation.

Conservative Australian governments will never take effective action to deal with alcohol abuse, and the Turnbull government’s policies will have a minimum impact on other areas of the drugs crisis. To make real progress we will have to rely on the combined force of Australia’s left and progressive parties. ✪



Census data shows that 50 to 60 percent of free standing houses in inner and middle suburbs in Sydney and Melbourne are occupied by people aged 50 and over. They bought these houses many years ago when those suburbs were unpopular and neglected. They also paid 18 percent interest rates in the 1980s to own their homes. In other words, they worked hard to save for their homes and raise their families. Now there is a suggestion that they should “move on” because there is a strong demand from young families for their properties. A report released last week suggests that unless these older Australians downsize, “they will be occupying much of the existing stock of detached houses”. National Seniors Australia chief executive Michael O’Neill said the idea that older people should move out of their own homes was “offensive”. He pointed out that there were also significant practical reasons why older people were not leaving the homes they had set up 30 or 40 years ago. Community links were vital for everybody but especially for older people who have strong connections with their neighbours, local doctors and chemist shops. Policy makers and planners should not be trying to accommodate one section of the community at the expense of another. Young families do need support and assistance but kicking older people from their homes is not the solution.

Accommodation, or rather the lack of it, seems to be a problem everywhere, even in prisons. NSW prisons are so overcrowded that there was even a suggestion that mattresses should be put on the floor and three prisoners should be put to a cell instead of two. The number of adult prisoners in NSW has risen from 9,897 in June 2013 to 12,250 in November 2015. With prisons packed to the brim, what sort of rehabilitation can be talked about?

“We don’t cross-examine survivor witnesses. It’s always been our policy. We don’t wish to run the risk of re-traumatising them”, said Francis Sullivan, chief executive of the Catholic Church’s Truth, Justice and Healing Council (TJHC). He was referring to child sex abuse victims who testify before the Royal Commission. The TJHC has been represented by law firm Gilbert and Tobin in the royal commission and has not cross-examined any of the victims. Cardinal George Pell is to appear before the commission in December and he did engage a legal team to cross-examine the victims. His excuse is that serious allegations have been made against him personally and that’s why he needed his own lawyers to assist him. So much for caring about the abused.

Support
The Guardian
by donating to Press Fund



Fulfilling the dream

Marion Harper

We all have a dream of the kind of life we want. Generally, what people dream for is modest. We dream of security, a safe and protected environment, a job that pays a liveable wage, a secure roof over our heads, affordable healthcare, a good education for our children, access to culture, and a world free from war. These are very natural, moderate dreams, but even this is denied to many.

And why? It is because of the rapacious greed of a diminishing number of national and international parasites that currently control the world's economies. In their never-ending demand for more and more, they deny our dreams in order to fulfil theirs.

Anybody who thinks that this recent change of leadership will bring our dreams to fruition is misleading themselves. What has changed is the leader, not the policies. Unfortunately, the bulk of the people who share our dream have been conditioned by both sides of politics and the media to believe that our desire for a better life contributes to the government's financial woes. This conditioning is accepted and has become part of the people's psyche.

Today, we accept as the norm, processes and policies that have no place in a decent society. We have been brainwashed by lies, sound bite propaganda, almost like subliminal advertising. We are encouraged to see poverty in all its pernicious forms as if it is unfortunate but inevitable. We talk about "acceptable" levels of unemployment. We view housing as a commodity only for the fortunate, not as a right for all. We generally accept, without question, that privatisation is more efficient than public ownership. We are constantly brainwashed about corrupt unions as if therefore unionism should be dispensed with. We accept the term "free market" as if markets are free. Wars have become the new negotiating tool and are accepted as inevitable. We no longer discuss peace. Trashing the environment is okay, as long as it's good for the economy.

Vilified

We have remained silent while whole sections of our community are vilified, marginalised, made scapegoats: asylum seekers, Muslims, unionists, Indigenous Australians, to name a few. We have seen them locked up, victimised, exploited, even tortured ... and we have remained silent. We have remained acquiescent when our governments, without any consultation with Parliament, wage wars of aggression against innocent people around the world in the name of democracy, while we witness much of that same democracy destroyed at home.

While giving lip service to democracy, we lock up and torture those trying to escape the very wars we have inflicted on them and which we prosecute without genuine justification. And we can't even use the words that Jesus was purported to have used: "Forgive them father, they know not what they do", because the ruling class, the international parasites, know exactly what they are doing. They are astronomically increasing their share of the common wealth, which we and our forebears have created, and they are imposing an austerity regime on us to ensure they are free to do so.

All of the processes that I have described that are alien to a decent society are bundled into a program now well known to us as "austerity". Austerity is a word we are becoming

accustomed to and some say, well, the national debt has to be paid and we all have to pull our weight. The previous Treasurer went much further: he divided our nation into "lifters and leaners". He believes that the leaners are those on benefits (the aged, the unemployed, the poor) and the lifters as large corporations, politicians, the wealthiest section of our community.

Austerity con

The need for this austerity is a con and it is working. Austerity is necessary, we are told, because we are in huge debt. In order to service this debt, we must all accept a more austere way of life. However, the debt is not ours, we didn't incur it and austerity is not being imposed on those that did. How has austerity affected those who are called the leaners? To reveal some aspects of this, I draw on a report by St Vincent De Paul, the social arm of the Catholic Church.

They said, and I quote from sections of that report:

"Australia currently faces the paradox of poverty in a land of plenty. Vinnies believes a good government acts as a good global citizen: it does not build its prosperity at the expense of others. The statement argues that a good society does not humiliate any of its people. People are humiliated when they are denied the essentials of life – a place to live, a place to work and a place to learn.

"What is austerity policy? Austerity is a word that describes a range of policies that generally involve central government reducing its spending. There is a range of flow-on ramifications from these policies. These include service cuts and reducing the size of the public service, outsourcing to private or not-for-profit providers, devolving powers to local government, and trying to place more responsibility in the hands of individuals themselves. Vinnies believes any austerity measures that result in cuts to essential social expenditure, such as education, housing and income support payments are politically rather than economically motivated. We are concerned that our identity as a nation is changing, becoming less fair, kind, and compassionate on the one hand and more individualistic on the other."

What has austerity meant overseas? St Vinnies says, "In the United Kingdom, austerity was a core plank of Thatcherism, and has since been revived by the UK Conservative Party with the 'Big Society' policy from 2010. Austerity in the UK has resulted in deep and universal funding cuts. Social housing spending has been reduced by 52% since 2010, and this seems to have contributed to a 14% increase in homelessness over that time. There have also been cuts in spending on mental health services, leading to increased relapse and readmission rates.

"Local communities have not been given extra resources to help manage their new responsibilities – in fact, local governments have had severe funding cuts. Charities have not had funding increased to meet increased need – in fact, there has been a 35% funding cut to the religious and community sector. Volunteering and charitable donations have not increased. In short, the vacuum in services has not been filled in any way. Moreover, outsourcing has resulted in predictable drops in the level of care and service provided, as the corporate structure of the providers is geared towards profits rather than people."

A telling example of this appalling policy is the impact on low-income families, for



example, in Yorkshire. According to the *Yorkshire Evening News*, they experienced soaring hospital admissions for malnutrition. In 2014 there were more than 27,000 suffering from malnutrition in a wealthy nation like the UK in the 21st century.

Recent fiscal policy in the United States has also seen austerity measures take hold. What began as a banking crisis soon saw the blame and the cost pushed downwards, and local units of government, and individuals, appear to be paying the price. Limitations have been placed on local government spending, which has seen cuts in pensions, and increased user fees. Privatisation has also taken hold, along with selling public assets. As well as this, there have been severe cuts in public sector employment, in some areas as much as 70%. Very lean local government has proven unable to deliver the range of services required of it; for example, a surprising number of cities have had to turn off their street lights due to an inability to pay providers.

"Death of a future"

Austerity across Europe has resulted in massive poverty and no resolution of the problems that face those countries. There are no dreams for people in any of these places, just the nightmare of poverty and no future. Meanwhile, politicians in Australia and in other wealthy First World nations give no leadership, have no solutions except further hardship for the majority while wealth and power are centralised in fewer and fewer hands.

Associate Professor Lucas Walsh, Associate Dean of the Faculty of Education at Monash University, seemed to sum it up well in *The Age* (08-09-2015) in an article headed "World's problems rob our children of a future". He says,

in part, "The image of Syrian refugee Aylan Kurdee lying dead on the beach evoked widespread outrage and despair, but something deeper and equally distressing was lying on that beach, the death of a future ... the future seems bleak. Young people must navigate seas of uncertainty and are acutely aware of this."

Professor Walsh says, "Figures published this year suggest that 73 million young people worldwide are looking for work." He concludes: "If there is one final effect of that image of Aylan on the beach it is to signify the death of a future ... one can only hope that his death is more than this week's trending item on social media, but a catalyst for a whole new way of thinking about our shared problems of humanity. We are no longer talking about the end of history, but the end of the future."

We have to do more than dream. We need drastic action. In the UK, where the Labour Party has elected a new leader, Jeremy Corbyn, the Murdoch media lost no time in describing him as an outrageous socialist who would destroy the country. I was privileged to attend one of his meetings in the UK. Twelve hundred people packed into a hall to hear him speak. These meetings were duplicated across the UK and resulted in a surge of membership to the Labour Party, exceeding 400,000. Corbyn is not calling for the overthrow of capitalism (more's the pity). He is calling only for a radical overhaul of that system in Britain. Yet the ruling class and its lackeys, including many in his own party, are screaming blue murder and will stop at nothing to destroy him. So, what dreadful proposals has this "terrible" radical called for?

I quote here from part of his address to the meeting I attended:

"For those of us both within and outside the world of politics, it's been a summer like no other. We have been making the point for the past five years of ideologically driven austerity that it doesn't have to be like this, that austerity is a political choice not an economic necessity. A fuse has been lit and a new kind of more inclusive, less personalised politics has been let out of the bottle. There is an optimism about this campaign that has attracted people to come to meetings and debate political issues.

"Whatever the outcome, it is clear that a fundamental change of approach to our politics is long overdue. Despite the barrage of attacks; hysteria and deliberate misrepresentation of the positions we have put forward, it is our message which is resonating. What is extreme is not the popular proposals we are putting forward but this government's cynical attempt to pay

The need for this austerity is a con and it is working. Austerity is necessary, we are told, because we are in huge debt. In order to service this debt, we must all accept a more austere way of life. However, the debt is not ours, we didn't incur it and austerity is not being imposed on those that did.

A children's story

The Little Chilli Pot That Could Not



for a crisis on the backs of the poorest and most vulnerable. This was a crisis brought about by rampant speculation in the City and the deference of successive governments to that corporate lobby.

"Our campaign, guided by ideas of social justice and prosperity for all rather than a select few, is one of pragmatism: for a strategic approach in which business, the state, and the population work cooperatively to create wealth; and for that wealth to reach all sections of society and all regions and nations of our country. Our approach to policy making would be to democratise and open up our politics. If elected I will appoint a shadow cabinet of all talents, drawing in all wings of the party and our swelling membership to debate the future direction of our Party and country. Labour must become a campaigning force dedicated to defeating the Conservative's politics, and then to defeat them electorally in five years' time.

"Our party has been reinvigorated in this leadership campaign and the Tories should be under no doubt – we will use the surge in excitement about progressive politics to pursue them at every turn and focus our energies on a massive growth in campaigning politics. We conceded too much of the economic narrative to George Osborne over the last five years. Far from losing because we were not 'aspirational' enough, we lost because we failed to articulate a convincing enough vision of how those aspirations would be achieved."

How we need this vision here, with a conservative anti-union, anti-worker, anti environment government, albeit one with a new leader, a leader who is constrained by half of his parliamentary team voting against him because he is too "moderate" for them.

With a Labor Opposition here with little positive policy and scared into submission by the media and a desire to get into office, Jeremy Corbyn in the UK has a dream and it is one vigorously shared by hundreds of thousands in the UK.

Our dreams won't be realised by Malcolm Turnbull or Bill Shorten. If we want our dreams to become reality, we have to build our own movement. Corbyn shows it can be done. We urge those who share this vision to join us. Together we can achieve it.

A talk given at the Melbourne Uniting Church on September 20, 2015 by Marion Harper, Honorary Secretary of the Melbourne Uniting Church.

The Beacon ✦

In a place like this, with people like you and me,
Was a cooking pot, filled to the brim with delicious chilli
All the people sought its chilli, yummy, tasty and hot!
But oh no! Although it wanted to serve all... The Chilli
Pot... Could not!

Because of some greedy people, fat, wealthy and mean!
They claimed ownership of pot, chilli and every last bean!
These were the fat cats!

Although fat cats few, and the chilli was vast!
"Only cold nibbles and drops for the poorer class!"

Because of the markets, banks and credit
The fat cats owned the pot, and all things in it!
The people who cooked and made the fat cats fat
Were poor, hungry and thin, hunched with bad backs.

The Chilli Pot was sad, it wanted to feed all!
But almost all suffered, bellies empty, fed scraps cold.
The pot grew angry, and its chilli began to boil ...

Tired of seeing the hungry people, slave work and toil.

"Enough is Enough!" Roared the Chilli Pot!

"You have had your fill!"

The fat cats were shocked! And scared stiff and still.

"Brothers and sisters, no longer shall you go without!"

All people rose up, inspired by the shout!

"Rise and remove these fat cats from our lives!"

No longer shall you be left and ignored, them dismissing
your cries!"

The people were stirred, shouting and cheering!

Marching in protest while the fat cats were fearing.

The Chilli Pot was bubbling hot, glowing a bright red!

The fat cats were captured, tried and no longer fed.

All the people chanted, "Hurrah! Hooray!"

All can have chilli, all are equal this day!

The chilli pot was happy, and all were ready for food!

But his chilli was all burnt! After his revolting mood!

The Chilli pot felt awful, the people could not eat!

Nothing left for anyone after the fat cats' defeat.

But no one was sad, everyone then laughed!

Together, people and pot, they began the new graft.

The vegetables chopped, fresh meat prepared.

All the work was equal, all labour was shared.

Everyone chipped in, and help make the batch!

Singing "For all people and pot", the pot then hatched!

The smell was amazing, the best ever known!

The masses did dribble and their stomachs did groan!

"Come one, come all!" Bellowed the smiling Pot!

"Enjoy OUR chilli while it is piping hot!"

Everyone had a bowl, and was stunned by its taste!

All people full and happy, not just the fat cats they'd chased.

The people's chilli, made for one and all!

Each person now fed, left feeling 10 feet tall

So came to an end, the pot and people's blight.

When the oppressed and poor, stand together and unite!

Chris
CommunistAttack



Protests after video release of shooting

Chauncey K Robinson

CHICAGO: The investigation into the death of Laquan McDonald rages on in Chicago, as authorities released the dashboard footage of the shooting to the public. Laquan McDonald, a young African-American man, was walking down a Chicago street on the night of October 20, 2014, when he was fatally shot 16 times by a white officer. It was reported by police that McDonald was carrying a four-inch knife and behaving erratically.

According to a spokesperson for the police union an officer told the 17-year-old to drop the knife. When McDonald reportedly didn't comply, the officer opened fire on the teenager. McDonald died on the scene. Van Dyke, the 37-year-old police officer who killed McDonald, has been on paid desk duty since the incident.

It has taken over a year for the footage to be released to the public, but on November 19, a Cook County judge ruled that the Chicago Police Department should make the dashboard video public no later than November 25. Mayor Rahm Emanuel, whose office sought to keep the video hidden from the public for over a year, announced he would not seek to have the judge's decision overturned on appeal.

The mayor's office released a statement saying, "Police officers are entrusted to uphold the law, and to provide safety to our residents. In this case unfortunately, it appears an officer violated that trust at every level." At a later press conference on the issue Mayor Emanuel said, "This officer didn't uphold the law. In my view, he took the law into his own hands. He didn't build the trust we want to see. And he wasn't about providing safety and security. So at every point, he violated what we entrust." At the press conference Emanuel urged Chicago residents to keep their protests peaceful.

Many who seek justice in the McDonald case criticised the city and the mayor's, initial decision to keep the video from the public. Reverend Jesse Jackson was quoted as saying, "He [McDonald] was shot 16 times 13 months ago and the tape was delayed and the officer was not arrested, not fired, not charged. ... The decision was made that this video was too provocative and they should lock it into a legal process," Jackson said. "This is a public camera. It belongs to us."

The video, being described as intensely graphic, shows McDonald being repeatedly shot while lying on the ground. The video also shows McDonald's body convulsing quickly several times, consistent with the striking shots. Many say the video might never have been released had it not been for the work of freelance journalist Brandon Smith, who successfully filed, under the Freedom of Information Act, to get it released.

Jason Van Dyke, the officer who shot McDonald, turned himself in to authorities. The Chicago *Sun-Times* first reported that Van Dyke will be charged with first-degree murder in connection to the shooting death. This case would mark the first time in 35 years that a Chicago police officer has been charged with first-degree murder for an on-duty fatality. Van Dyke could face a minimum of 20 years in prison if convicted.

Many in the city are preparing for inevitable protests and outrage as the footage is viewed. The mayor's office reportedly met with many church and community leaders in order to urge calm in their respective communities. The Reverend Ira Acree, pastor of the Greater St John Bible Church in Chicago's West side Austin neighbourhood, who attended the meeting with the mayor, is quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* as saying, "Many in my community feel betrayed, many are so very angry and protests are imminent, and from the meeting today it's very clear Mayor Emanuel knows



"Many in my community feel betrayed, many are so very angry and protests are imminent ... we are hoping these protests and demonstrations will be peaceful. But we know they are coming, because if there was no protest that would mean we've become immune to this madness."

that. He put a lot of pressure on us to use our influence to make sure these protests or demonstrations are peaceful ... Of course, we did respond to the mayor that there are so many people so angry and so disappointed in how they've been played by the city, the Police Department and the state's attorney. There is a group that is not listening to him and not listening to us either, but nevertheless we are hoping these protests and demonstrations will be peaceful. But we know they are coming, because if there was no protest that would mean we've become immune to this madness."

Since April, the investigation into McDonald's death has been handled jointly by federal and state authorities, spearheaded by the Chicago branch of the FBI. The city had already reached a settlement with McDonald's family, voting unanimously back in April to pay US\$5 million even before the family filed a lawsuit.

Although the lawyer for the family states that McDonald's mother would rather not have had the video released, it was explained that the family still believes that what is "important is that the community be told the truth about what happened,

about how he was shot. The fact that there was a narrative put out there by the Chicago police, by the union initially, that a police officer had to shoot [McDonald] in self defence, that he was approaching a police officer and lunged at a police officer with a knife, is not true. He was shot while he was walking away."

Just hours after the release of the video protestors took to the streets of Roosevelt and State to block traffic, while chanting "16 shots", referring to the number of times McDonald was reportedly struck by Van Dyke's bullets.

People's World ✪

Private renters powerless

Mike Dailly

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," wrote Charles Dickens in a Tale of Two Cities. Govan Law Centre's (GLC) report on Glasgow's private-rented sector tells the tale of one city and it's a story that may surprise and shock you in its squalor.

We searched out and listened to the personal experiences of a wide range of tenants in Glasgow's private-rented sector.

Our report is their story.

Their voice represents a common experience which we have no reason to believe is not replicated across Scotland and the rest of Britain. Our study, funded by the National Lottery, reveals that most tenants feel powerless and worry that they have little more than a month's security of tenure.

While short assured tenancies in Scotland have to run for at least six months, they can operate on a rolling monthly basis thereafter. While tenants have significant legal

rights, our report shows they are frightened to rely on them for fear of their tenancy being ended. Who wants to be homeless?

One thread running through almost all of our tenant experiences is they never chose to enter the private rented sector.

They had little or no choice as to where they lived, more often than not they were desperate and confronted with the "take it or leave it" harsh reality of life.

This goes to the very heart of our finding that tenants have little or no power in their relationship with their landlord. They are over a barrel all of the time. It's a stressful and unhealthy way to live.

What flows from this unequal relationship is a litany of disrepairs that never get fixed, from dampness and mould, inadequate heating, broken windows and really poor decor.

And yet half of our survey group struggled to pay their rent, sometimes going without food.

The shocking irony is tenants

in the private-rented sector can pay almost double the equivalent social-rented sector rent – but instead of getting a lovely home, they pay twice as much for a grubby flat.

Legal protections were routinely ignored such as the tenancy deposit scheme where a landlord has to place deposits in a third-party regulated scheme. In practice people's deposits were regularly pocketed by unscrupulous landlords.

Communication between tenants and landlords was generally poor, with rudeness, threatening behaviour, and in more severe cases assault and unlawful harassment.

From our research we now understand why so many tenants put up with awful living conditions and nasty landlord behaviour. It comes down to a combination of low expectations – people have been ground down – and the fact they have no choice, no options.

They are ripe for exploitation and that is precisely what happens to the many, not the few. Those

in power have been asleep at the wheel while these immoral, unethical and often unlawful practices have spawned across Scotland.

The private-rented sector has almost doubled in the last 12 years and now represents 14.6 percent of all households in Scotland. Eighteen percent of all homeless applications come via the private-rented sector.

In addition to rent paid privately, there is almost half a billion pounds in housing benefit going into the private-rented sector each year. And yet there is very little control of quality standards or indeed compliance with Scots housing law.

Three-quarters of private-rented sector landlords have a single home, while 29 percent are "accidental landlords" unable to sell their properties. A significant number of landlords view renting out properties as a cash cow.

The tenant pays his or her rent, and the landlord collects it. The law is ignored as a matter of course and

people are afraid to enforce their rights. The system is broken. It is unfit for a modern 21st-century Scotland that talks about equality of opportunity for the many.

Our report illustrates very powerfully that too many private-rented sector tenants have no expectations, choice, security of tenure or indeed a proper voice and stake in the policy-making process.

This isn't a minority group, it's the norm. This has to change and the Scottish government has the power to change it – even if so many of our politicians are private landlords.

The Private Housing (Tenancies) Bill recently published by the Scottish government will make it easier to evict and will do absolutely nothing to tackle the problems that the Govan Law Centre's report has identified. That isn't good enough.

Mike Dailly is principal solicitor and solicitor advocate at Govan Law Centre, Glasgow. *Morning Star* ✪

Turkey's act is unjustifiable

Turkey's shooting down of a Russian Sukhoi Su-24 bomber marks a dramatic escalation of tension, heightened by the likelihood that it was premeditated.

Ankara insists that the warplane entered Turkish air space, but territorial infringements happen all over the world and usually attract diplomatic protests rather than air-to-air missiles.

Decades of hostility in Europe between NATO countries and the Soviet Union, or since 1991 Russia, have not seen a downing of the other side's aircraft since the 1950s.

It is inconceivable that Turkish pilots would have fired on a Russian warplane without prior orders that this was acceptable or possibly even required.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's speedy appeal for the convening of a NATO extraordinary meeting in Brussels was clearly intended to canvass support for its provocative action.

Ankara claims to have radar footage that the Su-24 crossed the Turkish border while Russian President Vladimir Putin maintains that it was one kilometre inside Syrian territory.

Whatever the Russian plane's precise location when it was shot down – its wreckage is four kilometres inside Syria and the pilots clearly bailed out well within the Syrian

border – it is self-evident that at no time did it pose a threat to Turkey or the Turkish population.

Moscow has said that the plane was returning to the Khmeimim air base after attacking targets in Latakia province linked to the Syrian Turkmen Army opposition group, many of whose members come from Russia's Caucasus region.

The Turkmen group is armed and trained by Ankara, which had proposed to Washington during the G20 summit in Antalya that the US and Turkey carry out a joint air operation over Syria to support its activities against the Syrian army.

Despite being bracketed with the Free Syrian Army by the US as "moderates," they share operations on a regular basis with Al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham. The Erdogan regime fears that it has been losing influence in Washington – and, by extension, with NATO – in light of US forces' air support to the Kurdish People's Defence Units (YPG) at Kobane and elsewhere along Syria's border with Turkey.

This feeling has been exacerbated by the destruction by US warplanes of 283 oil tankers, following on from 116 last week, that were used to transfer oil looted from Syrian oilfields for sale in regional states, including Turkey, which has

provided about half of all revenues received by ISIS.

Russian authorities announced that its planes had blasted about 1,000 tankers in five days last week, which raises questions as to why the US-led coalition that began bombing Syria over a year ago – ostensibly against ISIS – has only just settled on these vital targets.

Putin's bitter observation that ISIS oil-smuggling operations now have the backing of the Turkish military will not have been a throwaway comment.

The same applies to his complaint that Erdogan dispensed with the diplomatic nicety to contact Moscow and offer regret over what had taken place, preferring to mobilise NATO allies behind the unjustifiable act.

Sergey Lavrov's cancellation of today's planned visit to Ankara and the likely – and potentially costly – suspension of Russian tourist visits to Turkey illustrate the chilly nature of bilateral relations.

Whether that remains the sum total of Moscow's response to its losses will depend to a large extent on the attitude of Turkey's NATO allies.

The key question, as never before, is whether world powers view ISIS as the main enemy or not. *Morning Star* ☛



The moment the Russian Sukhoi Su-24 jet was shot down.

It is self-evident that at no time did it pose a threat to Turkey or the Turkish population.



Region Briefs

Three-hundred Vietnamese students from the University of Foreign Trade, the Law University and the National University of Economics and many more, participated in a meeting called Young National Assembly of Vietnam on November 25 in Hanoi, simulating the country's plenary meeting of the National Assembly of Vietnam (NA). The meeting was part of a border project that was organised by the NA office. The project started in July this year, helping young people to raise their voices in politics, understand the working mechanism of the NA and exchange views with young NA deputies. Participants in the meeting suggested that universities should help students to gain access to internships and employment at state-owned enterprises and organisations.

The National Assembly of Vietnam recently passed a new law on referenda. The law contains eight chapters with 52 articles and will come into force in 2016. One third of the NA deputies, the NA Standing Committee, President, and the government can propose a referendum, and the NA is the legal body to organise a referendum. A referendum is considered valid if more than half of at least three fourths of voters chose yes: two thirds if it is for a constitutional change. The day of any referendum should be a Sunday and voters do not include Vietnamese who study, live and work overseas.

The Japanese National Confederation of Trade Unions recently held a three-day symposium, exchanging their experience with international participants in labour struggle against the machinations of global corporations. There were 140 people at the joint symposium, including participants from the US, Australia, France, South Korea and Indonesia. Guest speaker, Professor Stephanie Luce, stated that it was necessary for workers to unite in the current globalisation process. The Confederation's General Secretary, Inoue Hisashi, called for increasing international solidarity, alleviating poverty and social inequality, and securing decent working conditions for workers.

China recently held a ceremony to award 60 medical groups and 280 individuals for their outstanding work in fighting against Ebola in western African countries as well as in China. In his letter, Chinese President Xi Jinping praised the "noble spirit" of Chinese medical workers who offered medical aid and helped to control the epidemic. He said "China's all-out efforts in helping Ebola-inflicted African countries demonstrated China's image as a responsible country and significantly fortified and developed the Sino-African friendship". He called on all related factors to prioritise public health and security, disease prevention, and public health emergency responses. The country has sent more than A\$125 million worth of aid and hundreds of medical workers to the Ebola-stricken countries in West Africa.

Ankara's oil business with ISIS

Moscow has accused Turkey of helping Islamic State in the illegal oil trade which helps finance the terrorist group. According to analysts, Russian air strikes in Syria are disrupting the profitable deals for Turkish middlemen, including Ankara officials.

Turkish social media has posted photos of Turkish President Recep Erdogan's son Necmettin Bilal having dinner in an Istanbul restaurant with an alleged ISIS leader, who it is claimed participated in massacres in Syria's Homs and Rojava, the Kurdish name for Syrian Kurdistan or Western Kurdistan.

There is speculation Bilal Erdogan is directly involved in the black market oil business with Islamic State.

"IS has big money, hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars,

from selling oil. In addition they are protected by the military of an entire nation. One can understand why they are acting so boldly and blatantly. Why they kill people in such atrocious ways. Why they commit terrorist acts across the world, including in the heart of Europe," said Russian President Vladimir Putin after a Turkish F16 downed a Russian Su-24 jet near the Turkish-Syrian border.

Last October, the US Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen said Islamic State was earning US\$1 million a day from oil sales. "According to our information, as of last month, ISIL [now more commonly known as ISIS] was selling oil at substantially discounted prices to a variety of middlemen, including some from Turkey, who then transported the oil to be resold. It also

appears that some of the oil emanating from territory where ISIL operates has been sold to Kurds in Iraq, and then resold into Turkey," he said.

According to Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, the middlemen in Turkey are not only entrepreneurs, but are Ankara officials. Turkey is protecting Islamic State because of "direct financial interest of some Turkish officials relating to the supply of oil products refined by plants controlled by ISIS."

Russian political analyst Igor Yushkov from the National Energy Security Fund said Moscow's anti-terror operation in Syria makes such business much more difficult.

"Nowadays the truck columns have to disperse and their payload has grown smaller. Before the operation buyers would visit the oilfields themselves, now they have had to organise a new cluster," he told *Gazeta.ru*. He added that oil extraction will decrease because ISIS lacks qualified specialists.

A member of the expert council of the Russian Oil Industry Union Eldar Kasayev said Islamic State is selling oil at US\$15–25 per barrel, which is much cheaper than the Brent benchmark, trading at US\$45–50.

"By reselling it, Ankara has the opportunity to earn extra income and continue to bomb the Kurds, saying it is bombing radicals," he said. *RT* ☛

BE MORE THAN A TOURIST

JOIN THE

CUBBA

BRIGADE

★

Dec 27 2015 to Jan 16 2016 cubabrigade.org.au

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Sobering thoughts

By comparison with other countries, much has been accomplished in this vast continent of Australia, since the first settlement by Europeans in a mere 250 plus years. Centuries of development in other lands has left us with glorious examples of human artistic genius in all "genre"; wonderful open air concerts, ballet and opera, such as the ones on the floating stage or Sydney Harbour. We are fortunate to be able to see presentations on TV from other places as well.

What is the sobering thought? Have read the book by James W Douglas titled "JFK and the Unspeakable - Why he died and

why it matters", published by Simon & Schuster, first published in 2008. Meticulously researched and referenced. For me, the really sobering thought is in chapter six "Washington and Dallas", last paragraph on page 235 to the end of the first paragraph on page 243.

The author reveals the plans of the generals for a pre-emptive first strike on the Soviet Union, for the President's approval - "We could kill 140 million Russians and destroy their missile installations, at a cost of 30 million American lives, should they retaliate."

We are still living under a cloud of potential war. An English comrade of mine once said: "If the wealthiest people can't have their luxury and privileges, they would rather destroy everything." Then there are the Armageddonists, and religious, like a workmate named Wimpy, who said: "I would rather be hit by an atom bomb than live under communism!" He was so large it would have needed one for him alone.

If one reads the book by Douglas on the assassination of John F Kennedy, he reveals the sinister plans of the secret forces with their policy of a pre-emptive first nuclear

strike against the Soviet Union. Not unknown to the most progressive of course. As a young couple, Connie and I took part in the Aldermaston anti-nuclear protests in London.

After migrating to South Australia in 1956, we held an anti-nuclear stand in the Party, peace committee marches, Hiroshima and Vietnam war protests. Now 90, these sobering thoughts give an avenue to express my concern for the future.

If I need an apology for this outburst blame the Concert du Paris.

Les Purkis
Adelaide

George Bender's death must not be in vain

The death of Chinchilla farmer, George Bender, last month touched the hearts of thousands around Australia and overseas.

Jodi Meynell - a self-described "nobody" - was so affected by George's death by suicide following 10 years of harassment by the coal seam gas (CSG) industry that she started her own online petition

change.org/farmergeorge directed to Queensland Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk.

In the first two days, more than 50,000 ordinary people signed the petition asking that George's death not be in vain and that the Premier stop CSG companies from bullying farmers. The number of signatories has swelled to more than 75,000 and is still growing since the petition went up on October 21. More than 16,000 people have also left angry and sad comments on the site.

Ms Meynell, a Brisbane real estate agent, belongs to no activist groups but simply saw the injustice of the CSG industry's bullying and wanted to do something about it.

"It's just wrong that someone can be bullied to death for trying to protect his farm and his livelihood so I decided to start the petition," she said.

"I was totally blown away by the immediate reaction but at the same time I'm not that surprised because nobody would want another farmer to take his life under such extreme distress.

"Farmers and other people should have the right to say no to

mining companies coming in and taking over.

The Queensland government should consider the petition as it prepares to meet with all Australian governments on December 4 at the Council of Australia Governments (COAG), to address the issue of forced access by mining companies to Australia farms.

The reaction to the petition proved the Queensland government needed to go to COAG next week with a proposal to give landholders and Traditional Owners the legal right to say no to mining.

Queenslanders are sick of our government letting multi-national mining companies ride roughshod over our communities. The state government needs to find some backbone and take action to protect people in the firing line of the mining industry.

The Queensland government must give landholders the legal right to say "no" to mining and it must go to COAG leading the way on a new path forward so that the bullying and coercion of Australian landholders stops immediately.

Drew Hutton
President, Lock the Gate Alliance

Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

Capitalism and dying early

The main publicity shouters for capitalism - "government spokespersons" or PR firms, depending on whether you are referring to the parrot or its trainer - have for the last century proclaimed the USA to be at the forefront of global development. The American people are constantly told that they live in "the greatest country on Earth" and that the rest of the world's population envies them their comfortable even luxurious lifestyle. It's been drummed into them so constantly that most Americans, even poor Americans, actually believe it, despite the very visible signs that should tell them it is not true.

A huge - and growing - number of Americans only survive because of government food stamps (a peculiarly American form of the dole). Homelessness and soup kitchens are everywhere. The "greatest country on Earth" boast is looking more and more hollow every day. With poverty and hopelessness on the rise in the USA, there is disillusionment among middle-aged white middle class and working class Americans who were raised in the '50s and '60s and told that the "American dream" was peculiarly applicable to them. They not only now see it passing out of their reach; they also realise that it never really was within their reach.

Working class people in the US are under greater financial stress than they have been since the Great Depression. In fact, evictions have surpassed the level they were at in the Depression. Bank failures, high rents, the issuing willy-nilly of junk mortgages to entice

people into serious debt, the bursting of housing bubbles, have all become commonplace in the US and they have all contributed to destroying people's confidence and security. And this is beginning to have a serious impact on the nation's health.

Since 1998, while other developed countries saw mortality rates fall, in the US they have actually been rising among poor whites. In their despair, many people in this category are turning to suicide in order to escape from a reality they can no longer endure. Many others have sought to escape through drugs and alcohol, with equally fatal results. One "benefit" of capitalism in the US that contributes to this situation is the easy access there to powerful prescription painkillers and cheaper "high quality" heroin.

In percentage terms, the sharp rise in death rates among white middle-aged Americans does not seem very high (0.5% a year), but it has claimed nearly as many lives in the past 15 years (half a million) as the spread of AIDS (650,000 in the US), according to research by two economics professors at Princeton University, Anne Case and Angus Deaton.

The turnaround reverses decades of falling mortality rates achieved through better medical care and lifestyle choices.

The findings emerged from a review of national surveys in the US and six other rich industrialised countries, namely the UK, Australia, France, Germany, Sweden and Canada.

Case and Deaton found that death rates in the US from drugs, alcohol and suicides had risen for middle-aged white men and women

across all educational backgrounds. But the less educated, and hence poorest, bore the brunt of the trend: suicides for example up by 81%.

In a statement, Deaton said: "We need to think hard about controlling the prescriptions of opioid painkillers. The Federal Drug Administration recently approved Oxycontin for kids.

"While some kids are in awful, terminal pain, and can clearly benefit from it, the scope for abuse is there, especially if pharmaceutical companies misbehave, as they have done in the past. But if what is happening is an epidemic of despair, that people on the bottom of the economic heap are being increasingly left out as inequality expands, then what we are seeing is just one more terrible consequence of slow growth and growing inequality."

In other words, you need to be rich to enjoy the American dream. But then, most of us knew that already, didn't we? As for those who are not rich, living in the world's leading capitalist country is actually bad for your health. The dream would seem to have become a nightmare.

Another type of nightmare is touched on in an article in the US on-line journal *Tom-Dispatch* by US "journalist and social justice activist" Laura Gottesdiener, associate editor for *Waging Nonviolence*.

"To my mind, ... the truly disconcerting stories are the ones that arrive at my desk with so little information that it's almost impossible to say or write anything with certainty. And so I can't really tell you what happened on August 12, when 'a suspected US drone strike

in Yemen ... killed five suspected Al-Qaida militants', as the Associated Press reported in the standard language used to obscure attacks for which we, in the United States, have essentially no real information whatsoever.

"Who were these five people, I wonder, killed suddenly as they drove along a road somewhere to the east of the city of Mukalla? Statistically speaking, there's a reasonable likelihood that they were innocent people. As the *Intercept* recently reported, based on leaked secret documents, 90% of those killed during one recent period in the US drone campaign in Afghanistan were not the sought-after targets. Without being there, however, I can't tell you who those five Yemeni 'militants' were, or what lives they led, or how many children they had, or even whether they were children themselves - and the odds are that neither can the Pentagon.

"Nor can I tell you what happened when the US launched its first drone strike in Syria on August 4. I remember scouring different news sources over the following mornings for the most basic piece of information: how many people - if any - had been killed. That was, after all, what I was doing: waking up early and counting the death toll from America's endless wars.

"But in the days and weeks that followed, the Pentagon's spokesman refused to offer specifics of any sort on this strike. It's possible he didn't have any. And so, to this day, even the number of deaths remains unknown."

The USA the greatest country on Earth? Sure, it is. ★



Members of the United States Navy serve the homeless at Dorothy's Soup Kitchen, Salinas, California.

Gifts with a message

Pete Andrew Revisited

One of the most popular spots on the CPA's website is Pete's Corner. Peter Andrew has been producing cartoons for the *Guardian* since 2003. He is one of a number of volunteers who contribute in different ways in the production and distribution of the paper. His artistic skills in portraying political leaders match those of any professional cartoonist. His politics is sharp and penetrating and humour at times merciless.

The *Guardian* has produced a booklet, *Pete Andrew Revisited*, with a selection of 46 of his cartoons from over those years. They provide a very interesting reminder of political developments and the repetition of themes is striking as leaders change but the policies and subservience to the US do not.

The booklet looks great with a glossy cover and the more recent cartoons in colour. Everyone loves cartoons. What better present can you buy than a book of cartoons!

At \$10, including packaging and postage*, you cannot go wrong. Buy one for yourself and a few more for presents. Proceeds go to the *Guardian* press fund.

T-shirts

"Improve your Marx" is one of our most popular t-shirts with students. And cash-strapped students always appreciate clothing as a gift. The shirts are white with black image and text.

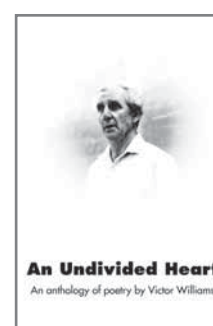
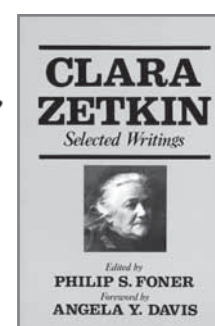
Our Che Guevara t-shirt is also very popular with younger people as well as adults. It is available in white or red with black print.

There are also the blue Eureka and the grey Lenin t-shirts to choose from.

T-shirts are \$25* each.



Pete Andrew Revisited



Clara Zetkin: Selected Writings

"In January, 1915, the British journal *Labour Woman* wrote of Clara Zetkin: 'She is Socialist in her very fibre, and she is a fighter ready to face death rather than give way in any issue of import in the people's struggle.'

"Through her journal *Gleichheit (Equality)*, with a circulation in 1914 of 125,000 ... she was able to exert a powerful influence in the formation of socialist and communist policy on the woman question, and on the policy of a number of trade unions toward women workers ...

"Clara Zetkin called upon the workers to throw their whole power into the struggle against imperialist wars without the slightest hesitation or reserve."

From the introduction by Philip S Foner.

\$26*, edited by Philip S Foner International Publishers, NY, 1984, 206 pages.

An Undivided Heart

An Undivided Heart is an anthology of poetry by well-known communist Vic Williams. It is a rich volume portraying working class struggle. There is a forward by Hannah Middleton.

My mates all call me Banjo Bill,
and sing this song as we throw and fill,
our backs are bent but our arms are strong,
and swing in time to our drawing song.

From "Banjo Bill".

At \$10* it makes a great gift that offers a great insight into working class history and can be read over and over again.

Published by New Age Publishers for the CPA, 2014, paperback, 32 pages.

ABC of social and political knowledge

The ABC of social and political knowledge is a series of books which give very clear, easy to understand explanations of basic political economy, philosophy and struggle. They are small paperback volumes, ranging anywhere from 150 to 300 pages with a very useful glossary of terms at the back of each edition. The following volumes make a great set to begin with:

What is Surplus Value? (Vol 4)

Classes and the Class Struggle? (Vol 14)

What is the Party? (Vol 15)

What is the Working People's Power? (Vol 19)

What are Trade Unions? (Vol 21)

They are normally \$10 each* (including postage and handling) but in the Spirit of the Festive Season we are offering the five volumes for \$40 or three for \$25.

Mark Twain

Mark Twain is well known for his humorous writings. There is a cloak of silence surrounding his political works including *King Leopold's Soliloquy*.

This "forgotten" work, written in support of the people of the Congo is not to be found in the standard collected works.

It is a biting satire fired with the hate of injustice, a historic exposé of imperialism. It roused the world to the horrors of the brutal crimes of colonisation in the Congo in the early 20th century.

Mark Twain took seriously the writer's duty to be the conscience of his time. He travelled widely, "I am an anti-imperialist," he told the press, in 1900. "I am opposed to having the eagle put his talons on any other land."

\$8.50*, International Publishers, NY, paperback - 95 pages

For more great books and gift ideas visit the CPA's website: cpa.org.au

Contact: 0296998844 shop@cpa.org.au 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

*All prices are for within Australia. International orders available on request. Credit cards incl type, name, number & exp date. All Cheques/Money Orders to "CPA".

Subscription to **The Guardian**

12 months: \$100 (\$80 conc/\$150 solidarity) 6 months: \$55 (\$40 conc/\$80 solidarity)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

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

Phone in details on 02 9699 8844

Or send to: Guardian Subscriptions

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

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

Card# _____

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

Signature: _____

The Guardian

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

Editor: Tom Pearson

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

Printed by Spotpress
24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl Marrickville 2204

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

Australian Marxist Review

Journal of the Communist Party of Australia



IDEAS
THEORY
POLICIES
EXPERIENCE
DISCUSSION

4 issues are \$25
including postage within Australia

Then - And Now

Antonella

The Whitlam government had changed the nation when it introduced Medibank, the first time Australia had a free universal health care system. Though it had fierce opponents, the Whitlam government stood strong. The bill was rejected in the Senate twice. The opponents were from private health insurance companies which persuaded doctors to put up posters in their offices claiming that it was "a socialist takeover". Defying all odds the bill passed on October 1, 1975.

The Coalition government of Malcolm Fraser dismantled the free universal, health care system and the Hawke Labor government brought it back in 1983 and renamed it Medicare.

But what has happened since 1983?

We can see that from the article "Defend Medicare, cancel the private insurance rebate" and our most recent article "Medicare privatisation at full tilt" that the attacks on our most prestigious universal system have been around since December 2, 1998, the similarities are endless and disappointing.

In December 1998 the Howard government's private insurance rebate practically gave \$5 billion of Australian tax payers money to the private health insurance companies, which left our public hospitals neglected; \$5 billion could have wiped out all hospital waiting lists and opened all hospital beds and wards and provided much needed new facilities in rural areas.

As stated in the 1998 article "imagine what \$5 billion could do in restoring services and fulfilling the health care needs of all Australians".

Instead not one cent was used for the restoration of our public hospitals and services.

Though the situation has escalated even further as seen in our latest *Guardians* of November 11 and 18, the Turnbull government is paying \$1 billion more to the private health insurance companies per year to keep the private hospitals sustainable. It sounds a warning that soon our rights to a free health care system will be handed to the private sector.

This will drastically change the quality of our health care services, with all decisions made by the private sector. Our interests will not be at the heart of the system; profit will come first.

So much for Australia's government supporting our human rights.

Article 25 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 states that

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services."

Though this only counts if you have money in the bank!

We need to defend our Medicare more than ever. We have been steered away from the path of progress, and it is evidently clear that our government isn't intending to change.

Say no to the privatisation of Medicare!

This is the first of a regular column that will examine stories on various subjects in the *Guardian* archive and look at current developments in the same subject.



December 2, 1998

The Howard government's tax rebate for private health insurance is the diversion of \$5 billion of badly needed funding from the public health system. It will not result in one more hospital bed, not one more nurse or improvement to the health system. It is a cynical vote catching exercise, a gift to the private insurance companies. It is another step towards the privatisation of health care.

But the rebate cost is enough to open all the hospital beds and wards that have been closed plus provide new facilities in regional areas where they are needed.

Hospital waiting lists could be wiped.

The end result of the present policies would be privatisation of the health system with a residual Medicare – a public system for the poor, the chronically ill and the uninsured.




November 11, 2015

The federal government now has six different reviews into different aspects of the health system as it embarks upon a complete "revamp" of the system. The latest is a review of private health insurance. The government is hell bent on the destruction of Medicare and the privatisation of all health services – the Americanisation of Australia's health care system.

The government is preparing to hand over the running of Medicare to the private for profit sector. The cost cutting is not to reduce the cost to people but to reduce government spending and for the benefit of the private for profit sector.

The cost of healthcare services is about to go through the roof. Accessibility and quality will be the casualties."

Medicare is worth fighting for.




Communist Party of Australia

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

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

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

Adelaide Bob Briton postal: PO Box 612, Port Adelaide BC, SA 5015

phone: 0418 894 366 email: sa@cpa.org.au web: www.adelaidecommunists.org

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

Canberra Ruben Duran phone: 0421 049 602 email: act@cpa.org.au

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

Melbourne Andrew Irving
postal: Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth Vic 3053
phone: 03 9639 1550 email: cpavic@cpa.org.au

Head Office (Sydney)

postal: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

phone: 02 9699 8844 fax: 02 9699 9833 email: info@cpa.org.au

Newcastle email: newcastle@cpa.org.au

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

Riverina Allan Hamilton
postal: 2/57 Cooper St, Cootamundra, NSW 2590
email: riverina@cpa.org.au

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

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

