



Qantas – the high cost of privatisation



Bob Briton

The repealing of the *Qantas Sale Act* has sailed through the House of Reps but few are predicting the Senate to endorse the decision either before or after July 1. Many of the new Senators are expected to vote with Labor and the Greens to scuttle the move to let Qantas out of pretty well all of its obligations to the Australian travelling public. Qantas says it doesn't matter what the federal parliament decides. It's pressing ahead with plans to cut \$2 billion off its expenditures over the next three years with a range of drastic measures including the axing of 5,000 full time jobs. One in six Qantas and one in 10 Jetstar staff are expected to be given their marching orders. Some have already received the letters.

Unions are furious that the details of the sackings and redundancies aren't available leading many to conclude the figure of 5,000 was plucked from the air. Qantas pilot and

president of the Australian and International Pilots Association, Nathan Safe, suspects the number was announced in order to impress the share market where Qantas' fortunes have been flagging. ACTU secretary Dave Oliver held talks with Qantas management last week but was frustrated on the issue of which of the 1,500 management, 300 maintenance and unspecified numbers of catering and fleet operations jobs are to go.

Mr Oliver said that there would be war if the company used the crisis caused by mismanagement to reopen enterprise bargaining negotiations and press for pay cuts. Tony Sheldon, national secretary of the Transport Workers Union, says Qantas chief Alan Joyce told him that wage concessions from workers would make "not one iota of difference" to the company's intention to wield the axe. That won't stop Qantas trying to raid workers' pay packets if they get the chance, however.

Interestingly, Qantas is proposing to expand domestic capacity in the second half of

this year and is still committed to effectively add two aircraft to its fleet for every one put on by Virgin. The airline has denied bogus claims from federal Treasurer Joe Hockey that the carbon tax added significantly to the company's woes. Qantas insists high fuel costs, the decision to buy the giant A380s instead of the more fuel efficient Boeing 777 and stiff competition from Virgin and its backer, government-owned Etihad, has led to the current crisis. So while workers were not to blame for the difficulties, they will pay the price. That's capitalism.

The business pages are full of encouragement to Qantas management to go in hard. Matt O'Sullivan of *The Sydney Morning Herald* authored a piece last week with the headline "Shifting work overseas biggest benefit to airline". It appeared to celebrate the fact that "This month Qantas will complete the closure of an engineering base at Avalon Airport in Victoria, leaving its Brisbane base as its sole heavy maintenance base in Australia."

Former Qantas executive and Rudd

political advisor, David Epstein, has praised the Abbott government's last minute decision not to provide a \$3 billion unsecured loan to Qantas as requested. That would have led us "down the Argentine road" of failed government intervention, he said. And like virtually all the writers in the business pages, he wants the *Qantas Sale Act* to go so as to deliver the airline a "level playing field".

That legislation and the determination of workers is all that stands in the way of much worse social consequences from Qantas' difficulties. Pressure is building on Labor to flip-flop. Its "no" vote in the House of Reps drew the following, tormenting comment from the PM: "The once great Labor Party, which had the strength and the courage to sell Qantas back in the early 90s has gone backwards."

Lets hope he's right and that they keep moving backwards. After all, "backwards" for Abbott means protecting the people's assets and interests against the capitalist predators who give the PM his orders. ✪

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Guardian

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Cuts are cuts are cuts

The Abbott government is quietly cutting health, aged care, women's, Indigenous and other programs. Since its election in September 2013, a number of community groups have suddenly found their funding cut off or severely reduced. No warning, no compassion. Just axe it! Legal services, women's refuges, advocacy centres and other community organisations are in the firing line. The government claims the cuts, always referred to as "savings", will eliminate over-spending and inefficiencies as though the organisations receiving the funding are roting the system and those using their services should be providing for themselves. Of course, there is never a shred of evidence to substantiate these wild claims.

Nursing home residents are the latest to feel Treasurer Hockey's razor. Annual medication reviews will be reduced to once every two years. These reviews save lives and reduce hospital admissions as well as improve the health outcomes of many residents. The majority of aged care residents take multiple medications, six or seven or more, and some have quite complex medical conditions. These medications may interact, cause adverse reactions, or require ongoing supervision such as in the case of anti-psychotic drugs. The annual medication reviews are presently government-funded and undertaken by qualified pharmacists who are able to give valuable advice to medical practitioners and patients.

The reviews play an important role in preventative care and a reduction in frequency will only hurt patients and put pressure on public hospitals. Already one third of hospital admissions for people over 75 are a result of adverse drug reactions. Cutting back the medication reviews will increase the number of people requiring far more expensive hospitalisation.

The government claims that there is no more money for medication management programs; that it must work within the existing budget. So, using the excuse of an ageing population and rising costs, it is halving the service to make savings! It steadfastly refuses to increase spending on the service, not even in line with inflation or its own income growth. To soften up the public there are the all too familiar accusations of roting by service providers but no explanation as to how the cuts would stop the alleged roting.

The proposed \$6 co-payment under Medicare follows a similar pattern of "cost-cutting". As reported in the *Guardian* ("Why bulk billing is important", #1628, 26-02-2014), the co-payment for GP services would lead to the destruction of bulk billing, higher costs for patients and inevitable pressure on the public hospital system, emergency departments, in particular. But the government is also determined not to increase spending on public hospitals. It keeps trotting out the usual lines about the "unsustainability" of an ageing population, the budget deficit and the "end of the age of entitlement". "There is no more money." Or so we are supposed to believe from a government that has promised companies another tax cut in 2015 – if they do still pay tax.

This pattern of cuts to health is repeated many times over in aged care, Indigenous services and a range of other vital services including credit and debt, employment, family violence and family law. More and more people will miss out on essential health, aged care and other services if they are on a pension, unemployed or on a low income. The government does not care about the most disadvantaged or the aged who are past being exploited in the workforce. They can be thrown on the scrap heap, and with a bit of luck church charities or philanthropists might step in.

The government is abdicating its responsibilities for the well being of the community, dismantling essential public services. There are two key objectives. The first is to cut spending so that corporate taxes can be reduced and eventually abolished. The second is privatisation. Anything that the private sector can turn a profit out of is being privatised in one form or another – sale, contracting out, private management, etc. Access to essential services and quality care will increasingly depend on ability to pay. In human terms, which don't rate a mention from government or the big end of town, the cuts are cowardly, brutal attacks on the most vulnerable in our community. The pain and suffering they cause cannot be measured in dollars. It is a question of humanity, a concept in short supply in capitalist ideology. The process is what Treasurer Hockey refers to as "the end of the age of entitlement".

PRESS FUND

Last month groundwater tests at a Narrabri coal seam gas test drilling site revealed contamination by seven different metals, including uranium at 20 times the safe drinking water level. However, the NSW Environment Protection Authority fined gas company Santos a meagre \$1,500, and two days later the Deputy Premier signed a document to speed up the approval process! At the *Guardian* our priorities are very different. We want to help reveal the rancid corruption that accompanies coal seam gas extraction (see page 3) and the mining industry in general. But we can't do it on our own. We need your help by way of contributions to the Press Fund, so please send us in something for the next edition if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's supporters, as follows:

David Anthony \$10, J Ayres \$50, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$20

This week's total: \$85 Progressive total: \$1,495

Closure exposes vulnerable older people

The sudden announcement of the closure of the Weighbridge nursing home, which cares for vulnerable mentally-unwell older people, has caught residents, their families and staff by surprise, according to the nurses' union.

"This crucial, 30-bed psychogeriatric home, which houses many long-term patients, is a vital service in Victoria's grossly under-resourced mental health sector," said Pip Carew, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Vic Branch) assistant secretary.

The Flemington nursing home

staff were told verbally of the closure, planned for June 30, at staff handovers. North West Mental Health, part of Melbourne Health, has not yet released specific details regarding staff cuts or accommodation for the residents.

One source suggested they would be transferred to Westside Lodge at Sunshine Hospital, which is a 30-bed facility with 10 vacant beds, but this is yet to be confirmed.

"This is total chaos," said Ms Carew. "We are to lose 30 crucial specialist mental health beds and the residents will be crammed into

Sunshine. There has been no discussion with the stakeholders, no organisation or plan. The patients are the bystanders in a political game.

"Nurses, residents and their families expect the responsible Minister, Mary Wooldridge, to take a frontline role on an issue of this magnitude.

"This follows the disgraceful Christmas Eve release of a mental health report, based on a previous report, that said it would lead to a further report. Meanwhile people with real needs are abandoned and more beds disappear," said Ms Carew. ✪

Hands off Ukraine and Venezuela

Statement United National Antiwar Coalition

The hypocrisy of Secretary of State John Kerry's statement on *Face the Nation*: "You just don't in the 21st century behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped up pretext", is beyond belief. What about the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, or regime change in Libya, or the threats to bomb Syria and attack Iran?

The US has waged a massive propaganda campaign of misinformation, distortion, and outright lies and the national media has taken the State Department's "facts" and disseminated them without question or challenge. News about the US/EU role in creating the current crisis is buried.

The US is the only country that has its troops throughout the world in over 120 countries. It sends drones and special operations forces

to kill anyone and anywhere it chooses and uses its vast economic power to undercut any government that will not submit to its policies. Although there is lip service to concerns about democracy and sovereignty, the reality is that the US acts in the interests of preserving its imperialist power and wealth.

Ukraine and Venezuela are not exceptions to this rule of imperialist intervention. For 20 years, US\$5 billion was invested in Ukraine to support the opposition and to create tens of thousands of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to move the country more towards the US and EU and their policies. In an intercepted phone call between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and the US ambassador to Ukraine, she discusses who the US wants to be the head of the new illegitimate government, and lo and behold, the US pick, Arseniy

Yatseniuk, is named as the interim Ukrainian leader. This is clearly outside intervention in the affairs of a sovereign country that would not be tolerated if directed at the US or its allies.

What are the real objectives and why is Russia so alarmed? Could it be the US-NATO campaign to militarily surround Russia and bring neighbouring countries into the western military and financial orbit? Might it be that the largest supply of natural gas in the world is in Russia and the pipelines go through Ukraine, or that global warming is opening the Arctic to oil drilling and Russia borders the Arctic? It is clear that Russia will not passively sit by while the Western-backed coup, led by violent fascist forces and local billionaires, overthrows a democratically elected government and installs a puppet regime on its border. ✪



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IWD March Sydney

Several thousand people turned out for one of the best International Women's Day marches and rally for some time on March 8, with strong contingents from the trade unions, the Communist Party, and other left and progressive parties, women's organisations and solidarity organisations as well as many individuals. One of the main themes was women's reproductive rights, in particular Zoe's Bill, legislation currently before the NSW parliament, which aims to give a foetus legal status of personhood. Other issues included pay equality, women with disability, women's legal services, women and education, poverty, sole parents (see page 6) and solidarity with women in other parts of the world. (Photo: Anna Pha)



Proven: Pilliga groundwater contaminated by CSG

The Lock the Gate Alliance is calling for all coal seam gas exploration in NSW to stop immediately after proof emerged last week that Santos have contaminated groundwater in the Pilliga. It has been revealed that groundwater near the Pilliga in north west NSW has been contaminated as a result of a leak from Santos' CSG exploration pilot in north west NSW.

Uranium levels recorded in the groundwater as a result of CSG activities are at 20 times the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. It is the nightmare that the communities of the north west dreaded, and we hope that the contamination is contained and does no harm. Groundwater is the lifeblood of towns and rural businesses and the worst fears of local farmers are being realised. The NSW government must halt coal seam gas drilling in the Pilliga and protect the groundwater of the North West from further damage and contamination.

Documents obtained by the Wilderness Society showed that groundwater in the Pilliga has been contaminated.

The NSW Environmental Protection Authority have confirmed the contamination event, but failed to act with any proper legal force, choosing to fine Santos only \$1,500 dollars.

"This proven case of contamination in the Pilliga makes a lie of all the claims Santos have made about their CSG operations being safe," said Drew Hutton, president of Lock the Gate Alliance.

"The uranium contamination of groundwater confirms that CSG is a dangerous, toxic industry and it needs to be stopped dead in its tracks before more extensive damage is done.

"It's extraordinary that contamination as serious as this has been swept under the carpet by the NSW government and trivialised with a paltry fine.

"We are demanding that the

NSW government now stops all CSG exploration immediately, and conducts a far reaching investigation into how things have gone so horribly wrong," he said.

"Groundwater contamination with high levels of uranium from CSG activities is our worst nightmare," said Mark and Cherie Robinson, dryland farmers from west of the Pilliga, who were recently arrested protesting Santos CSG drilling activities in the Pilliga forest.

"We are completely reliant on groundwater on our farm and cannot survive without it. Our water is our lifeblood. Now we know for sure that CSG puts all that at risk.

"There's no way we are going to allow this polluting industry to spread any further across our region. It needs to stop now," they said.

The Pilliga is an important recharge area for the Great Artesian Basin, which means Santos actions are a direct threat to our greatest inland water resource.

Take action

Santos have said this type of contamination could never happen – now we know that it already has. The NSW government must immediately halt all CSG drilling in the Pilliga and throughout NSW in response to this alarming news, and protect our groundwater from any further damage and contamination.

Phone the Premier and Deputy Premier

Coonamble farmers Mark and Cherie Robinson are travelling to Sydney to call for the government to stop the coal seam gas drilling in the Pilliga following contamination of groundwater with uranium and heavy metals from Santos' operations there.

Will you stand with them and add your support by phoning the Premier and the Deputy Premier and asking them to stop all coal seam gas drilling now that there is concrete evidence that it is not safe?

Barry O'Farrell and Andrew Stoner Premier and Deputy Premier of NSW Premier: (02) 9228 5239 Deputy Premier: (02) 9228 5209

Talking Points

Start with your name and where you live, then:

After all the promises by Santos and the NSW government that CSG wouldn't contaminate water resources, the worst fears of farmers in the North West have been realised, and waste water from Santos' coal seam gas operation has leached into groundwater and contaminated it.

It was very poor form for the NSW government to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Santos just days after the EPA fined them for contaminating groundwater in north west NSW.

The fine of just \$1,500 issued by the EPA for such serious pollution is totally inadequate and reveals a system that is broken.

The Pilliga is a recharge aquifer for the Great Artesian Basin – the lifeblood of western NSW. Will they now act to protect this irreplaceable

resource, and announce a moratorium on any further coal seam gas drilling?

Lessons for Qld

Queensland should heed a strong warning following the disturbing revelation that coal seam gas company, Santos contaminated an aquifer with uranium and other toxic heavy metals.

Santos is operating a huge coal seam gas project in Queensland. The company's joint venture partner, Eastern Star Gas, allowed water to seep from one of its CSG water holding ponds into a shallow aquifer. The aquifer was damaged beyond repair.

Drew Hutton said such pollution could occur when a holding pond leaks, when a frack or drilling operation goes wrong or even when contaminated "produced water" is sprayed on roads as dust suppressant.

Mr Hutton said the Pilliga incident proved contamination is a real problem and Queenslanders should be on notice.

"This incident has put the lie to the CSG industry's claim it has never contaminated an aquifer and should set alarm bells ringing about similar incidents happening in Queensland," he said.

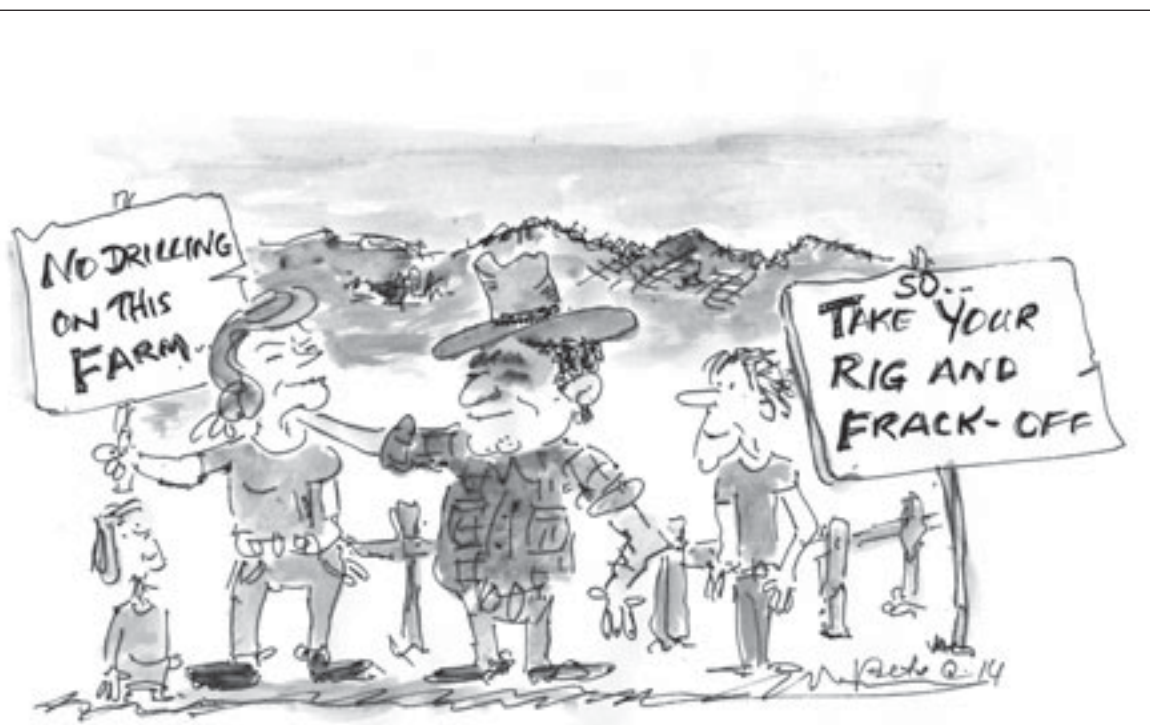
"Once an aquifer has been contaminated, it cannot be fixed and so there are farmers and towns all over Queensland hoping that such an incident does not happen in their communities."

Queensland authorities are totally dependent on the companies informing them if such a polluting incident happens. At present companies are able to spread produced water from the coal seams all over our rural roads with no regulatory controls whatever.

"This means that salt, uranium and other toxic pollutants could be sprayed over the countryside in any amounts and it is legal to do so," said Mr Hutton.

"The Queensland state government has also given the Origin energy company permission to spread drilling muds over agricultural land with no controls over dangerous contaminant levels." ❖

Pete's Corner



Abbott wants bosses' unions or no unions

Anna Pha

Last month two workers were injured when scaffolding at a construction site in Mascot, Sydney collapsed. They rode the falling materials ten metres to the ground and were taken to hospital, lucky to be alive. The falling scaffolding brought down power lines and fell across the footpath and one lane of the road. It was only luck that no pedestrians or motorists were hit in this busy street.

According to the Construction division of the CFMEU, there was a stoppage by workers at that site just before Christmas over safety concerns with the scaffolding. It was one of two serious accidents on construction sites in Sydney last month. The other involved a concrete pour, with the pump truck tipping over the next day. Luck alone saw no one killed or injured.

In January, a construction worker died in a fall at the controversial Lend Lease site at Barangaroo in Sydney. Reports indicate that he fell 30 metres from scaffolding. Last August a 19-year-old was driving an excavator on a site in Linfield, Sydney, when a metal rod flew up and became lodged in his head. In the same month a slab of concrete fell from a crane onto a worker causing back injuries at an inner-Sydney site. A 22-year-old worker lost his life when he was crushed by metal beams at a demolition site.

The list continues of "accidents", not just in Sydney but on construction sites across Australia.

One of the most notorious sites is the Royal Adelaide Hospital which has been riddled with safety issues. Fifty sheets of wood fell more than two metres onto decking in one incident as a crane lost its load in November last year. It is sheer luck that no one was on the deck underneath. It



An anti-ABCC rally in Sydney, 2009. (Photo: Anna Pha)

was the second crane malfunction in one month.

It is not hard to find safety breaches. It is not uncommon to see unsafe scaffolding, sites not locked after hours, workers wearing runners or no hard hat, dust not hosed down, rubbish scattered along walkways, ladders not secured, and so on. For examples, visit hcfmeunsw.asn.au and click on photo galleries, *Safety Shockers!*

In a number of the cases cited above, the CFMEU had previously warned employers of dangers, had called stop work meetings or made demands for inspections and engineers' reports. But building contractors and companies act with impunity. State inspection authorities are grossly under-staffed and not carrying out the necessary inspections or enforcing health and safety regulations.

Building workers are constantly being hit by shonky contractors and developers, by phoenix companies, that fail to pay them their entitlements, even their wages in some instances. The same outfits go belly-up and re-emerge as a new company to rip off more workers. Employers sign workers up as contractors to avoid paying their workers' compensation insurance, superannuation, sick leave and other entitlements.

They act with impunity, outside the law, putting workers' and the public's health and safety at risk and denying workers their entitlements. They know that at worst they might receive a slap on the wrist for these misdemeanours.

The union is the only force seriously attempting to protect workers from the criminality of their bosses. But this has been made far more difficult than ever thanks to a number of government measures.

Instead of pursuing the real criminals, the Abbott government is set to increase the powers of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) (at present an inspectorate under Fair Work umbrella, FWI) which needless to say does not hound employers.

The system does not jail negligent employers for the loss of life or serious injuries. But unions and their members face hefty fines and damages actions if they take any form of industrial action to save lives, reinstate sacked delegates or recoup unpaid or underpaid entitlements. Officials also face loss or suspension of their entry permit.

Unions and individual workers are also penalised if they take action for other reasons. The ABCC is now in the process of prosecuting 76 building workers – serving subpoenas on them one by one – for participating in a union/community rally for "local jobs and local content". The workers were employed on the John Holland children's hospital site in Perth and the rally was 12 months ago. They face fines of \$10,200 each. (Abbott's ABCC legislation, which has retrospective provisions, increases the maximum fine to \$34,000 for individuals and \$170,000 for unions.)

Last December the Federal Court fined CFMEU WA and its assistant secretary Joe McDonald a total of

\$193,600 for their role in "unlawful industrial action" at Citic Pacific's Sino Iron Ore Pilbara site.

Federal Court judge J Barker said: "Mr McDonald's conduct involves a calculated and careless attitude to the law governing the employment of persons by employers. It was calculated to cause disruption to employers carrying out building and construction work on the site and it was careless in that McDonald was aware of the legal consequences of his actions and pursued them nonetheless".

The ABCC had taken McDonald and the union to court, claiming he had attended and entered the site on February 21, 2012. "He addressed an unauthorised meeting of 87 site employees. Seventy-seven workers subsequently withdrew their labour," the judge said.

Legitimate trade union activity is outlawed. The aim of the hefty fines is to bankrupt unions and intimidate workers. In this instance, workers were dealing with safety concerns, the use and abuse of Section 457 visa workers who were being paid 40 percent less than local workers and an attempt to drive down wages and conditions of all workers on the site. The company was also attempting to deny the CFMEU the right to organise and collectively bargain.

The Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014, which Employment Minister Eric Abetz presented to Parliament, contains further limitations on the right of entry of union officials. It gives employers greater flexibility to undermine wage and penalty rates on an individual basis and in effect could see building companies shut the union out when enterprise agreements for new (greenfield) sites are determined.

An investigation into the construction industry is urgently required. There have been several Royal Commissions, the last one, launched by Tony Abbott as Minister for Industrial Relations in the Howard government, found evidence of massive corruption and criminality on the part of employers. The Cole Commission was used to clamp down on building and construction workers, and the ABCC was set up to destroy union in that industry.

The \$66 million Royal Commission did not result in a single

conviction for criminality and only one civil prosecution of a company – for paying strike pay! It was used to provide a blueprint for destroying unions in the industry – the ABCC. But the unions have survived.

So now we have Abbott back again, with a \$100 million Royal Commission. This time there is no pretence of "even-handedness". The inquiry is not into the industry but into the trade unions. The real criminal and corrupt elements – the Coalition's employer mates – will not be under the microscope.

The findings will again be used to launch another round of attacks, on building unions, possibly deregistration of the CFMEU and an opening for the employer-friendly Australian Workers Union.

Without a strong, militant union presence, construction workers would be turned into slave labour, unpaid or underpaid for their labour, forced to work in unsafe conditions and arbitrarily sacked for speaking out. The cost would be huge in lives and injuries.

The government has so far got away with murder (literally and figuratively) in its treatment of asylum seekers, playing the race and "they are illegal" cards. They are not illegal, and even if they were, such barbaric treatment is not justified or legal under Australia's justice system.

The CFMEU and other unions in the industry are the next in line. Abbott and Abetz have no intention of stopping there. The Maritime Union of Australia is also squarely in their sights. Once the stronger, more militant unions are out the way, the aim is to do over the rest of the union movement.

And it will not stop there. The defeat of organised labour would remove the main barriers to the government's attack on left and progressive forces. It would remove the main barriers to its austerity measures, such as the abolition of bulk-billing, privatisation of Medicare and public education, slashing of pensions and unemployment benefits, and even worse.

It is imperative that the unions, left and progressive parties and all forces that support basic human and democratic rights unite now to defend our hard won, fundamental rights. ✪

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Manus Island tragedies

Major human rights questions

Peter Mac

The murder of 23-year old Iranian asylum seeker Reza Barati, and the injuries suffered by more than 70 others during an attack on detainees in the Manus island detention centre three weeks ago, has raised profound questions about Australia's immigration policies.

Barati was a qualified architect, but he could never practise. Because he was from the oppressed Kurdish minority, and because of economic restrictions from international sanctions, professional opportunities were virtually non-existent for him.

His fiancée remained in Tehran. He wanted to study architecture in Australia, but ended up in an asylum seeker boat and then in Manus Island after it was intercepted.

He never had the chance to see one of his designs materialise, beautiful, strong and ready to serve human needs, or to marry, raise children and experience a full and productive life.

After the attack Immigration Minister Scott Morrison immediately blamed detainees for the violence and claimed that Barati had endangered himself by escaping with them from the compound.

However, his cousin informed relatives that he and Barati were in the centre's computer room when the attack began. When Barati opened the door to investigate, he was pulled outside, savagely beaten and dragged away.

Moreover, evidence given by witnesses, including the courageous interpreter Avita Bokal, forced Morrison to admit that "almost all" the detainees' injuries were inflicted inside the centre.

The PNG Deputy Commissioner claimed the paramilitary "Mobile Squad" was not involved, but later admitted that police had fired shots "to calm the situation". The involvement of police has been confirmed by others, including a guard who stated that before the attack police entered the compound with dogs.

A coroners' report has revealed that Barati was killed by multiple blows from a heavy wooden object. Seven severely-injured victims were taken to Port Moresby and one to Darwin. One was shot in the buttocks, while dozens are being treated for injuries to face and hands, proving they were the victims, not the instigators of the violence.

A smouldering fire

According to a Fairfax report a week before the attack an argument took place between a detainee and one of the catering staff, who then subjected the detainee to a savage beating.

Rod St George, a former occupational Health and Safety officer on Manus Island, has also revealed that there have been repeated instances of rape and torture in the detention centre – which is exactly what you would expect in a vile, crowded single-sex prison where the inmates appear to have little hope of release.

Many people who have been involved in Manus Island predicted violent upheavals, but their advice was studiously ignored by the government.

A previous Immigration Department review into Mr St George's allegations airily dismissed the allegations of rape and torture but had

to admit that instances of self harm, lips being sewn together and detainees swimming into the sea to escape the island had occurred.

According to Mr St George the presence of certain Departmental officials during the review hearings intimidated a number of witnesses, and the Department attempted to deflect the blame for all such events away from itself. A similar approach will almost certainly be taken during the Department's review of the attack in which Barati died.

So far, most information on the attack has come from victims or witnesses, not from the government. Journalists who attempted to take photos of victims' injuries had their cameras seized and the images destroyed by security staff. Detention centre staff are forbidden from publicly discussing conditions and events at Manus Island or Nauru.

Two fundamental issues

Australia is surely breaking the UN Refugee Convention, which it has signed and ratified, and is clearly guilty of a mass violation of human rights.

Article 31 of the Convention forbids host countries from penalising refugees who declare themselves to authorities and show cause as to why they have sought asylum. Article 16 requires free access to a court of law, and Article 33 forbids their expulsion or removal to any place of danger because of their race, religion or beliefs. Article 26 says the host country must allow free movement of refugees.

However, more than 4,300 people who have committed no crime against Australia, and who have not been charged or tried for any offence, are now imprisoned in Australian detention centres. Many are separated from their families.

By last December 1,028 children were in detention on the mainland, and 116 on Nauru. The terrible and long-lasting effects of imprisonment on children are well-known, but have been ignored by the government.

In many cases the detention of asylum seekers is indefinite. For a long period the Australian government has processed few if any applications for asylum, and no applications have been processed in Papua New-Guinea since Operations Sovereign Borders began. For many detainees determining their refugee status has not even commenced.

Indefinite detention is in effect a punishment for arriving here unannounced. The punishment is magnified by the banning of asylum seekers who have no visas from ever settling in Australia.

On Manus Island detainees were told that if they complained they would receive no legal assistance and their applications for asylum would be ignored.

Some detainees whom ASIO has classified as security risks are in effect serving life imprisonment inside the detention centres, together with their wives or husbands, and their children. They cannot access or contest the evidence for their detention, which is known only to ASIO and the government.

Whereto from here?

The PNG Prime Minister has declared that the Abbott government



should fly detainees from Manus Island to Canberra, at its own expense, to testify before the Senate inquiry into the attack.

However, Greens Senator Sarah Hansen-Young says that Senators involved in the inquiry should visit the island to inspect conditions for themselves. Moreover, flying detainees to Canberra and then returning them to Manus Island would inflict terrible psychological distress according to mental health expert Louise Newman from Monash University.

In fact, the scope of the inquiry should be broadened to include detention in all offshore centres, and parliamentarians should visit the island detention sites, accompanied by officials from the UNHCR and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Both those organisations have a vital interest in the issue. The UNHCR has described detention on Manus Island as arbitrary and harsh. Human Rights Commissioner, Professor Gillian Triggs stated: "The primary obligation that Australia has is to offer protection for asylum seekers and we cannot abdicate that responsibility by sending people to a third country, in this case Papua New Guinea."

An open investigation would give the Australian public a clear idea of the terrible results of the policies of mandatory detention and offshore processing. This would certainly not be welcomed by the Abbott government, which would doubtless claim that people smugglers would benefit. Displaying an amazing degree of hypocrisy and condescension, Abbott recently declared:

"We are in a fierce contest with these people smugglers. And if we were at war we wouldn't be giving out information that is of use to the enemy just because we have an idle curiosity about it ourselves."

Bishop Christopher Saunders, chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Commission contradicted him, saying: "if it is a war, then it is being fought against wretched and defenceless people".

The Pope has said that "Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity". But that's exactly how they're being treated by the Abbott government, which is demonising asylum seekers for electoral advantage.

Moreover, the government now intends to reintroduce temporary protection visas, which would disallow family reunions and facilitate forcible repatriation, and it has reduced the number of refugee places from 20,000 to 13,000 per annum.

It also plans to deport from the community or to return to indefinite detention 1,000 asylum seekers whose claims for asylum it has rejected, even though they include stateless people and others who have not yet exhausted the full appeal process in the courts.

The costs

Last year \$2 billion was added to the estimated \$10 billion cost of administering Operation Sovereign Borders over three years. That far outstrips the \$7 billion bill for Australia's participation in the Afghanistan war, our longest military engagement.

According to a Fairfax report, the average cost of a bed at the offshore detention centres is now approximately \$900 per day, compared to \$590 for a harbour-view room at Shangri-La, a five-star Sydney hotel.

Transfield, which runs the Nauru centre, has been awarded a \$1.2 billion contract to run the Manus Island and Nauru centres for 20 months, apparently without normal tendering processes. Transfield will retain existing arrangements at Manus Island.

Since 2003, fees paid to four firms for running offshore detention centres have exceeded \$5.6 billion. Toll Holdings received more than \$3.5 million for providing a kitchen in Manus Island since October 2012; G4S was paid \$244 million to run the centre from October 2012 until last Friday. Transfield got \$302 million for running the Nauru centre last year.

Subsidiaries of G4S are located in five tax havens. The British firm paid no tax in Australia, nor in Britain, during 1012 – in fact it received a \$2 million refund from the Australian Tax Office!

But the cost to the nation is not only financial. Australia's national conscience already carries two terrible burdens of guilt, but the "white Australia" policy has at least been dropped in favour of multiculturalism, and there has been some healing for those affected by the stolen generation tragedy because of the Labor government's formal apology.

We are now facing another appalling moral dilemma with regard to the shocking treatment of asylum seekers, in which both Labor and conservative coalition governments have participated.

If those parties refuse to amend their vindictive approach to asylum seekers, the Australian people will have to replace them. It can and must be done. ✪

MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS IN SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA, 2014



Third Week of Denounce and Solidarity "5 days for the Cuban5"

Date: June 4-11, 2014

Place: Washington DC, USA

More information in: www.thecuban5.org

III World Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba, "Cuba Solidarity 2014"

Date: October 27 - 31, 2014

Place: Havana, Cuba

More information in:

www.icap.cu & www.facebook.com/cubasolidaridad2014

Why I'm a sole parent activist:

Kerry Arch

This is Kerry's story on how and why she became an activist which she related in a speech in Sydney for International Women's Day. Kerry is a founding member of United Sole Parents of Australia. Her speech was greeted with warmth and enthusiasm.

I have been a single parent for 10 years now. My children are aged 13 and 16. I now face the challenges of raising teenage children on my own, which can leave me at times mentally and physically drained. They are good boys though and I am proud to be their mother.

As single parents we endure discrimination in numerous places; in the work force, while applying for rental homes, obtaining loans, in the media, from the public and even from some friends and family, but worse still, at the hands of our politicians.

Actions of governments

In 2006, the Howard government started moving single parents onto Newstart when their youngest child turned eight, while those that became single parents prior to this date were able to remain on the higher Parenting Payment Single allowance. Only those that applied after 2006 were moved to the lower payment Newstart under the excuse that they needed to look for paid work when their youngest turned six. However, all those left on the higher payment were now also obliged to sign up to look for work when their youngest also turned six.

In January 2013, the Gillard government moved over 100,000 single parents off the Parenting Payment Single allowance, mostly over to Newstart. The claim was that these "grandfathered" recipients left on Parenting Payment Single prior to 2006 should also find employment.

Julia Gillard claimed to be a "feminist" Prime Minister, yet she had the audacity to move more sole parents 40 percent below the poverty line. Her own Parliamentary Committee advised it was a violation of human rights. The day this bill was passed in Parliament, was the day she gave her famous misogyny speech in relation to then opposition leader Tony Abbott. In my opinion, Julia had no concern for women and their children who are the most vulnerable in our society. If she claimed to have cared about women's rights, why didn't she return all sole parents to Parenting Payment?

This move cost single parents \$65 to \$135 in their weekly income. This was further reduced by the loss of Pensioner Tax Offset at tax time where single parents were able to claim a rebate of up to \$2,000, and a 1,000 percent increase in JET (Jobs, Education and Training childcare fees) without notice.

Women were caught unaware of the changes and could no longer afford the homes they were privately renting and had to break leases and move to cheaper accommodation. Others defaulted on their mortgages and/or on any loans they held. Many lost the roof over their heads and became homeless, forced into refuges and even into living in their cars, before joining already-bursting public housing lists.

Welfare agencies haven't been able to keep up with the demand and have been turning away up to 20 families a day and told they are only allowed three visits a year. Women in rural communities have become even more isolated and marginalised with noticeably less support and opportunities than those in metropolitan

communities and are only able to seek assistance twice a year.

Sadly the Abbott government is now keen on dumping other bonuses that will entrench single mothers and their children further into poverty. These are the School Kids Bonus, Income Support Payment and Low Income Superannuation Contribution.

How these bonuses help

School Kids Bonus gives single mothers the ability to buy school books, uniforms and pay for excursions for their children. There is a large majority of mothers that do not receive the child support they are meant to, or receive it so irregularly that they are unable to rely on it. Without this support our children will be disadvantaged in our school classrooms and will face further discrimination from their peers and sadly bullying if they are unable to attend excursions and participate in school activities. The Income Support Bonus has helped pay for those unexpected bills. This could be the difference between paying an incoming insurance premium or a car service that's due.

Low Income Superannuation Contributions is needed for single mothers who work casual or part time, as their employer superannuation contribution payments are minimal. To have this contribution scrapped is yet another blow and the effects will be felt upon retirement where the gap between women and men is already significant. Scrapping it doesn't make sense.

The move to Newstart was to encourage single mothers back into the workforce. Sixty eight percent of sole parents were already in some form of paid work and 27 percent were studying. What was not considered was the availability of work in the economy, family responsibilities that might interfere with full-time employment, the availability of childcare, and social responsibility for children. It was also evident that those moved onto Newstart after 2006 were not encouraged by the lower allowance to move into full-time employment, but naturally increased their hours as their children grew older.

Access to childcare and healthcare

Another problem with single parents working is the affordability and accessibility of childcare for those who are lucky enough to gain employment. Then there is the issue of available casual childcare spaces for sole parents attending job interviews or those working odd hours in casual positions.

Waiting lists for public healthcare are lengthy and single parents can no longer afford private health cover. Going to specialists is too expensive so parents and children go without needed specialised care.

Now Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews wants to be able to stop welfare payments if we refuse to take a job that is more than 90 minutes from our homes.

No thought has gone into single parents that might have to rush back these distances to sick children at school or childcare.



Kerry Arch at the rally. (Photo: Ana Pha)

For those that do find full-time employment, they would be away from their homes up to 11 hours or more each day. When would the children get to see their mother? Children are expected to return to empty homes each night as young as 12 years of age. They will have no help with their homework, very late dinners and the loss of after-school activities. With obesity on the rise, the loss of after-school activities will only cause more health problems and children will not enjoy the social benefits of sport either.

Stay-at-home?

Caring for one's own children at home is not considered to be real "work" although it is considered to be "work" to care for someone else's children. Go figure! Reliance on social security programs is once again referred to as "dependence" although reliance on a husband's income is not. Increasingly it is considered unacceptable behaviour to have government support, yet acceptable for middle class welfare acceptance of family tax benefit up to those earning \$150,000 per annum and the paid parental scheme of up to \$75,000 per annum.

Money well spent?

Forcing people into a Controlled Income Management scheme, which was introduced in the Northern Territory, is now being expanded across Australia to single parents. How are these vulnerable parents supposed to learn to be self-sufficient with this idea of control? It's demeaning and lowers self-esteem.

This scheme costs between \$4,500 to almost \$8,000 per person, per year. This money could be better spent on drug, alcohol and gambling rehabilitation programs that not only educates parents, but also encourages them to make better choices and to give up these addictions. Or programs that can improve their self-worth such as job skill training, increasing numeracy

and literacy skills, plus parenting courses. An option such as Centrepay, which is much cheaper to run, does almost the same as controlled income management by paying debts directly out of the welfare income – but at least it gives the recipient the feeling of still being in control of their own finances.

Pay

Australian unions have fought for the "family wage" since early last century which has kept men's wages higher than women's and limited the access of married women and mothers to the paid labour force. The gender gap per hours pay is still 18 percent higher; it is not closing and sometimes seems to be widening instead of decreasing, which is a shame considering this has been highlighted as blatant discrimination for many years.

This is clearly a feminist issue and needs to be picked up by women's groups as separate from just the question of the levels of Newstart.

Parenting payment

We are sole parents. We need to have payments that are higher than normal income support for individuals looking for work or studying, because we already have a job that takes up time and energy.

So a payment – for example parenting payment – needs to be high enough to allow us to work shorter hours or study and still get some extra public support to give us the top up to at least a minimum wage payment. If we need to be there when children are sick, after school and in emergencies, we may have difficulties in finding the right job. All this needs to be taken into account in shaping the payments that will support us and our children decently.

I was one of the grandfathered recipients who moved onto Newstart in January last year. I was devastated. I was sent into a spiralling depression that lasted three weeks. I found a

Our job is to change the perceptions that single parents are lazy bums and welfare cheats. We work, we study and we do the best we can to improve our lives for ourselves and for our children.

"You need a thick skin to cope with disability"

Koren Helbig

"Change your appearance so you can be a little kinder on yourself," a date once told Melbourne writer and activist Carly Findlay, referring to the genetic skin condition that leaves her skin forever scaly, itchy and shiny red. Too many people, assuming Findlay's face is flushed crimson with severe sunburn, take the opportunity to publicly scold her. Or worse. "If I was in your situation, I'd top myself," someone once told her. She tries to adopt a more or less stoic attitude toward the daily "staring, commenting and teasing", knowing it is part and parcel of life with a visible disability.

Findlay's disability is doubly public, for she writes openly through her blog and social media about life with ichthyosis, an incurable condition that affects only 10 to 20 people per million. With heartfelt missives that read more like deeply personal letters, Findlay, who is 32, bares her private self to a world already looking, questioning and commenting on the outer shell they see. "I like to tell my story on my own terms," she says. In a tone that suggests she has previously faced the kind of hatred that internet anonymity breeds, she adds: "I think you do have to have thick skin."

Storm of ridicule

It happened late last year. She saw an incoming link to her blog from the user-submitted "social news" website Reddit, clicked through and found her photo had been uploaded to a storm of ridicule. One person suggested she looked like "something partially digested by my dog". It was Findlay's worst fear, the reason she had initially balked at putting her picture online when she first began blogging in 2001. "I don't get many negative comments on my blog [normally] but I had comments coming over telling me I should kill myself," she says. "It was weird." She decided to fight back with a measured, informative response. It garnered an apology from the person who originally uploaded the photo and support from others who clicked through. Still, it hurt.

A month later, the internet, like the fickle beast it is, gave her an opportunity to connect in a more positive light. Scouting around Twitter one morning in January, Findlay happened across the hashtag, #AblePeopleSay, through which people with disabilities were documenting things said to them as they went about day-to-day life. The trail led back to American disability activist Lydia Brown, who coined the hashtag to share remarks made daily about her own disability, autism. Things like: "If you try harder, maybe it will just go away."

Dozens of people with disabilities – physical, mental, visible, invisible – were soon chiming in from around the world, including Findlay, who has received such comments as: "I know exactly how it feels to have a severe skin condition, I have my eyebrows waxed monthly", "It's so good that someone like you is out there and not locked away somewhere", and "Don't you wish there was a cure so you'd look a little less ... unfortunate?"

As the Twitter comments multiplied into the hundreds, Findlay was reminded how intrusive people can be towards those with disabilities. But, she says, sharing those words was also surprisingly cathartic. "Just writing down the things that people have said to me, these harsh things, it's like I'm just playing them back in my head and laughing them off."

Faced with the almost daily barrage of naive or intentionally hurtful comments, Findlay mainly manages to keep her cool, responding politely or laughing it off, skills she learnt as the kid who looked different growing up in a small town near Albury in New South Wales. Occasionally the judgements cut deep, leaving



Carly Findlay: "Sometimes, I just want to get on with my day. I don't want to be the person who scares a child on the train or be the brunt of teenagers pointing."

her reeling and upset. Very rarely does she let anger get the better of her, like the time she lobbed the f-bomb in the face of a taxi driver who spluttered "What's on your face?" before suggesting she smelt bad. "I think there's this expectation that people with disabilities should be meek and mild and polite and just take it," she says.

But it can be hard living up to that expectation. "Sometimes," she says, "I just want to get on with my day. I don't want to be the person who scares a child on the train or be the brunt of teenagers pointing." Findlay understands that some people don't know how to act around those with disabilities, yet she wishes they would at least kick off conversations sans empty platitudes and with a touch of politeness, just the way they would with anyone else.

Words cut deep

The unofficial Twitter campaign seemed to empower people. That week a woman wrote to Findlay, said she'd been holding on to a secret for years, a barbed sentence spat at her by another person, words that cut so deep it hurt even to write them down. She wrote those words to Findlay and something shifted. "People tell me their secrets," Findlay says. "It's kind of privileged."

It's a trust bred from Findlay's own

willingness to share publicly the intimate details of her life. She looks inside herself, "for the shiny bits and the darkness" and comes to know herself through writing. It's therapeutic, in a way, for herself and her readers. Recently, Findlay got a boyfriend and immediately began writing about the strangeness and the joy of sharing her life with another. "I shed so much skin," she writes. "Initially I would brush it off his clothes, embarrassed I'd leave my mark on him. I'd worry about the skin in my bed. I'd worry about my peeling face in the morning or how my skin would fall onto him. He has said countless times that it doesn't bother him. He finds my skin flakes in his pocket and smiles that he's carrying me with him wherever he goes."

Her frank, direct words have caught the eye of major news organisations and led to a flurry of speaking and disability activism opportunities. She has won a bunch of awards too; yet, Findlay says, she doesn't always feel like the journalist she has become. She is just telling her own story, in her own words. Then again, she realises this is where her talent and power lies, especially when communicated through direct channels like Twitter. "Because it's real people telling their story, it hits home. It's a start in creating change."

New Internationalist ★



single parent support group online, became active and started to raise awareness of what had happened to us. Now I run several Facebook groups ranging from housing, Centrelink advice, a single parent forum, a single parent small business and bartering group and my main activist group United Sole Parents of Australia. We have run petitions, held rallies and appeared on many television and radio shows. We write to politicians, magazines and anyone who will listen.

Our job is to change the perceptions that single parents are lazy bums and welfare cheats. We work, we study and we do the best we can to improve our lives for ourselves and for our children. I saw the isolation for single parents and I am now trying to build local groups so single parents can network and gain support from each other. I hope to arrange guest speakers to come and empower the women in my groups. While I have been researching the changes that have taken place, I noticed that these changes weren't just happening in Australia but in other countries as well. Cuts have also been taking place in Ireland, England and even the Netherlands. The sole parents in these countries were also given little notice. No thought has been given to the impact of these cuts, only of the money the governments can save at the cost of our children.

Domestic violence

Women suffering domestic violence have limited choices: either they leave a DV relationship and enter a life of poverty on Newstart, or they stay remain and endure the risk of permanent disability or even death to themselves or their children. A return to Parenting Payment Single is desperately needed. Women need to feel society and welfare can support their safety, through fair benefits, not charity.

The 2013 Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot report showed that in April, when the Anglicare network surveyed over 56,000 rental properties across Australia, less than one percent of the properties listed were suitable for anyone on Newstart allowance, parenting payment, aged pension or disability support pension. Single parents are paying over 30-90 percent of their income to have a home for their children. This is not acceptable!

Since these cuts have taken place they have opened my eyes to the many injustices and discriminations that single parent women are facing. Many don't have the courage to speak, so I chose to be a voice for them and bring to light what needs to be said and heard. ★

Manipulations in Venezuela coverage

Emile Schepers

Major demonstrations and counter demonstrations have been going on in Venezuela for more than a month. These have been covered in the US and international press and media, but how they are covered is a major issue.

Supporters of the left-wing government of President Nicolas Maduro, of the Venezuelan United Socialist Party (PSUV), are often aghast at the degree to which corporate controlled media echo the "line" of the right-wing opposition in their country, and end up retailing serious distortions of the situation there. This is mostly done by blocking out certain kinds of information that would put the Venezuelan government in a favourable light. But it is also common to see outright falsehoods and misrepresentations.

One example of this is reported recently in Venezuelan online media.

Ramon Soto, studying social sciences and law at the University of the Andes in Merida, a member of the youth branch of the PSUV and a strong supporter of Mr Maduro's government, says that on April 10 of last year, during the lead-up to

the hotly contested presidential elections between the PSUV's Maduro and the right-wing MUD coalition's Henrique Capriles, he was beaten up by the Voluntad Popular (People's Will, or VP) and the Juventud Activa Venezuela Unida (Activist Youth for a United Venezuela, or Javu). Blows to his face broke a number of bones, and took a while to heal. Photographs of his bandaged face were then distributed online and by CNN in Spanish, with the false information that these were pictures of an opposition student beaten up by supporters of President Maduro in this year's street conflict.

Says Soto: "There exists a series of images of my person which are being published via social [media] networks and which are unscrupulously being distributed by television programs, above all by CNN in Spanish. These are taking some old images taken of my person, which happened on April 10 of 2013, when I was attacked by hordes who were with Henrique Capriles when he came to do the closing act of his campaign," Soto told the Venezuelan News Agency (AVN). "Now they are using these images to say that there is repression in Venezuela, and

fool the world". He and others have stated that the Venezuelan opposition is circulating other images that are not even from Venezuela but from other countries and conflicts, mislabelling to create the impression that brutal repression is taking place in Venezuela.

A number of other fake photos, circulated widely through social media in the context of the disturbances in Venezuela, have been identified.

Very prestigious corporate news outlets such as the *New York Times* are lending themselves to the fakery. The *New York Times* was, however, recently busted by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR).

A *Times* report suggested that the supposedly dictatorial Venezuelan regime has so far suppressed the media so as to prevent the coverage of opposition political activities on television. People in Venezuela immediately spotted the misreport; in fact almost all private TV stations in Venezuela are run by people opposed to the PSUV government, which they regularly criticise. Called to account by Just Foreign Policy and others, who circulated a petition that got 13,000 signatures calling for a



Photographs of Ramon Soto bandaged face were distributed by CNN with the false information that they were pictures of an opposition student beaten up by supporters of President Maduro in this year's street conflict.

retraction, the *Times* finally climbed down and corrected its text.

However, many other US and international news agencies continue to parrot the line that there is no free opposition press in Venezuela. This puts them in synch with US foreign policy, which has been aiming at reversing the tendency of Latin American countries to unite in

opposition to the traditional hegemonic control of the United States over the Western Hemisphere.

There are a number of far more reliable sources for Venezuela news, including the Venezuelan analysis website, and, of course, the *Peoples World* online.

Peoples World ☪

Failure to pass army rape laws

The US Senate bowed to Pentagon pressure last week by refusing to remove the authority to prosecute rapes and other serious crimes from US military commanders.

The vote was 55-45 in favour of stripping commanders of that authority, but that fell short of the 60 necessary to move ahead on legislation sponsored by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.

It would have given the decision to take serious crimes to courts-martial to military trial lawyers independent of the chain of command. The debate and vote were the culmination of a nearly year-long campaign to curb sexual assault in the ranks.

But Pentagon leaders opposed the measure, as did some former

prosecutors and military veterans in the Senate. However backers of the measure insisted that previous piecemeal reforms only had a limited impact on a problem.

Recent survey results have suggested that some 26,000 people in the ranks, mostly women, have been sexually assaulted, with thousands unwilling to come forward for fear of inaction or retribution.

Including Senator Gillibrand, the Bill had the support of 17 of the Senate's 20 women. Senator Gillibrand is expected to pursue further measures in the spring, when the Senate's armed services committee begins work on a defence policy Bill for 2015.

In two hours of debate supporters of the Bill argued on the Senate

floor based on their personal experiences, showing frustration with what they dismissed as fixes around the edges and horrific stories from the ranks.

"The current system is failing the men and women in uniform," said Democrat Senator John Walsh, who is the first Iraq war veteran in the body.

"We have moved too slowly."

After blocking Senator Gillibrand's Bill, the Senate overwhelmingly passed a weaker measure to eliminate the "good soldier defence," which allows a service member's character and military performance to be used in a defence.

Morning Star ☪

Lawrence spies face inquiry

Paddy McGuffin

BRITAIN: Ministers ordered a public inquiry last week after a damning report levelled allegations of corruption and spying on police investigating the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence. Home Secretary Theresa May said a judge would lead the probe into Mark Ellison QC's "deeply troubling" findings that the Met had placed an undercover officer in the "Lawrence camp" during its long campaign for justice.

Mr Lawrence's father Neville said the inquiry was "21 years overdue."

Stephen Lawrence was stabbed to death by a group of up to six white youths in an unprovoked racist attack at a bus stop in Eltham, south-east London, on April 22 1993.

In January 2012 two men, Gary Dobson and David Norris, were jailed for life for their roles in his murder.

Mr Ellison had been tasked with investigating corruption claims during the initial investigation but his remit was extended after former Special Demonstration Squad officer Peter Francis said he'd been deployed undercover to dig up information that might "smear" the family.

The SDS, a top-secret squad within Special Branch from 1968 to 2006, focused on infiltrating campaign groups and has been at the centre of a series of allegations of wrongdoing and incompetence.

Mr Ellison found that an SDS "spy" was working within the "Lawrence family camp" during the landmark judicial inquiry led

by Sir William Macpherson into Stephen's death that accused the Met of "institutional racism" at the time of the teenager's death.

The mere presence of an undercover officer was "highly questionable," said Mr Ellison.

His report said undercover officer N81 had met acting detective inspector Richard Walton, who had been seconded to the Met's Lawrence review team responsible for making submissions to the Macpherson inquiry.

The meeting was "a completely improper use" of intelligence, said Mr Ellison.

"We find the opening of such a channel of communication at that time to have been wrong-headed and inappropriate."

The review also found evidence that one of the detectives on the original Stephen Lawrence murder investigation, detective sergeant John Davidson, had acted corruptly both before and after he worked on the investigation.

The McPherson inquiry should have been made aware of the suspicions but was not, he said.

Neville Lawrence said: "Mark Ellison's report has simply corroborated what I have known for the past 21 years and our long fight for truth and justice continues."

Stephen's mother Doreen added: "I'm not shocked. It's something I suspected all along."

She was in the Commons public gallery as Ms May told MPs of plans to introduce a new criminal offence of police corruption - rather than misconduct in a public office.

Morning Star ☪

Hague to consider Israel prosecution

The International Criminal Court at The Hague received a formal request last week for the prosecution of Israel over the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010.

Nine aid workers died on the *Mavi Marmara* - which was part of a six-ship aid flotilla - when Israeli troops forcibly boarded the vessel in May of that year.

The request is the first attempt by a recognised state to pursue the prosecution of Israel in the international court and was formally submitted by the Comoros Islands.

The court recognised the

Turkey-based Human Relief Foundation as a victim of the outrage.

The foundation was the lead organisation of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla project which intended to travel to Gaza to offer relief to Palestinian victims of the Israeli blockade.

On May 31, 2010, Israeli armed forces carried out an armed attack in international waters against the flotilla, resulting in the death of nine volunteers on board the *Mavi Marmara*.

Scores more were seriously injured, tortured and unlawfully detained in Israeli prisons. Turkey and Israel have been negotiating a

compensation deal for over a year without success.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has ruled out any reconciliation with Israel "until the end of the siege on Gaza", a condition of the settlement that Israel has flatly refused to accept.

Israel offered to pay US\$20 million in compensation to the families of the nine victims and Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had authorised up to US\$23 million to secure an agreement.

Morning Star ☪

The EU's Ukraine policy a moral bankruptcy

Peter Lavelle

The conversation between EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton and Estonia's Foreign Minister revealing Ukraine protesters were shot on the orders of their own leaders is a stinging indictment of the EU's policy towards Ukraine. Brussels has some explaining to do.

We now have a "smoking gun" demonstrating the EU has been and remains in cahoots with fascists and extremists in Kiev. The political fiction that President Viktor Yanukovich ordered sniper attacks has been exposed. There are many (nasty and truly awful) things one can and should say about Yanukovich, but proof he ordered any targeted murders has always been only heresy propagated by Brussels, US Secretary of State John Kerry, and Western mainstream media.

Allow me to quote Urmas Paet, the Estonian Foreign Minister, from the bugged conversation believed to have taken place on February 26:

"There is now stronger and stronger understanding that behind the snipers it was not Yanukovich, but it was somebody from the new coalition."

It is pathetic that Kerry only had high praise for this "new coalition" when he visited Kiev last week (with the promise of a billion dollar cheque – or should we describe it as blood money?). Kerry, Ashton, and US State Department official Victoria Nuland know very well whom they have decided to anoint as Ukraine's new leaders.

All three of these western officials intentionally overlook the racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-democratic sentiments of the "new coalition" because the rebel government in Kiev is anti-Russia and against ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine. That suits the EU and Washington just fine. The West's push into Ukraine has never been about democracy or "civilisational choice" – it is about raw geopolitical power and advantage at the expense of Russia's legitimate security interests.

Instead of being honest and open about the thuggery the West has empowered in Kiev (and wants to invest in!), Western powers and Western media want the world to focus its attention on Crimea. This is a place that Russia has not invaded over the past few days, though it is a place that Russian military forces

have been for 15 years under a treaty negotiated and ratified by Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Since this crisis erupted in Ukraine back in November, we have learned of two bugged phone conversations on how the West's demands will be imposed on the Ukrainian people. I suspect those kinds of conversations happen every day. The public doublespeak and hypocrisy is obvious and dangerous.

Catherine Ashton should resign immediately and an investigation should be started. What else does she know about criminal acts committed in Ukraine? The same applies for Urmas Paet and Nuland, as well. But we all know this will not happen. Why? Because the Brussels gang (not to speak of the epicentre of this moral and political bankruptcy originating in Washington) believes they are all above the law and know what is best for the rest of us.

In light of both these revealed conversations, it is probably not a bad idea that Vladimir Putin's Russia is on the wings to repel anything that Western-sponsored fascists plan for Ukraine and those in Ukraine looking to Moscow for protection.

RT ☪



EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton should resign immediately and an investigation should be started. What else does she know about criminal acts committed in Ukraine?



Region Briefs

On February 28, the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China published a report titled "Human Rights Record of the United States in 2013". Most cases and data used in this report are from mainstream Western media and the United Nations website. By providing and analysing these, this report reveals and criticises a number of US human rights violations and poor human rights conditions and their effect on lives and personal security, on civil and political rights, on economic and social rights, on racial discrimination, on women and children's rights, and on violations of human rights against other nations.

On March 1, in the railway station of Kunming, the capital city of China's Yunnan province, eight terrorists stabbed civilians in peak hour crowds. As a result, 29 people were killed and 143 people were injured. Four terrorists were shot dead on site, and the other four were captured. Kunming railway station was soon restored to order. After the investigation, the attack was found to be organised by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement. ETIM is a notorious Islamic terrorist group supported by reactionary forces which are hostile to socialist China, seeking Xinjiang province's unlawful independence.

After being separated for a long period of time due to the imposed division forced upon them, families and relatives from Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and South Korea were reunited at Mt Kumgang on February 25. Those from the DPRK told their relatives and families from the south how much they loved the country and how proud they were of living in DPRK. They all expressed their strong wish to achieve reunification of the Korea Peninsula.

On March 2, according to a Suan Dusit poll which surveyed 1,354 people across Thailand, 71 percent of respondents showed their support for holding bilateral talks between the caretaker Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and the opposition leader Suthep Thaugsuban in order to end Thailand's current crisis. However, more than six percent of participants disagreed, as they considered bilateral talks would only heat up the crisis, and 23 percent of participants were uncertain about bilateral talks, as there were no date and time given. Ninety one percent of the people who supported the talks insisted that the talks should be broadcast live on TV in order to keep transparency.

On March 3, after Indonesian Speaker of People's Consultative Assembly Sidarto Danusubroto's official visit to Vietnam, Indonesia and Vietnam reached an agreement to foster comprehensive cooperation in economics, culture, education and peace in the East Sea. Indonesia will become one of the world's top 10 economies, whilst Vietnam is becoming even more attractive to foreign investment. Sidarto said he is confident that Vietnam will have more successful developments and its important role and position in this region will be recognised.

Communists join Nepal government

RK Sharma and Teresa Albano

After weeks of negotiations, Nepal has a government in which the Communists are equal partners with the leading centrist political party and top vote getter. The Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist joined the Nepali Congress Party to form a coalition government on February 25. The two political parties won the most seats in the Himalayan nation's November 2013 parliamentary elections.

But in this former monarchy, besieged for decades by war, repression and poverty, the road to adopting a democratic constitution is fraught with difficult twists and turns. These last three months were no exception.

On February 10, the Communists agreed to back Congress' Sushil Koirala for prime minister after hammering out a number of "points of agreement" for the coalition government and arriving at verbal agreements on the ministerial appointments.

However once elected, Koirala refused to appoint the UML to the powerful home minister

position, as agreed to, the UML said. That forced the party to reject Congress as a coalition partner, tying Koirala's hands from moving forward with a Cabinet. Nepal's legislative branch, the Constituent Assembly, elects the prime minister who appoints Cabinet ministers. Once posts are filled, this becomes the "government" (the executive branch).

Finally, Koirala and Congress acquiesced and allotted the post to the UML. Each party will have 10 ministries with several other parties taking remaining ministerial portfolios.

In the November 2013 election, no party received a majority in those elections, but the top two vote getters were NC and UML. In Nepal's 601-seat Constituent Assembly, 575 seats are filled by a combination of direct elections and proportional representation. Twenty-six are reserved for women and others to help round out representation. Out of the elected seats, 194 went to NC and 175 to UML and 80 to the former-ruling Maoist party. Other minor parties got the remainder.

The country's once popular

Maoists, who won the election overwhelmingly in 2008, charged election fraud and refused to join the Constituent Assembly until the NC and UML agreed to an investigation.

Both parties had committed to delivering a constitution quickly. People have been frustrated by the constant bickering in the previous assembly.

Maoists waged an armed insurgency for 10 years against the King of Nepal, which was the only Hindu monarchical state in the world, while others, including the UML chose to wage the struggle for democracy through civil disobedience, electoral and other mass protest means. Eventually, the anti-monarchy/pro-democracy forces won, establishing a Constituent Assembly tasked with drafting a democratic constitution. In 2008, the Maoist communists swept the election winning two-to-one over the NC and UML and catapulted to the prime minister post. But problems arising from the armed insurgency and the call for thousands to lay down their arms or be absorbed into Nepal's army, stymied efforts to move the country forward. President Jimmy Carter helped negotiate a successful resolution, eventually. The PM resigned and others from other parties, including UML stepped up to try to fulfil the voters' mandate. However the task of approving a constitution remains.

People's World ☪

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Reef damage exposed

Secret files obtained by Greenpeace under Freedom of Information laws have exposed how Reef authorities repeatedly warned our government of the unnecessary and irreversible harm dredging and dumping would cause to our Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

Reef authorities called the project “unacceptable”. Yet instead of listening to the advice of its own experts, our government approved it anyway. And a few months later, despite claiming that “absolutely no political pressure” played a role, the Reef authority fell into line.

We know something’s gone really wrong when our own government looks away from the risks, then the authority charged with protecting the Reef backflips and does the same. Here’s a basic breakdown of the Marine Park Authority’s earlier

advice to government, revealed under the FOI request:

Dumping 3 million cubic metres of sediment would cause unnecessary and irreversible harm to areas of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Coral reefs and other marine life are already fragile from damage caused by bleaching and ocean acidification.

Studies by coal port developers into the damage dredging would cause are deficient and unreliable.

There are alternatives to dredging and dumping at sea, so the project as it stands should not be approved.

Shockingly, these crucial facts were kept under lock and key, until now. So with crystal-clear evidence that Reef authorities advised the government to reject this dodgy dredging plan, why did they approve it?

Since the final permit came through in January, the public pressure to save our Reef has been ramping up like never before. Community groups are now challenging the dredging in court. Even mining companies including Lend Lease and BHP Billiton are getting cold feet, publicly withdrawing their interest in coal projects that would require dredging in the first place.

There’s no doubt the government is embarrassed by the headlines. They should be. But if we speak out together today, we can turn this explosive new evidence into more than just a bad day in the press. We

can make it into a critical turning point.

Louise Matthiesson
Greenpeace Australia Pacific

Artists protest inhumane treatment of asylum seekers

The Biennale of Sydney has opened in controversial circumstances – almost 40 artists urged the disengagement of its main sponsor, Transfield Holdings, which is connected with detention

Clara Zetkin: Selected Writings

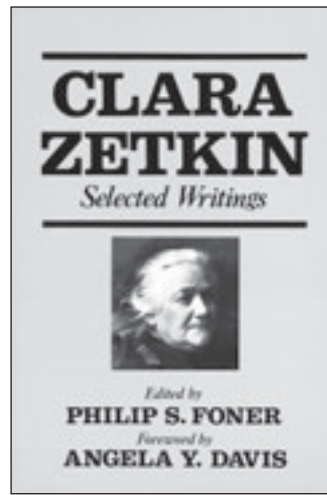
Edited by Philip S Foner Foreword by Angela Davis
Paperback 206 pages \$25 including p&h

The communist activist Clara Zetkin is widely associated with International Women’s Day but she also deserves to be better known for her Marxist analysis of women’s oppression.

“Like her heroic contemporary, VI Lenin, she sought to understand the special oppression of women by placing it within the larger context of the socioeconomic evolution of humankind and consequently attempted to analyse most of the major events within the history of the class struggle of her era,” Angela Davis writes in the foreword to the book.

The interesting and important collection of writings are still as relevant and of interest as when they were written.

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centres in Nauru and Manus Island through its Transfield Services.

Transfield Services was awarded a \$1.22 billion government contract to run both detention centres. The artists do not want to be seen associated with it and want the board to look for other sponsors of the event.

The Biennale board has rejected the demand and unanimously affirmed its loyalty to Transfield Holdings which was the founder of Biennale. However, five artists withdrew from the Biennale stating that they had “revoked our works,

cancelled our public events and relinquished our artists’ fees”.

“We see our participation in the Biennale as an active link in a chain of associations that leads to the abuse of human rights. For us, this is undeniable and indefensible”, they said in a statement.

Congratulations to them for their principled stand. Word is spreading about the inhumane treatment of asylum seekers in these secretive camps.

T Southern
Brisbane

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Demonising North Korea & destroying jobs

The capitalist mass media – and its faithful echo, the ABC – has been full for some weeks now of accounts of the gross human rights violations that apparently occur routinely in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, more commonly North Korea). I say “apparently”, because these accounts were contained in a report issued at the beginning of February by a special commission of the United Nations. Now, that may sound impressive, until you realise that the Commission in question was established in response to a bill passed in 2004 by the US Congress, called the “North Korean Human Rights Act”. This was not the first time that the US was able to lead the UN by the nose.

The North Korean Human Rights Act was sponsored by Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas. Since then Senator Brownback has become Governor Brownback, and is described by *The New York Times* as “a hero of the country’s Christian right” who is pushing “a bullishly conservative agenda” in Kansas. Senator Brownback’s act established a special office on “human rights in North Korea” at the US State Department.

Part of the role of this special office was “to get a UN cover for this effort to defame the DPRK” (*Workers World*, USA). The office was headed up by Jay Lefkowitz whom the *Washington Post* describes as a “cerebral neoconservative”.

To sum up: the damning “human rights” critique of the DPRK issued by the UN is the

brainchild of a US government department whose agenda is to bring about “regime change” in North Korea. It is as believable as the lies pedalled by NATO spokespersons about Libya, Ukraine, Venezuela, Syria or anywhere else that the US and its NATO allies are interested in disrupting and wrecking.

Changing the subject somewhat, have you noticed just how grim of visage Tony Abbott is these days? I mean, he always looks grim even when he’s smiling (that’s just him) but lately he looks grimmer than usual, assuming that’s possible. There are good reasons for this, of course: the country’s economy is going down the tube faster than you can say “mounting job losses”. By the time Abbott, Hockey and co get tossed out at the next election they will have overseen the most destructive period of de-industrialisation that this country has ever seen, with numerous major employers ceasing production, and tens of thousands of jobs sent off-shore.

Abbott’s only response to this catastrophic situation is to repeat his pathetic mantra that small businesses will provide alternative jobs with the money they save on their light bills once his *bête noir*, the carbon tax, is repealed. He says this with such conviction one must conclude that he actually believes it, which doesn’t say much for his intelligence. But then, he refuses to believe in global warming so his intelligence is actually a moot point anyway.

Of course, Abbott is not the only Conservative politician to prefer faith over science. (Look at George W Bush.) Or

consider Britain’s Tory PM, David Cameron. His government cut funding to that country’s Environment Agency, funding the agency wanted in order to carry out planned flood prevention work in Somerset, the Severn Valley, the Thames Valley and the Fenlands. Since 2009, funds for the Environment Agency have been cut by 16 percent, but during this same period inflation has increased by 11 percent. In real terms, the grant to the Environment Agency has been cut by more than a quarter.

As Daphne Liddle says in *The New Worker*: “The Somerset levels are below sea level, and like the marshes of the Fens and large parts of East Anglia, the farming land has been reclaimed over generations by much hard work in creating ditches, drains, dykes, broads, canals and high river banks.

“The people who live in these areas know well that these man-made flood defences must be regularly maintained or the flood waters will inevitably return – this is even without taking climate change into consideration. And the flood defences put in place by previous governments after the horrendous floods all down the east coast [of Britain] in 1953, in which over 300 people died, have played a vital role in preventing this [northern] winter’s floods being even worse.”

The floods, storm surges and wild seas that recently shook Britain also shook up significant numbers of the ruling class, whose posh mansions in the high-priced Thames Valley were affected by flood waters just like poor people’s houses. For now, most of the

ultra-high end property market is still protected by the Thames Barrier (a wall of flood-gates across the Thames that can be closed to prevent flooding). But water levels are expected to top the Barrier before long. Daphne Liddle warns: “When that happens, the Palace of Westminster will also be under water, along with most of the Tube network.”

As a wise man once said, “There are none so blind as those who will not see.” Cameron seems to be much more interested in promoting British imperialist interests in Ukraine (and elsewhere in Europe and Africa) than in bothering much with domestic problems. Like Tony Abbott, he seems to think that the ruling class will effectively be immune from any adverse effects that climate change might have on the planet, simply because well-to-do people ought to be exempt from them. Apart from revolutions (which are a Bolshevik plot) bad things simply cannot happen to the top people.

And so, they cut funds to agencies charged with protecting the environment, downgrade the role of science in advising government (Abbott has even dispensed with the position of Science Minister in his cabinet, for the first time in decades), and put their trust in prayer.

Much comfort that will be to ordinary people in Britain or Australia, as Britain’s NHS and Australia’s Medicare are earmarked for destruction, environmental pollution is encouraged to continue unabated, pensions and welfare are cut and the flight of jobs to low wage countries goes on unchecked. ☹



The North Korean Human Rights Act was sponsored by Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas.



Sunday March 16 –
Saturday March 22

In part two of *The Search For Noah's Ark*, screening on *Compass* (ABC1 Sunday March 16 at 6.30pm), Joanna Lumley rather naively continues her search to find the "truth" and origins of the legend of Noah's Ark and the Great Flood.

She began last week with the Biblical account, but this week various scholars in ancient texts bring to her attention the fact that the story of the man who survived the flood and saved his family and his animals is very old – much older than the collection of books that make up the Old Testament of the Bible.

At the British museum she is shown accounts of the legend in cuneiform from Mesopotamia, and she also learns that there are older accounts still among the stories from the Indus Valley civilisation in India. The story probably travelled to Mesopotamia from India via the thriving trade in cotton and ivory between the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia.

With the origin of the story now pushed back to at least 8,000BC, Ms Lumley would clearly still like it to be true. She thinks it is important "to remember that the flood was sent by God as punishment". I think it is important to remember that to subsistence farmers (as they all were that long ago), who rarely if ever left their own village, any flood of their local

area would cover "the whole world" and would certainly be devastating.

That the exciting tale of the man who beat the flood would be popular with the oral storytellers of olden times is hardly surprising. Nor is it surprising that the tale would be carried from land to land by these same storytellers. That the survival of the man and his family is credited to a deity is hardly surprising either, given the age of the tale.

I did not watch the earlier series *Of Ross Kemp: Extreme World*, being put off by publicity that indicated it was cheap tabloid journalism. I have now watched the first episode of the new series (ABC2 Mondays from March 17 at 9.20pm) and although it is certainly tabloid journalism it is a very high quality variety. In this latest series Kemp looks into some important issues across the globe: the sex-trafficking of kidnapped girls across India, the invisible subterranean world of homelessness, poverty, prostitution and crime that lives in the storm drains which criss-cross beneath the streets of Las Vegas, America's 24/7 party city, and the destabilisation of Lebanon, threatening another civil war.

But in this week's episode, he is in Rio de Janeiro, a city trying to clean up its image ahead of the football World Cup later this year and the next Olympic Games in 2016. Brazil has the seventh largest economy in the world and a burgeoning middle class. Yet despite this new-found wealth, it's also the largest consumer of crack cocaine anywhere on the planet. And like the crack wave that slammed the United States in the 1980s, the result is the same – lives destroyed, families upended, neighbourhoods made uninhabitable.

After some intense negotiations (and probably some greasing of palms), Ross gains access into the secretive underworld of Rio's favelas, the crime-controlled slums where the drug trade flourishes. Here, drug dealers openly carry weapons should the police mount a raid. With great



Devon Morehouse (Tobey Maguire) & Lady Anne – *The Spoils Of Babylon* (ABC2 Thursdays from March 20 at 9.30pm)

understanding and sympathy, Ross gives the viewer a window into the world of the crack-addict, many of whom remain trapped in a cycle of addiction.

His sympathy for the users/victims is apparent, but his conclusion that the solution must rest with the crack users themselves is unfortunate. They admit they smoke crack to escape, but if the mass of the poor had not missed out on the country's new wealth they would not need to escape.

I have said it before and I will say it again: the makers of television documentaries today owe an awful debt to the USA, without whose monumental weirdness and cultural foolishness they would have far fewer subjects for their cameras. In *The Virgin Daughters* (ABC2 Wednesday March 19 at 8.40pm), award-winning British documentary-maker Jane Treays looks into the pseudo-religious Purity Movement and its curiously Victorian attitude towards the relationship of daughters to their fathers.

In what are beginning to

resemble arranged marriages, boys cannot court girls (or even mingle with them) in the USA's "Bible Belt" without first obtaining the permission of the girl's father, who has a "God Given" position akin to that of a Victorian *pater familias*. For their part, the girls in the Purity Movement vow to remain virgins until they are married. Many don't even kiss a boy until their wedding day.

Girls aged from six or seven up to 19 or 20 attend purity balls, accompanied by their fathers. The balls are the brainchild of Randy Wilson, the self-appointed minister of the New Life Church in Colorado Springs, and his wife Lisa, stalwarts of the Purity Movement. Listening to Randy talk about fathers and their daughters is subtly disturbing. It seemed distinctly unhealthy to me: he had no intention of letting "daddy's little girl" grow up until he could pass her over to another father-figure (her husband) at the altar.

Spoofs or parodies are not common on US TV, because they are hard to sell and are not always understood. *Mary Hartman*,

a genuine satire on American values as portrayed in their popular TV shows, was a flop because it was an actual satire not a spoof. *The Spoils Of Babylon* (ABC2 Thursdays from March 20 at 9.30pm) may fare better because it is recognisably a spoof.

It sends up – with a straight face and some clever writing – those multi-generational family sagas about Texas farmers who find oil and become rich and powerful. An easy target, you might say, but there are opportunities for wit here nonetheless.

Introduced by the saga's supposed "famous author, "Eric Jon-rosh" (played rather well by Will Ferrell), the story quickly gets into its stride, with Jonas Morehouse (Tim Robbins) digging relentlessly for oil as his daughter (Kristen Wiig) and adopted son (Tobey Maguire) begin a forbidden affair. As the saga continues, it covers everything from illegal arms deals and international espionage with the Shah of Iran to the creation of the doomed sub-prime market. ☺

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**CHALLENGING THE 20 YEAR OBSESSION WITH
DETERRENCE FOR BOAT PEOPLE BY SUCCESSIVE
FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS – NEEDED MORE THAN EVER!**
Mark Goudkamp, Refugee Action Coalition;
Dianne Hiles, ChiLOut (Children Out of Detention);
Shane Prince, National Co-convenor Labor For Refugees, barrister
acting pro-bono for refugees;

March 20
THE GREEK CRISIS – THE UNWORKABLE STATE
Varasidas Karalis, Professor of Modern Greek, Sydney University;
Jorge Sotirios, journalist, author *Graffiti Over Marble* due 2014;

March 27
**DEBT, FRAGILITY & STAGNATION:
CAPITALISM'S MISSING ENGINE**
Frank Stilwell, Political Economy, Sydney University;
Jim Stanford, Economist, Canadian Auto Workers Union;

April 3
**THE MURDOCH PRESS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON
AUSTRALIAN, BRITISH & AMERICAN POLITICS**
Paul Barry, presenter, ABC *MediaWatch*, author of new book *Sex,
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"Democratisation" and anti-Semitism in Ukraine

Julie Levesque

One of the "Big Three" political parties in Ukraine behind the protests is the ultra-nationalist Svoboda (Freedom), whose leader, Oleh Tyahnybok, has called for the liberation of his country from the "Muscovite-Jewish mafia." After the 2010 conviction of the Nazi death camp guard John Demjanjuk for his supporting role in the death of nearly 30,000 people at the Sobibor camp, Tyahnybok rushed to Germany to declare him a hero who was "fighting for truth." In the Ukrainian parliament, where Svoboda holds an unprecedented 37 seats, Tyahnybok's deputy Yuriy Mykhalyshyn is fond of quoting Joseph Goebbels – he has even founded a think tank originally called "The Joseph Goebbels Political Research Centre." According to Per Anders Rudling, a leading academic expert on European neo-fascism, the self-described "socialist nationalist" Mykhalyshyn is the main link between Svoboda's official wing and neo-Nazi militias like Right Sector. (Max Blumenthal, "Is the US backing Neo-Nazis in Ukraine?" *Alternet*, February 25, 2014)

Numerous reports have exposed the links between the US government and Svoboda.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), which has expressed its concern about the Svoboda party, has yet to condemn US and European support for it. In a statement published on February 28, ADL's National Director Abraham H Foxman writes:

"The Ukrainian Jewish community is nervous. The ultra-nationalist Svoboda party, with its history of anti-Semitism and platform of ethnic nationalism, won more than 10 percent of the vote in October 2012, shared the political leadership of the Maidan revolution over the past months, and just this week received three ministries in the new Ukrainian government.

"While Svoboda's leaders have refrained recently from making anti-Semitic statements, it is troubling that Oleksandr Sych, Svoboda's chief ideologue, was named vice prime minister. Sych's speeches over the years have focused on promoting Ukrainian nationalism, which he says is exemplified by Stepan Bandera, a leader of the Ukrainian nationalist movement of the 1930s and 1940s. Bandera was at times aligned with the Nazis during World War II and was complicit in mass killings of Jews and Poles by Ukrainian collaborators ..."

Dmitro Yarosh, leader of Right Sector, met with Israel's ambassador to Ukraine, Reuven Din El, and told him that their movement rejects anti-Semitism and xenophobia and will not tolerate it.

Ukrainian Jewish journalist Eleonora Groisman interviewed Sergei Mischenko, the leader of "Spilna Sprava", and told him that Ukraine's Jews were worried about the nationalists. Mischenko responded that Jews will not have any problems and shouldn't worry. He went on to say, "On the Maidan there were Jews with us who served in the Israeli Defence Forces. We got along excellently and fought shoulder to shoulder ..."

"Will Svoboda accept Jews as full-fledged Ukrainians and follow the welcome assurances of the armed nationalists? Or will the promises of Right Sector and Spilna Sprava be overtaken by the ethnic nationalism of Svoboda?" (Abraham H Foxman, "In Ukraine, New Government Must Reassure Jewish Community", *The Huffington Post*, February 28, 2014)

The ADL doesn't address the fact that former Israeli soldiers fought alongside with known neo-Nazi militants who now claim to reject anti-Semitism. This sends the paradoxical message that neo-Nazism is somehow acceptable. It is worth noting that the US media as well as the ADL refrain from using the terms "neo-Nazi", neo-fascist and "extremist". Instead of condemning this abnormal alliance, the ADL sees a glimmer of hope in the "promises of Right Sector and Spilna Sprava", groups which the Israeli media itself qualified as "fascist and neo-Nazi".

"Along with similar fascist and neo-Nazi groups such as Spilna Sprava (Common Cause) and Afgantsy (a coalition of veterans from the Soviet war in Afghanistan), Pravy Sektor has played a key role both in seizing government buildings and providing security for the sprawling protest camps against riot police. (Ari Soffer, "Ukraine: Neo-Nazi Militia Leader Threatens 'Civil War'", *Arutz Sheva*, February 5, 2014)

Israel's *Haaretz* also reported that members of Svoboda and Pravy Sektor, were "flying flags with neo-Nazi symbols" and were "distributing freshly translated editions of *Mein Kampf* and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in *Independence Square*." (Anshel Pfeffer, "The new dilemma for Jews in Ukraine", February 25, 2014)

The ADL should not only firmly condemn the presence of all the fascist and neo-Nazi groups in the post-coup Ukrainian government, but also denounce the countries which support them morally and/or financially, like the US, Canada, and member countries of the European Union.

In sharp contrast with today, Hillary Clinton was heavily criticised by Jewish groups in 2012 for "indirectly legitimising (the) Ukrainian opposition party that entered into a parliamentary alliance with (a) neo-Nazi party".

The ADL has criticised the Ukrainian Opposition Party of Yulia Tymoshenko for having signed a parliamentary alliance that gave legitimacy to a far-right extremist party well known for its anti-Semitic views.

ADL National Director, Abraham Foxman issued a statement in which he expressed "alarm" at the strong electoral support for the neo-Nazi Svoboda party of Ukraine.

"Anti-Semitic rhetoric has been a mainstay of Svoboda's leaders and campaign slogans," Foxman said.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has also come under fire from Jewish groups for having penned an op-ed published in *The New York Times* for praising Tymoshenko, leader of the opposition Batkivshchyna (Fatherland) party ...

"Israeli foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, also denounced the agreement, alluding to the deaths of millions of Jews on Ukrainian soil during the Holocaust. (Rachel Hirshfeld, "Clinton Indirectly Legitimising Ukrainian Neo-Nazi Party?", *Arutz Sheva*, June 11, 2012.)

Today, former Israeli soldiers are fighting with Svoboda allies, the ADL is not "alarmed" and Avigdor Lieberman has not condemned this unholy alliance. Abraham Foxman now hopes Prime Minister Yatsenyuk will "set an admirable example" by ensuring anti-Semitism is not tolerated.

"Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, together with UDAR leader Vitaliy Klichko, brought Svoboda into the opposition coalition



Ukraine's Arseniy Yatsenyuk was US Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland's pick for PM on the infamous "F...k the EU" tape.

in 2012. Now, having brought Svoboda into the government, it is up to Prime Minister Yatsenyuk to ensure that anti-Semitism is not tolerated and that democratic norms are adhered to. By sending that message to the people of Ukraine now, the prime minister will reassure the Jewish community and set an admirable example." (Foxman, op., cit).

What kind of example are we talking about exactly? Alliance with neo-Nazi groups is okay as long as they're not anti-Semitic?

The presence of former Israeli soldiers in the Maidan protests along with neo-Nazi militias and the attitude of the ADL and Israeli officials in this matter raise questions about what the Zionist lobby and Israel might possibly gain from the coup which put in power, among others, Igor Kolomoisky, a Ukrainian-Israeli who was appointed governor of Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine's vital business and political centre.

The newly-appointed Dnepropetrovsk governor is Igor Kolomoisky, Ukraine's third-wealthiest man, with an estimated fortune of US\$2.4 billion. He co-owns the informal commercial group Privat, which includes Ukraine's largest bank Privatbank, which Kolomoisky heads, as well as assets in the oil, ferroalloys and food industries, agriculture and transport.

"A former ally of Yulia Tymoshenko, Kolomoisky reportedly had a falling out with her and refused to finance her election campaign in 2010, which the ex-prime minister subsequently lost to Yanukovich. Kolomoisky was reported to be a principal sponsor of the UDAR party, which is one of the three fueling the street campaign to oust Yanukovich. Kolomoisky has a dual Ukrainian-Israeli citizenship and controls his business empire from Switzerland." ("Rule by oligarchs: Kiev appoints billionaires to govern east", *RT*, March 3, 2014)

Kolomoisky also owns the Jewish-interest news channel Jewish News One and heads the European Council of Jewish Communities which describes itself as the "the pan-European umbrella body for Jewish communities and organisations across the continent, representing

Jewish community life across West, Central and Eastern Europe covering around 40 countries."

There is hardly any mention of the presence of neo-Nazi personalities in the new government on Jewish News One.

It is also interesting to note that in a country struggling with an important national debt, Mr Kolomoisky's PrivatBank was the Ukrainian champion of offshoring in 2012. *Economic Pravda* reported in July 2012:

"Ukraine which is struggling from poverty of the majority of its population is able to make banking transfers to Cyprus and British Virgin Islands of billions of US dollars in two month period. The question is who does those transfers and what are the destinations?"

The first place is taken by the biggest Ukrainian bank – PrivatBank. The result of the entity which is owned by Igor Kolomoisky and Hennadiy Boholoubov is almost fantastic.

For the first two months of 2012 the PrivatBank has transferred to the offshore US\$3 billion 863 million." ("Treasure Islands", *Economic Pravda*, July 13, 2012)

"After calling for attacks on Russia, the Right Sector leader Dmitro Yarosh, seen by the ADL as reassuring, is now on an international wanted list for inciting terrorism", *RT* reported March 5, 2013:

Earlier Yarosh called on Russia's most wanted terrorist, Doku Umarov, to act against Russia in an address posted on the Right Sector's page in the Russian VKontakte social network.

The statement said that "many Ukrainians with arms in their hands" supported Chechen militants in their fight against Russians and "it is time to support Ukraine now. "The message, signed "leader of Right Sector Dmitry Yarosh" called on Umarov "to activate his fight and "take a unique opportunity to win over Russia". ("Russia puts Ukraine far-right leader on international wanted list over calls for terrorism", March 5, 2013)

Will the ADL review its position and condemn all neo-Nazi, fascist and extremist groups, as well as their supporters? globalresearch.ca ☘



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