



People to suffer for Abbott's war plans



Bob Briton

Prime Minister Abbott and his Cabinet probably thought the approach of ANZAC Day and the jingoism added to commemorations in recent times would provide the perfect cover for the announcement. The government is to buy an extra 58 Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II aircraft at a cost of \$12 billion. When spares, maintenance and other costs are added the total bill will be \$24 billion over the next 12 years. But rather than rally that ANZAC spirit, the federal government got a hefty backlash from the public. The same week that the military cash splash was announced, Treasurer Joe Hockey was telling us that we will all be feeling the pain of the Federal Budget to be announced on May 13.

Stories about the F-35 purchase – with photos of Abbott giving the thumbs up from the cockpit of a mock version of the stealth fighter – sat on the same front page as the news that the retirement age will have to be lifted to 70 to allow the government to meet its commitments. The outrage was instantaneous and justified. The debt “crisis” rhetoric was called into question and the build up to the belt-tightening Commission of Audit report due to be released this week fell flat. Claims that the money for the F-35s has been set aside in a kitty kept for such

outlays have been questioned. The answers have not been persuasive.

Abbott and Co will press on with its attacks on the gains made by working people over many decades. And the government will certainly not be diverted from the massive expansion of the Australian military. The PM has his orders. The US economy is still struggling and can no longer support the massive military infrastructure needed to maintain its global reach. Australia is not buying up to 100 F-35 multi-role stealth fighters, spending \$8 billion on new Hobart class air warfare destroyers, talking to the Japanese about replacements for the current fleet of Collins class submarines, hosting more “joint” facilities (i.e. US bases) like the Marines base in Darwin, raising the spectre of conscription and so on, for nothing.

Who is the enemy?

The build up is not being carried out to defend the country from aggressors; it is the Australian taxpayer's huge contribution to the Pentagon's “Pivot” to the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean regions where the US feels its economic pre-eminence being challenged by China. The Pivot is preparation for war with China and the F-35 is the sort of equipment that will be required.

“The fifth generation F-35 is the most advanced fighter in production anywhere in the

world and will make a vital contribution to our national security,” Abbott said last week without identifying where the threat to our national security might come from.

“Together with the Super Hornet and Growler electronic warfare aircraft, the F-35 aircraft will ensure Australia maintains an edge. The F-35 will provide a major boost to the Australian Defence Force's intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities,” he continued.

The Defence Minister, WA Senator David Jensen, sounds even more hawkish in his support for the weapons purchase. “This aircraft is peerless,” he said. “It has no identifiable rival in the air at the moment. We see it dominating the skies for the next at least 10-15 years.”

“Dominating” is, indeed, the name of the game; dominance in support of US economic and military interests. It was the sub-text of Abbott's recent tour of east Asia. The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter announcement underscores it emphatically.

Doubts

The federal government is spruiking the jobs benefits to flow from the F-35 purchase. Some of the tail fins for the aircraft are being made in Victoria, which is haemorrhaging manufacturing jobs in the wake of the imminent departure of US car-making transnational Ford. RAAF bases at Williamstown in NSW

and Tindal in the NT will need additional infrastructure to house and service the stealth fighters. Military jobs or no jobs is the message for those struggling communities.

The enthusiasm for the aircraft is not universal even among defence experts. Some point to delays and cost blow outs in the project that carries a mighty US\$400 billion (A\$425 billion) price tag.

Partners in the Joint Strike Fighter project include Australia, Turkey, Denmark, Norway, Italy, the UK, the Netherlands and Canada and it seems Canada is having second thoughts about the aircraft. Nervousness about the ultimate cost of the F-35, the reliability of the 2018 delivery date and the aircraft itself are understandable. But it is a safe bet that the workers and other exploited people, whose governments are lining up with the US for further military aggression, will pay lavishly though unwillingly to fix the troubled F-35 project.

They will pay for it with their tax dollars, with the privatisation of public assets, the loss of services and entitlements including the right to a secure retirement in old age. That's the calculation that has been done by the US Administration and its servants in Australia. It's way past time for the victims of this dangerous waste – and there are billions of us – said “No more! Reduce military spending! Scrap your war plans!” ✪

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Guardian

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March for workers' rights

May Day is a day belonging to the workers of the world, a day for the working class to celebrate its many fine achievements and to focus on the struggles ahead. There is no shortage of challenges, with workers and trade unions under attack around the world. In Australia, the Abbott government has launched an all-out war on the trade union movement.

The government offensive includes increased powers for the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC).

The ABCC Bill extends coverage to any resources platform in the creation of an exclusive economic zone or in the waters above the continental shelf and any ship, in the same zone or waters travelling to or from (or both to and from) an Australian port and to transportation to building sites such as by rail, plane or truck.

This means the Maritime Union of Australia, the Transport Workers Union and other unions such as rail will come under the ABCC. Community and trade union pickets are outlawed. The right to strike is all but completely outlawed and penalties for breaches increased from \$51,000 to \$170,000 per day per offence for trade unions and from \$10,200 to \$34,000 for individuals – workers and trade union officials.

In addition trade unions, officials and workers face the ongoing risk of being sued millions of dollars for damages. The aim is to smash trade unionism and rid building sites of militant workers by intimidation and bankrupting them.

There are a number of other dangerous provisions in Abbott's ABCC legislation that criminalise legitimate trade union activity but the most the media does is repeat the lies about "thuggish" and "violent" trade union behaviour and ignore the criminality of employers who do not pay benefits and put workers' lives at risk.

The union movement is facing the fight of its life. The Abbott government and its employer mates are out to destroy the trade union movement. Survival requires the maximum unity of all unions and the building of strong relations with and support from the wider community.

What better day than May Day to affirm which side we are on and commit to building and strengthening the trade union movement and its relations with the wider community.

A tax on the sick

The introduction of a \$6 copayment will have to include the sick and pensioners, the elderly and frail i.e. the high end users, or it won't make any money. It is therefore a tax on the sick.

Some GPs will not bother to collect the copayment, but will have to push through much quicker the elderly and those with chronic or complex illnesses.

Other GPs who already charge their well-off patients will see the bulk billed patient as second class because they will derive only a "half payment" from Medicare. There will be pressure to spend more time with their private paying patients or to drop bulk billing altogether.

Other GPs will try and collect the \$6 – although it will tie up their time with collecting money and issuing tax receipts.

Either way, bulk billing will eventually fade out – especially as there is predicted to be a long-term freeze on the Medicare rebate as part of the \$6 co-payment.

But the big question, especially in the minds of the state premiers and state health ministers, will be the sustainability of the public hospital system if patients start deserting their GP and turning up to free public hospital emergency department.

Will the federal government be offering to guarantee compensation to the state governments for the increased costs to the state budgets – or will they be expected to privatise the emergency departments, and eventually the hospitals – as people turn up sicker and later in their illness.

The \$6 co-payment has enormous ramifications for all of the health system – and the implications for our free public hospital system are just as great as they are for bulk billing. The Abbott government's drive to to a US-style private health system must be met with strong public opposition.

Next month's March in May actions is an ideal forum to demonstrate that opposition. (Sydneyiders see ad page 4)

PRESS FUND

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has declared that students will have to bear the increasing cost of tertiary education. However, the government is also giving serious consideration to subsidising private tertiary colleges and universities. So the public, i.e. students and their families, will have to cough up the profits for yet another private sector industry! Mind you, that's dwarfed by the \$12.4 billion for new joint strike force fighter aircraft which the government has bought, but which the US Air Force itself is unwilling to purchase. If all that makes you hopping mad send us a contribution for the next issue, because we feel the same way and we really mean to kick up a stink about it! Many thanks to this week's supporters, as follows:

Dianna \$100, Steve Cooper ("Steppy") \$40, R Kiek \$20, Mark Mannion \$5, KM \$10, Jim Doyle \$100, "Round Figure" \$15
This week's total: \$290 Progressive total: \$2,870

Upper Hunter coal mine to run aquifer dry

The Lock the Gate Alliance has commissioned new research into the availability of water in the Upper Hunter following revelations that the Bylong Coal Project will not be able to meet its demand for water from an important alluvial aquifer.

Documents released with the "Gateway certificate" given to the Bylong Coal Project reveal that there is likely to be insufficient groundwater available to meet the demands of the controversial coal mine, proposed for the upper reaches of the Hunter Valley.

In a submission to the Gateway Panel, the NSW Office of Water said: "Whilst the proponent has acquired a large number of shares for the take of groundwater from the alluvial aquifer, there may be real constraints on the availability of water. As demand within the licences entitlement available in the water source increases, or under dry conditions, access to the full entitlement each year may not be possible."

The Office of Water went on to say, "There is a substantial economic risk to the activity that there may not be sufficient access to alluvial groundwater to meet the indicated mine water requirements."

The law currently prevents the Gateway Panel from recommending that a mine not go ahead, and the section of the Water Management Act that makes it an offence to interfere with an aquifer has not been brought into force.

Mines use water to wash coal and suppress dust. If the water is not available, it is not clear whether dust suppression will be stopped, or mines will be forced to cease operating.

Lock the Gate Hunter Coordinator, Steve Phillips said, "This revelation should put a rocket up the NSW government. The NSW Office of Water thinks there will not be enough water in the aquifer to meet the demands of the proposed Bylong coal mine. It appears that the coal mines may be sucking the Valley dry."

"If the section of the Water Management Act that is supposed to protect aquifers from interference of this kind were in force, if the Gateway Panel had the legal power to recommend rejection of a mine proposal, this project would rightly be knocked off at the first hurdle."

"The mining proponent should stop wasting their money, and the Bylong Valley should not be put through the trauma of a drawn out assessment process: the government should reject this mine out of hand."

"Lock the Gate is taking this revelation very seriously. We are commissioning urgent research into the availability of water, and whether this region is about to be bled dry by the mines. In times of drought, not all licences will get water allocated. It could be that the region will be facing a man-made drought, thanks to excessive purchase of water by coal mines." ✪

ACFS Perth celebrates 20 years of Cuban solidarity



(Photo: Alex Bainbridge)

The Australia-Cuba Friendship Society WA branch celebrated its 20th anniversary on Sunday 27th April.

Founding members of the friendship society gathered with other past and present members to toast 20 years of solidarity with Cuba and the links of friendship between the peoples of Australia and Cuba.

Tribute was paid to Vic and Joan Williams (RIP), Dorothy Parker, Joanna, Sylvia, Myrna, John, Maureen, Rene, Ana, Michele, Diana, Vinnie, Len, Elizabeth, Alex, Rhonda, Owen, Peter, Marta, Lefki, Paulina and many others who have kept ACFS going stronger.

In March and April 1994 several friends got together to discuss ways to express their solidarity with the Cuban people who were facing enormous challenges at the time of the "special period" that had been delivered by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Cuba had lost its main trading

partner and was left virtually alone, unable to trade with other countries due to the US blockade on Cuba. At the same time the situation worsened even more when the United States chose to strengthen the economic blockade with the aim of destroying the Cuban revolution.

While many predicted the end of the Cuban revolution, hundreds of good hearted people joined in solidarity with the Cuban people like the group that came together in Perth; Cuba was not alone as an enormous network of solidarity and friendship developed.

The condition of limitations and shortages was soon overcome by Cuba and in spite of the difficult times lived by its people, Cuba never faltered in its solidarity, sharing their human wealth with the world in the way of doctors, teachers and other professionals with those most in need around the world. Cuba now has over 70,000 professionals working in solidarity in Latin America, East Timor,

Pakistan and Haiti. Most recently Cuba has been helping Aboriginal communities in Wilcannia and Bourke NSW with the literacy program "Yes I can" (Yo si Puedo) to learn to read and write.

The challenges that saw Western Australians forming the ACFS are slowly being overcome by the Cuban people. However, the struggle against the US blockade, the return of the illegally occupied Guantánamo Bay to the Cuban people and the freedom of the Cuban Five continue to be the key challenges faced by the Cuban people and the key focus of Cuban solidarity today.

The ACFS Perth toasted the friendship and solidarity with the Cuban people and pledged to continue working in solidarity with the Cuban revolution for their right to self determination and for the freedom that will see Gerardo Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero and Ramón Labaniño walk free from their unjust incarceration in US prisons. ✪

UN says Australia breaching Refugee Convention

Peter Mac

In the wake of the recent attacks on asylum seekers held on Manus Island, United Nations representatives have expressed opposition to the Abbott government's policy of resettling asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea. They have also stated that forcing boats back to Indonesia is in breach of the UN Refugee Convention, and that all asylum seekers who reach Australian waters should be processed in mainland centres.

Their criticism is well justified. Last November one security guard at Manus Island emailed his colleagues that the detention centre was "a tinderbox ready to ignite".

Subsequent actions inflamed the situation. Detainees were forbidden to meet the local people, which fostered mistrust and suspicion on both sides. They were also forbidden to grow their own vegetables, and were banned from using brooms, which authorities thought might be used as weapons. Their view of the ocean was curtailed off to prevent the media from taking pictures.

On February 16 detainees were advised they would only be accepted for resettlement by Papua New Guinea, and never by Australia. In near hysteria some rushed the camp gates, but were confronted by armed PNG guards who pursued them back into the compound and began a violent physical attack, which only ceased after an Australian guard intervened.

On February 17 local police and vigilantes broke into the compound and commenced a brutal armed attack that left one asylum seeker dead and 62 injured. There was virtually no radio communication, and the lighting was cut off. The lack of official control engendered panic among the detainees and frenzy among the guards and vigilantes.

Last week new video evidence showed that firearms were discharged at waist height, (not into the air as the government claimed), the site of the murder of 23 year old Iranian detainee Reza Barati was not cordoned off afterwards, and the murder weapon was immediately removed.

Making your own rules

Despite the UN representatives' position, the government now wants to resettle asylum seekers in Cambodia, one of the world's poorest countries. The Minister for Immigration, Scott Morrison, said the critical issue is about "providing temporary safe haven" for asylum seekers.

However, he has now admitted that this "may be difficult". Moreover, Volker Turk, UNHCR director of international protection, reminded him that the Convention is not just concerned with safety, but also with fundamental human rights, and that it requires signatory states to ensure freedom of movement, education, access to health care and labour rights for refugees.

Morrison has argued that signatories to the Refugee Convention should have more say in defining their obligations under it – in short, that the Abbott government should be entitled to do whatever it sees fit.

Mr Turk replied that the Convention requires implementation of "fundamental principles of a standard of treatment that is adequate and dignified to the human being", and that "this makes more sense because you need an organ that is the voice of reason above the fray of domestic politics."

Hovering on the edge

Stung by the criticism, Morrison asserted belligerently that "We are a sovereign body and we will protect our borders." No one has suggested otherwise, but if the Australian government can do what it wants, so can the United Nations. And it would be entirely possible for the UN to formally declare Australia in breach of the Convention and remove it from the list of signatories.

That would place Australia among the ranks of the pariah nations that systematically abuse human rights, and would turn public opinion against the current immigration policies.

The government is determined to hang on to power in order to protect the interests of the dominant sectors of big business. Accordingly, it has victimised asylum seekers in order to

More than 1,000 children are being held indefinitely in Australian detention centres, and the children of asylum seekers described by ASIO as a security risk are in effect detained for life under present conditions.



gain the support of redneck voters, and has simultaneously sought to appease widespread public concern about the plight of the asylum seekers, by claiming it has a deep concern for their safety.

The hypocrisy of this position has been highlighted by the government's attitude to a proposed addition to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Australia is a signatory to that Convention. The proposed additional clause, known as the Third Optional, would allow anyone under 18 years of age to bring a complaint of violation of their human rights to the United Nations. So far, the Third Optional has been endorsed by ten nations, and another 45 have promised their support.

But the Abbott government refuses to do so, because more than 1,000 children are being held indefinitely in Australian detention centres,

and the children of asylum seekers described by ASIO as a security risk are in effect detained for life under present conditions. That would provide ample grounds for a case to be brought against the government. However, that could only happen if the Abbott government signed the additional clause, and there's no way it's going to.

The government might also be vulnerable if charges of abuse of human rights were brought against it in the International Criminal Court.

Human rights advocate Ben Pynt says UN officials who recently interviewed him "were aghast that Australia has institutionalised mental torture on a massive scale, and facilitates the abuse of asylum seekers by sending them to places with inadequate medical facilities and an unacceptable risk of contracting malaria, dengue fever, cholera or infectious diarrhoea. They can't

believe we do this to pregnant women and newborn babies. But we do."

There is growing opposition to current immigration policies within the Labor and coalition ranks. Last week Ian MacPhee, former coalition Minister for Immigration, stated: "I feel ashamed, really ashamed, at the way in which the major Australian political parties have behaved on the refugee issue. It denies all the principles that underlie Australia's sense of a fair go."

Former Labor minister Chris Evans commented: "The thing that most frightened me ... was the way people sought to demonise or vilify those seeking refuge in our country."

It's unlikely that the current immigration policies are about to be dumped by the two major parties. But what's absolutely certain is that it can't happen too soon. ✪

Pete's Corner



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 socio-economic 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.

CLARA ZETKIN
Selected Writings



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Which side are they on?

Anna Pha

May Day is an international working class day, a day for the working class to celebrate its many fine achievements, to remember its martyrs and to focus on the struggles ahead. And there is no shortage of issues, with workers and trade unions under attack around the world. The Abbott government, Murdoch and Fairfax media and big business have launched an all out war on the trade union movement in Australia. The media are running an ugly ideological war against trade unions, doing their utmost to discredit any union that dares to defend its members.

The government offensive includes the Heydon Royal Commission, Productivity Commission inquiry, anti-union legislation, increasing the powers of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC), as well as a massive smear campaign aimed at criminalising and demonising legitimate trade union activity and militant unionists.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott has singled out the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) for particular attention, in line with former Liberal PM John Howard's strategy of first destroying the strongest and most militant unions, saying the rest would follow. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) has defended the unions in the frontline of Abbott's attack.

But the offensive is not just coming from the Big End of town or government. A growing number of individuals within the union movement, mostly but not exclusively from the Right factions of the Labor Party, have jumped ship to support the destruction of the CFMEU and MUA.

In a speech to the National Press Club on February 14, the then secretary of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) Paul Howes spoke about the "criminal behaviour" of "traitors" in the union movement.

"There is no place for you in any corner of our movement," Howes said, lining up with Abbott's agenda to deregister and wipe out the CFMEU and any other union that refuses to collaborate with the bosses, and fights for workers' rights – those who wage the class struggle and defend workplace health and safety.

"We must never confuse strength with thuggery," Howes adds, repeating the language of the capitalist media and anti-worker Coalition government.

"We are about civilising capitalism," parroting the capitalist myth that there is a civilised form of capitalism where workers get a "fair share" of the fruits of their labour.

In case anyone still had any doubts as to where Howes' loyalties

really lie and whose side he is on, he made that clear last month when announcing his forthcoming resignation as union secretary: "Sometimes we romanticise the working class," Howes said. "The only good thing about being in the working class is leaving it."

He identified his trip to Cuba on billionaire Richard Pratt's private jet as the turning point in his rejection of socialism in an interview with the *Financial Review* ("Education of Paul Howes", 28-03-2013). Prior to that he had been a member of a Trotskyist organisation. His engagement to senior Qantas executive and former adviser to Liberal Treasurer Joe Hockey, Olivia Wirth, raised some eyebrows in his union. Wirth was company spokesperson when Qantas locked out its workers, including AWU members, in 2011.

Howes promoted a Global Compact for class collaboration with employers and cooperation with the Abbott government – business and unions in the same tent.

Howes is off to the private sector where he will no doubt fit in well and be suitably rewarded for his years of loyal service and possibly a seat in Parliament. According to some in the ALP, he has the makings of a future Prime Minister.

"Traitors"

Some call Howes a traitor, but traitor implies a shift in loyalties. Howes has come out and said what a number of his colleagues on the Labor Right believe, especially those aligned with Catholic Action (National Civic Council) and the late Bob Santamaria – also Tony Abbott's idol.

With their ultra-conservative and backward social agenda, their aim is to serve capital. They settle for a few modest concessions for their members, and work to rid the union movement and Labor Party of those seeking to put the interests of workers first, before profits.

They serve time in the union movement, masquerading as representatives of the working class, and then are rewarded with a seat in Parliament or a six or seven figure package and consultancy fees in the private sector or both.

Martin Ferguson, a former ACTU president and former Labor minister for the mining companies, is a classic example. He is now chair of the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association's advisory board. He went straight from Parliament, after six years of faithful service to mining companies, into a leading advocacy position for the oil and gas companies into battle against what he describes as the "radical environmental movement" that "despise market economics".

He has called on Labor to abandon its opposition to Abbott's restoration and strengthening of the already draconian powers of the ABCC. He



(Photo: Anna Pha)

is pushing for Abbott to go in harder with his government's anti-union industrial relations legislation and wants enterprise agreements gutted to a few allowable matters.

Another former ACTU president, Simon Crean, has also shown his true colours. Instead of rallying support for a trade union under attack and possibly facing deregistration if not bankrupted first by the Abbott government, Crean has lined up with Abbott. He has called on the ACTU to take action against the CFMEU following its latest fines of \$1.25 million. (See *Guardian*, "Assault on unions steps up", #1634, 09-04-2014)

Labor leader Bill Shorten, also from the same right-wing camp as Howes, joined the swill, moving to distance the ALP from the trade union movement and the scandals and mud that might surface during the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption.

Witch hunt

The Royal Commission's terms of reference direct the Commission to investigate the CFMEU; AWU; Transport Workers' Union (TWU); Health Services Union (HSU); and the Communications, Electrical, Electronic, Energy, Information, Postal, Plumbing and Allied Services Union of Australia (CEPU). But its wide powers are not limited to these unions. With the exception of the CFMEU, the national leaderships of these unions are right-wing.

The name of the Royal Commission gives the impression that its target is just unions, but the government has a far wider, unstated agenda. The ALP, any other political organisation or group that acts in solidarity with trade unions and anyone else associated with them is also in the

firing line. They are aiming high, Bill Shorten, Julia Gillard, Paul Howes, etc, with the media already drawing attention to slush funds for the reelection of officials. The employers who contributed to these slush funds in return for co-operation expect to be overlooked.

It does not take a crystal ball to anticipate some of the Royal Commission's likely recommendations. These include:

- Expansion of provisions for deregistration of unions to cover more offences
- Deregistration of the CFMEU
- Criminalisation and jail for breaches of industrial relations legislation
- Strict restrictions on the use of union monies
- Ban on political donations
- Restriction of union activity to employer-employee relations

The Registered Organisations Bill (ROB), which is waiting for a supportive Senate to be passed, sets the scene for the enforcement and control over the use of union funds and activities.

The last three of these possible recommendations are aimed at hitting the Labor Party which is heavily reliant on trade union donations and union campaigns for re-election.

Trade union independence

Many of the attacks from within and outside the labour movement are calling for the ALP to distance itself from the trade union movement. This misrepresents the situation. It is the trade unions that are in the grip of Labor: to become an official in many unions, it is necessary to first join the Labor Party.

Union policy largely, but not always (eg the good ACTU policy on asylum seekers) is dictated by ALP policy. Right-wing Labor has a tight grip on a number of trade unions through such figures as Howes.

The examples of Howes, Crean, and Ferguson demonstrate the importance of trade unions taking an independent stand, with the interests of their members and the working class foremost in determination of policy and other activities.

The constant and pervasive barrage of anti-union propaganda, the repeated description of militant unionists as thugs, criminals, corrupt, etc, is having an impact. It does not help when repeated by leaders and former leaders of the labour movement.

If the union movement is to survive the current offensive then it will require maximum unity of all trade unions and strong relations with and support from the community. The independence of trade unions is an important part of this struggle – by those who are on the side of the working class.

Trade unions might, for example, consider standing their own candidates at the next federal or state elections. They could do so in a coalition of unions whose only commitment should be to their members and workers and the community in general.

And as Communist Party President Vinnie Molina told the *Guardian*, "What better day than May Day to affirm which side we are on and commit to building and strengthening the trade union movement and its relations with the wider community.

"Let's march on May Day in unity for jobs and socialism!" ✪

MARCH IN MAY

Protest the Abbott Government's anti-people policies

March again in May

SYDNEY

1pm Sunday May 18

Belmore Park (Near Central Station)

SUPPORT THE CUBAN 5

Support event outside US Consulate

Martin Place, Sydney

Monday May 5, 5pm

Come and support the Five.

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Further info Maria 0431 275 434



Public service wages - back to the future!

Bob Briton

In 1981, the Fraser Liberal government legislated a national wage freeze claiming it would help fight inflation. If that was the intention, it failed. All these years later, Abbott and Employment Minister Eric Abetz are campaigning hard for a similar wages outcome in order to deal with "Labor's debt". Not long ago, at the height of the resources "boom", wage restraint was said to be needed to stop the economy "overheating". Rain, hail or shine, workers can count on the Libs to go in boots and all to secure the biggest possible share for private profits.

Abetz says Australia's bosses are too soft. "As shadow minister it was also disappointing to see weak-kneed employers caving in to unreasonable union demands and then visiting me, advocating for change in the system," he said. He claims

there has been something of a wages breakout in recent times. Judging by the size of their pay packets, few workers are aware of it and neither are the experts paid to keep an eye on such things.

Steven Walters, a chief economist with JP Morgan, says wages growth is the lowest it has ever been, which makes sense given how intense the attack on unions has been lately. "We've only got comparable series back to about the late 1990s and in fact wages growth [over the past year] is the lowest we've ever seen in that period," Mr Walters said.

Regardless of the facts, Abetz is sticking to the Coalition line and is going to show employers how it's done. He has dictated that in current enterprise bargaining federal public servants will receive between zero and 2.5 percent pay increases. And the only way to get more than zero is to give away something significant.

The Commonwealth Public

Service is still reeling from savage staffing cuts. And, contrary to the "fat cats" propaganda, public sector wages in the ACT (along with those in Tasmania) have had the smallest increase in the country over the past 12 months, according to Wage Price Index data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The increase was just 0.3 percent - well below the national trend.

"So despite savings measures and job losses in the public sector that mean people are working harder than ever, you've got to get a cut as well on your conditions to get a pay rise," Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) national secretary Nadine Flood said.

The CPSU has been campaigning for an increase of four percent a year over the next three years of the new agreement. It has made the threat from the Abbott government clear to its members and pointed out what is at stake:

Your conditions: Under the new policy agencies will be forced to cut employees' conditions and entitlements to offset any pay rise. Suggested measures include reducing leave entitlements, use of leave, forcing work onto lower level employees and cutting managerial staff. Agencies will also be barred from enhancing conditions.

Your job: The policy makes no provision regarding jobs or job security and seeks to drive down the classification level at which work is being conducted.

Your pay: The new policy does not include any pay offer and severely restricts pay outcomes. It ties any improvements in pay directly to employee-related savings, pushing agencies to cut employment conditions. It also severely limits the range of productivity improvements that can be considered in setting pay increases.

Your rights: The new policy seeks to "streamline" or strip rights out of agreements and limit the range of content that can be included which means employees would have less enforceable rights on issues such as dispute resolution, consultation and health and safety.

Your say: The new policy is far more complicated than the one it replaces, with the government seeking to tightly control bargaining outcomes through new and onerous restrictions on making changes.

A clash with the approximately 165,000 workers whose enterprise agreements expire in June appears inevitable. If it were to prevail, the position of the government would mean humiliation and a major loss of rights and living standards for public sector workers. Abetz' object lesson to employers must be answered with united action from workers. ☘

Cops target protest over visiting royals

Rudi Maxwell

Queensland police clamped down on Aboriginal protesters in Brisbane two weeks ago, breaking up the group at South bank before they'd even had a chance to ask the visiting Duke and Duchess of Cambridge to "give back what you stole".

However, the group simply followed the police instruction, moved and carried on with their protest, chanting "Was, is and always will be Aboriginal land", "No treaty, no peace" and waving placards about Aboriginal sovereignty and land rights.

Kooma man and member of the Brisbane Aboriginal Sovereign Embassy Wayne Wharton travelled to Sydney earlier in the week to carry the message to the royal visit to the Opera House. "In 1992, the Mabo High Court case found that the Crown's claim of ownership and sovereignty of this continent via terra nullius was illegal," he said.

"The court upheld that there was a system of governance by the original tribes and that our sovereignty has never been ceded. It is only through the Royal Family's false and illegal claim of sovereignty over this continent that federal, state and territory governments derive their authority to pass laws and enforce them.

"By not answering the big question posed by the Mabo decision, the Queen, her representatives and the Australian government have effectively been lying to everyone who calls this continent home since 1992.

"All people who call this continent home need to start maturely and seriously engaging with the issue of Aboriginal sovereignty because the Queen and the government have proven incapable of doing this."



Wayne Wharton speaks with a police officer at a Sydney Opera House protest about the royal Family's visit to Australia. (Photo: Brendon Qu)

Police officers made no arrests at either of the protests.

"Here we are 12 years after the Mabo decision still parading the British Royal Family as head of state, still paying these people coming to this country," he said.

"It's hypocritical, an insult to that High Court decision and to Aboriginal people. On the one hand, white Australians want reconciliation, and say they're sorry for all the things Britain has done to us - but they're happy for representatives of the Crown to come here and wipe shit on us."

However, Mr Wharton was equally as scathing of the lack of Aboriginal protesters in Sydney. "There's a lack of leadership, a lack of fight in our young people. The first thing you must do as an Aboriginal person is defend your country," he said.

"There was definitely a lack

of attention from people living in Sydney - what does that say about our plight, our fight for justice? Has Sydney given up that role? From the land councils, leadership has been non-existent. Where's the leadership fighting for our rightful place defending our country - have all these people given up the fight in return for superannuation and a safe job?

"When I came through, I was taught by great leaders that your response as a black person was to defend your country.

"I think the Howard government destroying our community-controlled organisations has meant we are less able to mobilise as political units and support each other and drove a wedge through the heart of our community.

"The political momentum that existed in this country has stalled."

Koori Mail ☘

Western Australia, mother of all jailers

Gerry Georgatos

Western Australia's prison population is a stark contrast to the rest of the nation, jailing First Peoples at the nation's highest rate. Eighty two percent of the juvenile detention population are comprised of the youth of First Peoples, while 40 percent of the state's adult prison population is comprised of First Peoples despite the fact they only comprise less than 3 percent of the total population of the state.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2013, the overall prison population decreased by one percent from 2012. The imprisonment rate decreased from 267 per 100,000 to 256 per 100,000. In 2013, the imprisonment rate for non-Aboriginal adults was 159 per 100,000 of the Western Australian population while for First Peoples it was 21 times the non-Aboriginal rate, at 3,315 per 100,000.

Western Australian Aboriginal adult males are imprisoned at the world's highest rate.

Restorative justice academic and criminologist, Dr Brian Steels, said that the "penal estate" would continue to fail all prisoners but that governments were ultimately responsible for addressing the extensive disparity that First Peoples endure in reference to incarceration.

Dr Steels said it is disingenuous for anyone to suggest that racism does not underwrite the disproportionate rates.

"Government keeps on telling us that these rates have nothing to do with race. How is that possible? The police are mostly non-Indigenous and they have little idea of what it is to live under colonial rulers," said Dr Steels.

"The majority of police do not know what it is like to be treated as

a second-class people on their own land and which was stolen from them.

"Governments only need to work with us, restoratively and therapeutically instead of retributively and punitively. Our way works, their way does not." Indeed, evidence from around the world suggests restorative justice does succeed to reduce re-offending and to help people to alternate pathways other than a life immersed in criminality. Scandinavian countries such as Norway, where restorative justice practices are in place, have the lowest re-offending rates in Europe. Europe's overall re-offending rate is 60 percent, while Norway has a re-offending rate of 16 percent.

Noongar rights advocate, Marianne Mackay said that nothing will change unless governments listen to restorative justice experts and criminologists such as Dr Steels, and also heed the recommendations of one report after another.

"I think the latest statistics show the failure of governments to heed recommendations from reports such as the "Doing Time, Time for Doing" report. Until they start implementing these recommendations our people will continue to be locked up," said Ms Mackay.

"It does not also help anyone to have draconian mandatory sentencing regimes in place that not only erode but do away with people's rights.

"People need to start looking at these statistics, think about how is it possible to have this disparity of 21 times the rate, and then begin to pin on it racism.

"Our people only need to bump into someone and they're arrested. Our people only have to speak up in trying to defend themselves and they're arrested."

The Stringer ☘

How Media Watch lost its teeth backing the war on Syria

Tim Anderson

A turn to reactionary politics is nowhere more clearly seen than in a formerly independent voice moving away from criticism of the high and mighty towards attacks on little people. That is precisely what happened when Media Watch (the media watchdog of Australia's public broadcaster, the ABC) bought into the propaganda war on Syria.

Media Watch had gained a reputation for making corporate monopolies squirm when their lies and manipulations were exposed. This was best done by lawyer Stuart Littlemore, who started and presented the show for much of the 1990s. Since then the program, run by ABC journalists, became tamer and more sensitive to political criticism.

The ABC itself was subject to a witch-hunt style inquiry in 2003, after the Howard government accused it of biased reporting of the Iraq invasion. That inquiry upheld 17 of the government's 68 complaints. Several management reshuffles and a fair degree of self-censorship later and the ABC is much less likely to "rock the boat" over any new Washington-led war.

Nevertheless, it was surprising to see the near compete turn-around in "A Syrian Homecoming" (*Media Watch*), ostensibly the critique of a story about a young Syrian-Australian woman's visit to Syria, published in the *Good Weekend* magazine ("Cry my father's country"). In practice this was a savage personal attack on a young woman who opposed the foreign-backed war.

The *Good Weekend* story profiled Reme Sakr, who visited Syria last December both to see her father and to participate in an Australian solidarity delegation to Syria. This writer was also part of that 11 member group. Freelance journalist Chris Ray, who accompanied the delegation, wrote several articles on matters that emerged from our meetings with political, religious and community leaders; but the *Good Weekend* article was commissioned as a personal profile.

Journey

This long and well written piece covered Reme and her journey to visit her father in the Druze area of Sweida, after her work with the delegation. Reme had gone to school there and her father had returned home from Australia, after he retired. She was worried about him and Sweida, after hearing of attacks on Sweida by the western-backed Al-Qaeda groups.

The story therefore humanised a young woman and her family in the context of a war which has been characterised by many well-publicised atrocities by the western backed "rebels", and a series of highly contested accusations of war crimes by the Syrian Army.

Media Watch researcher Emily Watkins asked Reme, Chris and the *Good Weekend* several questions before the program, but the narrative by veteran journalist Paul Barry, was one-eyed and relentless. Unusually, he focussed on subject of the story much more than the journalist, attacking Reme for her support of the Syrian government.

Paul Barry, a journalist who made a fair amount of money on the side writing tame books on Australian media moguls Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer, seemed keen to re-ingratiate himself with the Murdoch stable. He quoted *The Australian* and Prime Minister Tony Abbott, as authority figures who had condemned Reme and her fellow travellers.

The program inexplicably attacked her for her minority Druze origins, falsely claimed she had received special favours from the Syrian government, falsely claimed the story had covered up her active opposition to the war on Syria, and falsely claimed she was part of a group which was personally committed to President Assad and had covered up war crimes.

Media Watch also criticised the *Good Weekend* story for "sidestepping" the alleged

crimes of the "Syrian regime" and for ignoring the "moderate Syrian opposition". However author Chris Ray responded in a letter: "I wrote about and identified rebel groups who attacked Malek Sakr's district and the road between Damascus and Druze territory in Sweida. Should I have written about other rebels who did not attack Druze territory? ... Who is the moderate opposition anyway? The rebellion is dominated by Islamists who differ mainly in the extent of their sectarian intolerance."

Outraged by the misrepresentations of the story, Reme wrote a two page reply to *Media Watch*; at the time of writing this letter was not posted on their website.

Lies

To the disgrace of the ABC, in the course of trying to de-humanise Reme and re-assert the western media line on Syria, presenter Paul Barry told several lies.

1. Barry said: "A couple of things seemed not right. The father turned out to be a leader of the minority Druze community". This was both false and an ethnic slur. As Reme said in her letter "It is simply not true – and a complete fabrication on your part – to claim my father is a leader of the Druze. He is a religious man, an 'Uqqal' ... [but] in no way is he a community leader ... And why does belonging to the Druze, a religious minority, seem 'not quite right' to you? Does it devalue my family's story or our position regarding the conflict in Syria?"

2. Paul Barry said: "Reme Sakr clearly received special favours on her trip", referring to a letter of safe passage she had from the government, when travelling to Sweida. This "special favour" claim was untrue; and the *Media Watch* researcher didn't even bother to ask Reme about it. In fact, as her Syrian ID card had expired, she needed a temporary identity document to travel through areas with many army checkpoints. Providing her with such a travel document and assisting with her safety, in these circumstances, is a duty that governments owe to their citizens.

3. The *Media Watch* presenter said Reme was "a leading light in Hands off Syria, which backs President Assad, refuses to admit he's used chemical weapons." This was another deception. Reme has publicly spoken out against the war on Syria and the *Good Weekend* story noted that her delegation had met with several Syrian ministers, including the Prime Minister and the President. Reme responded: "Since when did speaking out in support of a cause we believe in ever make us ... less deserving to have our stories told?" The false suggestion was that Reme or the story had somehow covered up her anti-war activism.

Hands off Syria for its part, has always made it clear that it supports the Syrian people and their nation, not any particular political leader. Barry repeatedly misrepresented Hands off Syria and the delegation as "backing Assad" or expressing "solidarity with Assad". Reme responded: "While many Syrian-Australians do back President Assad, Hands off Syria as an organisation supports principles rather than personalities – especially the principle that Syria has the right to self-determination free from aggressive interference by foreign powers and foreign-backed terrorists." That distinction was lost on *Media Watch*.

4. In an effort to back up its claim that Hands off Syria and Reme "paint the popular uprising as a foreign invasion", *Media Watch* showed three video clips of Reme speaking at rallies and referring to "foreign militants" and "foreign militants who are destroying the country of my mother and father". The evidence presented does not support the deceptive claim that she suggested a Bush-style "invasion" was underway. Further, no evidence was cited to back the claim that the sectarian Islamist groups were part of a "popular uprising". Indeed analysts for NATO, after more than two years of war, said President Assad probably had 70 percent support. The sectarian groups



themselves have admitted that they have little popular support. Paul Barry's claim that there was a "popular uprising" was baseless war propaganda.

5. Barry twice claimed that President Assad and his government had used chemical weapons, and that Hands off Syria and Reme had tried to cover this up. He cited a UN report from February 2014. This is highly misleading. While it is true that UN investigators (in most cases conducting interviews from outside Syria) have "accused both sides of war crimes", they have not accused individuals nor have they moved into any prosecutions. Further, no UN body has accused the Syrian government of using chemical weapons. Indeed the available evidence is quite the reverse.

It was the Syrian government that first invited UN inspectors to visit and investigate chemical weapon use in Syria, after several attacks on Syrian soldiers and civilians. The NATO-backed groups tried to turn that around with the East Ghouta incident, launching an attack precisely when the inspectors were in Damascus. The UN's report of December 2013 was not mandated to allocate blame, but did conclude that 3 of the 5 attacks were "against soldiers" as well as civilians – that is, they were attacks carried out by opponents of government soldiers. The February 2014 report said: "In no incident was the commission's evidentiary threshold met with respect to the perpetrator".

Ignored evidence

The independent evidence, which *Media Watch* ignores, was stronger. With the exception of the Washington-based Human Rights Watch (in lock step with the Washington establishment, as regards Syria), almost all independent reports on chemical weapon attacks in Syria tell a very different story. *Gavlak and Ababneh* (MINT PRESS, August 29) reported that residents in East Ghouta blamed the Saudis for providing chemical weapons to untrained "rebels".

The ISTEAMS group led by Mother Agnes-Mariam provided a September 17 report which analysed video evidence of the attacks and said the massacre videos preceded the attack, and that staged and fake images were used. Seymour Hersh, the famous US journalist, wrote on December 19 that US intelligence was fabricated "to justify a strike" on Syria. The Peace Association and Lawyers for Justice group in Turkey issued a report in December saying that "most of the crimes" against Syrian civilians, including the East Ghouta attack, were committed by "armed rebel forces in Syria".

The *New York Times* in December retreated

from its telemetry evidence claims, admitting the earlier vector analysis was "speculative"; and MIT investigators Lloyd and Postol reported on January 14 that sarin gas "could not possibly have been fired ... from government controlled areas". In its zeal to back the war on Syria, *Media Watch* covered up all these reports.

The scale of independent reporting which undermines claims against the Syrian government stands in stark contrast to the open and boastful publicity given to atrocities (beheadings, mutilations, public executions including executions of children for blasphemy, launching of chemical canisters on rockets, attacks on civilian airliners, bombing of hospitals, destruction of mosques and churches) committed on an almost daily basis by the western backed terrorist groups.

6. Finally Paul Barry, who quoted *The Australian* to label the Syrian President "dictator and accused war criminal Bashar al-Assad", took it one step further. He wrapped up by saying that the Syrian President was "a man the UN has branded a war criminal". This is false and must be a deliberate lie. No UN body has "branded" President Bashar al Assad "a war criminal". This may be wishful thinking, but dishonest journalism.

In her unpublished letter, Reme Sakr concludes:

"Contrary to what you tried to imply, I have no ulterior agenda in supporting one side or another in this war, but unlike you ... I see Syria being pillaged and burnt to the ground by foreign-sponsored terrorists, I see my family fearing for their lives every time they leave their homes, and I see young women, just like me, being raped and made to watch as their fathers and brothers are beheaded."

If Reme and Hands off Syria really have served as "useful propaganda for the Syrian government" then, equally, Paul Barry and *Media Watch* have served as useful propaganda for the Al-Qaeda groups, which boast of their atrocities, often blaming them on the Syrian government.

There was no hint of any controversy over the atrocity claims, in the *Media Watch* polemic. Given their experience and the time they had to investigate, we can safely conclude that Paul Barry lied repeatedly, as an exercise in war propaganda which served to cover up the crimes of western-backed Al-Qaeda style forces.

Far from the action of a media watchdog, this was the pits of tabloid, propaganda journalism. Rupert Murdoch's media dynasty will be well pleased to see that the ABC's former "watchdog", on this particular dirty war, has pulled its own teeth.

"Crimes against peace"

Inder Comar*

On March 13, 2013, my client, an Iraqi single mother and refugee now living in Jordan, filed a class action lawsuit against George W Bush, Richard Cheney, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz in a federal court in California.

She alleges that these six defendants planned and waged the Iraq War in violation of international law by waging a "war of aggression," as defined by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, more than 60 years ago.

At the Nuremberg Trials, American chief prosecutor and associate justice of the US Supreme Court Robert H Jackson focused his prosecution on the planning and execution of the various wars committed by the Third Reich. Jackson aimed to show that German leaders committed "crimes against peace," and specifically, that they "planned, prepared, initiated wars of aggression, which were also wars in violation of international treaties, agreements, or assurances."

For Jackson, the Nuremberg Trials were a high watermark of legalism. In his report regarding the negotiations of the treaty that would set up the Nuremberg Tribunal, Jackson wrote that the Tribunal "ushers international law into a new era where it is in accord with the common sense of mankind that a war of deliberate and unprovoked attack deserves universal condemnation and its authors condign penalties." He concluded, "All who have shared in this work have been united and inspired in the belief that at long last the law is now unequivocal in classifying armed aggression as an international crime instead of a national right."

The Nuremberg Tribunal agreed with Jackson. In its famous judgment in 1946, the Tribunal wrote:

"War is essentially an evil thing ... to initiate a war of aggression, therefore, is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."

The case against Bush is based on the conduct of members of the administration

prior to coming into office as well as conduct taking place on and after 9/11. Years before their appointment to the Bush Administration, Richard Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz were vocal advocates of a militant neoconservative ideology that called for the United States to use its armed forces in the Middle East and elsewhere.

They openly chronicled their desire for aggressive wars through a non-profit called The Project for the New American Century (or PNAC). In 1998, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz would personally sign a letter to then-President Clinton, urging the president to implement a "strategy for removing Saddam's regime from power", which included a "willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing."

On 9/11, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz openly pressed for the United States to invade Iraq, even though intelligence at the time confirmed that it was Al-Qaeda, and not Saddam, that was responsible. Richard Clarke, former National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counter-terrorism, famously told President Bush that attacking Iraq for 9/11 would be like invading Mexico after Pearl Harbour.

We now know that the Bush Administration began a concerted effort to scare and mislead the American public in order to obtain support for the Iraq War. As alleged in the complaint, this included the famous phrase that "the smoking gun could not be a mushroom cloud," which was used repeatedly by Administration officials on news shows as a way of equating non-action with the vaporisation of a United States city. The Administration used bogus and false intelligence to make the case for weapons of mass destruction, and also falsely linked Al-Qaeda to Iraq, despite the fact that there has never been any evidence of any operational linkages between the two. These were not simple mistakes: this was an intentional campaign by Administration officials to use faulty data to garner support for a war.

The crime of aggression was completed when these officials failed to secure proper authorisation for the war. So concerned with their invasion, the Administration dismissed any need for a formal Security Council

mandate. Today, Kofi Annan, an official Dutch inquiry, the Costa Rican Supreme Court, a former law lord from the House of Lords (Lord Steyn) and a former chief prosecutor from the Nuremberg Trials (Benjamin Ferencz) have all concluded the Iraq War was illegal under international law.

After months of briefing, the Northern District of California will issue its order any day as to whether it will recognise the crime of aggression, and whether my client may pursue a civil case against the Bush-era defendants based on that crime. In August of last year, the Obama Department of Justice requested that the district court immunise Bush and his high officials from civil charges on the basis that they were acting "within the scope of their authority". This issue also remains pending before the court, but it should be noted that both Nuremberg, as well as the more recent Pinochet decision, reject the idea of immunity for leaders when they step outside the appropriate scope of their authority.

We cannot let the crime of aggression disappear into history; indeed, even the International Criminal Court has now provided its own definition for aggression, with jurisdiction for this crime being enabled after 2017. We must affirm Jackson's belief that, "law is not only to govern the conduct of little men, but that even rulers are, as Lord Chief Justice Coke put it to King James, under God and the law."

For most of the post-war period, this notion – that leaders must be held accountable for their decisions to go to war – has gathered dust. This must change, or else the legacy of Nuremberg, and its foundation for the post-war international legal regime, will be tossed aside in favour of the state of anarchic international relations that led to the Second World War itself. It is time to fulfil Jackson's dream of a global order governed by law, not war. And it is time for accountability over the Iraq War and for the millions of people who lost their lives or who were affected by it.

*Inder Comar is counsel of record for Sundus Shaker Saleh in her case against members of the Bush Administration. globalresearch.ca ✳

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President Bush was told that attacking Iraq for 9/11 would be like invading Mexico after Pearl Harbour.

Boycotting the architects of Israel's occupation

Abe Hayeem

A nine-year-long campaign to hold Israeli architects responsible for their role in dispossessing Palestinians reached a significant stage on March 19. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) approved a call for its Israeli equivalent to be suspended from the International Union of Architects.

This decision echoes an important precedent. In 1978, RIBA protested against apartheid in South Africa by severing its links with the South African Schools of Architecture.

While the campaign for an academic boycott of Israel has grown in recent years, the March 19 vote could be the first successful action against Israel's professional institutes. This decision – the result of mobilisation by Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine, backed by eminent architects and academics around the world – has put the spotlight on how Israeli architects assist the occupation in a most unethical way.

It is appropriate that the world body of architects takes action against the Israeli Association of United Architects (IAUA). Members of the IAUA have designed many of the settlements that Israel has built – and is continuing to build – in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, as well as Israel's apartheid wall.

These settlements are illegal under international law. Significantly, we are approaching the tenth anniversary of the International Court of Justice advisory opinion of July 2004, which declared Israel's wall

and the settlements unlawful. Architects facilitating these human rights violations and war crimes are thus a legitimate target of boycott.

Deeply political

Architecture is a deeply political profession, and Israeli architects operate in a hyper-political environment. One of Israel's architecture schools is located in Ariel University, built inside the Israeli settlement of Ariel in the West Bank.

The charter of the International Union of Architects (IUA) reminds architects that they have an obligation to “thoughtfully consider the social and environmental impact of their professional activities”. It also requires architects to respect heritage and to help preserve it.

As designing settlements is a deliberate attempt to erase Palestinians' heritage and dispossess them from their homes and land, members of the Israeli Association of United Architects have reneged on their obligations under the IUA Accords.

In 2005 and 2009, the International Union of Architects' General Assembly approved a resolution condemning the construction of buildings and development projects on land that had been ethnically cleansed or illegally appropriated (“RIBA votes to suspend Israeli architects' association from international body,” Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine, March 20, 2014).

The Israeli Association of United Architects, despite numerous appeals, has not paid any attention to those decisions. Logic dictates that it should be suspended from the international body for architects until



A Palestinian walks on his property overlooking the Israeli settlement Har Homa, West Bank.

it starts complying with that body's ethical codes and international law, and when these illegal projects end.

In August this year, the World Congress of the International Union of Architects will take place in Durban, South Africa. It is vital that participants take this action against Israeli architects over the role they play in designing the infrastructure of occupation and apartheid, and the “Judaization” policies in occupied East Jerusalem, the Galilee, the Naqab (Negev) and Palestinian neighbourhoods in cities within present-day Israel.

Selective outrage?

This decision by RIBA has been met with orchestrated fury by the pro-Israel lobby and media. The usual accusations of “singling out”

Israel and anti-Semitism were trotted out, and the enumeration of all the world's different atrocities compared with Israel's “model democracy” in the heart of Arab Middle East. A boycott of RIBA being used as a venue for bar mitzvahs was also suggested.

Top-level British politicians and two famous American architects have vilified RIBA for its principled stance. But a letter signed by top architects, academics and cultural figures to support this courageous action by RIBA, asking it not to bow to the intimidation and accusation of anti-Semitism, was publicised widely.

After the vote took place, the Israeli Association of United Architects called on British Prime Minister David Cameron to intervene. They recalled that he had spoken against boycotts of Israel during his visit to Jerusalem earlier this year, though he also condemned the accelerating settlement construction (“Israeli architects ask David Cameron to block RIBA boycott,” The Jewish Chronicle, March 27, 2014).

Michael Gove, the UK's education secretary and an avowed Zionist, has accused RIBA of “selective outrage” (“Gove's reaction to the censure of Israeli architects involved in illegal construction in the West Bank was to be expected,” The Independent, April 9, 2014).

His allegation is ludicrous. Our initiative wasn't in response to a small sample of misdemeanours by Israeli architects, but to their general practice.

Gove and his colleagues in the British government have ensured that Israel is treated with impunity despite

its routine abuses of human rights and flouting of dozens of United Nations resolutions.

Eyal Weizman, a courageous Israeli architect whose books *A Civilian Occupation* and *Hollow Land* expose how many of his peers were assisting Israel's illegal acts, has delivered a strong riposte to our critics. In a statement for The Architects' Journal, he writes that the attacks on our initiative “wilfully invert perpetrator and victim, divert the discussion from the ongoing suffering, theft and violence enacted through the architecture employed in the context of Israel's occupation and close an avenue for a better and more hopeful future.”

Duty to speak out

Michael Mansfield, a British barrister who was a key adjudicator in the Russell Tribunal on Palestine, was among numerous distinguished figures to support the RIBA motion. “There can be no doubt about Israel's flagrant disregard for international law,” he stated. “The ICJ in 2004 made it clear that everyone had an obligation to help end this illegal situation.”

Desmond Tutu, the South African archbishop, once said: “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

Architects of conscience have a duty to speak out when members of our profession in Israel are assisting the gross injustices perpetrated against the Palestinians. We cannot remain neutral.

The Electronic Intifada ☪

Rana Plaza: One year on, no justice

Joana Ramiro

The collapse of a factory building which killed thousands of garment workers marks its first anniversary (April 24) – but British companies continue to refuse compensation to those affected. A year after the tragic subsidence of the Rana Plaza building in Savar, central Bangladesh, big brands such as Matalan and Asda are still to contribute to the official Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund for families and victims of the disaster.

“One year later [Matalan] is still sitting on its hands,” said garment workers' rights group Labour Behind the Label Sam Maher.

Her organisation said that despite many companies' statements in the wake of the incident – which killed over 1,100 people – only a third of the total £24 million compensation pay has been raised.

Trade Union Congress general secretary Frances O'Grady said: “It is shameful that many of our companies sourcing from Rana Plaza have still not paid into the fund to help victims and their families.” The TUC has supported the historic agreement between international trade unions and fashion businesses

guaranteeing safer workplaces for Bangladeshi workers at almost 2,000 factories.

The Accord on Fire and Building Safety makes sure that recurrent building inspections are conducted so tragedies like Rana Plaza no longer occur.

Ms O'Grady said she was pleased that over 150 employers had signed the accord, but believe there was much left to be done.

Britain's second largest supermarket Asda – a subsidiary of the US retail colossus Walmart – has so far declined to sign the accord. Campaigners believe that Asda is determined not to set a precedent on indemnity pay for large scale industrial accidents, donating an undisclosed amount to poverty relief charity Building Relationships Across Communities (BRAC) instead.

“Cowardice”, retorted War on Want campaigns director Jeff Powell.

BRAC USA – to which not only Walmart but also clothing giant Gap contributed – has officially granted around £1.3m to the Trust Fund.

A poor record given that companies such as Primark contributed

with almost £600,000. *Stitched Up – The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion* author Tansy Hoskins spoke to the *Morning Star* about the double standards of many of the companies sourcing from Rana Plaza, saying that the industry had “grown rich as Croesus” by exploiting workers.

Ms Hoskins said: “The refusal of companies like Matalan to pay a penny in compensation and the attempts by Gap and Walmart to disrupt the vital Bangladesh Accord show what we are really dealing with – capitalist corporations' callous disregard for human life.”

The TUC is now lobbying International Development Secretary Justine Greening to pressure British companies to pay the due compensation.

Labour Behind The Label hosted a vigil outside of London's Bond Street Gap shop in memory of all those killed in Rana Plaza.

A Matalan spokeswoman said it had been working with BRAC because it was one of the first development organisations to respond to the disaster and that the “partnership works well”.

Morning Star ☪

Adelaide May Day Events

May Day Dinner

7:00pm Thursday May 1
Cypriot Club 8 Barrupwell St Welland
\$40 Waged – \$30 Unwaged
Further info contact: samaydaytreasurer@gmail.com

May Day March

10.30am for 11:00am start Saturday May 3
Torrens Parade Grounds to Light Square

May Day Workers Memorial

10:00am Sunday May 4
Black Diamond Corner Port Adelaide
Followed by a gathering at
The Semaphore Workers Club 93 Esplanade Semaphore



Canada: back off on voter suppression

Tim Pelzer

VANCOUVER: To calm growing anger, a Senate Committee – composed mostly of Conservatives – has joined the ranks of critics who are demanding that the Conservative government revise Republican-style voter suppression legislation that it is determined to implement.

The Senate Committee – two-thirds of its membership consisting of Conservative Senators – is recommending the following set of changes to Bill C-23 in a report issued to the government: Ensure the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commissioner of Canada Elections can warn the public of problems they find in the electoral system which they are restricted from doing with the new bill; give retirement homes and homeless shelters the right to issue letters to clients that can be used as ID at a voting booth as well as allowing electronic correspondence to corroborate ID; requiring robo call firms to keep certain records for three years, rather the proposed one year; loosening restrictions on allowing Election Canada to promote voter turnout; ensure the Chief Electoral Officer and the Commissioner of Canada Elections can share information.

The Conservatives say the change is necessary to prevent vote fraud. Instead of deterring fraud, critics charge that Bill C-23 is designed to disenfranchise thousands of Canadians who don't vote Conservative – the poor, young people and natives.

Until now, Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper – whose party controls 54 percent of seats in Parliament – has brushed off criticism of the legislation. He said Bill C-23, dubbed “the Fair Elections Act” by the Conservatives, will “increase the

integrity of our elections system” and rejected opposition calls to drop or modify the legislation. Now, the Conservative Minister in charge of promoting Bill C-23, Pierre Poilievre – who has been attacking opponents until now rather than listening to them – said he will read the Senate report and consider the recommended changes.

The Senate Committee's objections to Bill C-23 is the most serious hurdle the Harper government faces in its determination to pass Bill C-23 by June. If the government does not revise the legislation, the Senate could reject the bill and send it back to Parliament.

The Bill is stirring up a hornet's nest of opposition in Canada. The most controversial change proposed by the legislation is the abolition of vouching whereby one voter can swear to the identity of another voter who has their voter identification card but no additional ID to verify name and residence, so they can vote.

Chief Electoral Officer Marc Mayrand, who heads Elections Canada, (the electoral agency in charge of running elections) has denounced the bill as anti-democratic and said the end of allowing voters to vouch for others and the enactment of mandatory ID requirements will adversely affect more than 100,000 voters. “Many electors still have a challenge producing proper identification documents at the polls – especially certain groups that come to mind are Aboriginals, young people, even seniors that are increasing in terms of population and have increasing difficulty producing proper identification documents,” Mayrand said. In 2011, 120,000 people voted through vouching. Elections Canada has found no evidence of widespread voter fraud through vouching.

The bill will also limit the Chief Electoral Officer's right to communicate with the public and bar Elections Canada from encouraging voting and publishing research reports; remove the investigative capacity of Elections Canada to monitor and prevent electoral fraud, placing it instead under the authority of the Director of Public Prosecutions, a Cabinet appointee who is in turn answerable to Cabinet and the Prime Minister, not parliament.

Also, the bill will increase the role of big money in election campaigns by increasing allowable donations, from \$1,200 to \$1,500 and \$1,200 to \$5,000 for candidates to their own campaigns; exempt fundraising from spending limits which will benefit the large parties with big donors lists; enable the winning political party to recommend names for supervisors who oversee elections in each polling station.

So far a long list of experts and organisations have spoken out against Bill C-23, among them the opposition New Democratic Party, Greens, Liberals, Communists, Canadian Federation of Students, Leadnow, Council of Canadians, the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario Greg Essensa, former right wing Reform Party leader Preston Manning, 150 Political Scientists who signed an open letter, former Auditor General Sheila Fraser and Commissioner of Canadian Elections Yves Cote; an open letter signed by 19 international scholars.

Critics charge the Bill is designed to give the Conservatives, who only received 39.6 percent of the vote in 2011, an advantage in the 2015 elections.

People's World ✪



Region Briefs

China launched a number of major projects to restructure its energy layout in order to achieve greener development with cleaner energy, after Chinese Premier Li Keqiang held the State Energy Commission (SEC) meeting in Beijing on April 18. These major projects include hydropower station and solar power station construction, electric cars development, and coal burning power generator upgrades. Li said “China will wage a war against smog and step up ecological protection measures by further saving energy and cutting emissions”. China's SEC is headed by Premier Li. It is made up of more than ten related authorities.

Sino-Japan relationship have reached a low point due to Japan's Abe government's recent revival of militarism and aggression towards China. In contrast to the Japanese government's position, in a symbolic gesture on April 21, Kohei Watanabe, a 20 year old Japanese student, along with fellow students, offered hugs to people at Beijing's two famous tourist sites: Wangfujing and Yuyuantan Park. They said they hoped their actions improved friendship between the Japanese and Chinese people. Watanabe said “actions speak louder than words; the moment when people hug each other, they feel very close.”

On April 24, Vietnamese Defence Minister Phung Quang Thanh hosted a reception in Hanoi for a delegation of the family members of Chinese experts and advisors who assisted Vietnam in the war against French imperialism. He said that the Vietnamese party, people, army and state always remember the aid offered by their Chinese partners. The Vice Chairman of the China-Vietnam Friendship Association, Qi Jianguo, on behalf of the guests said that with the joint efforts made by the two sides, friendship between the two countries will be strengthened further.

The French colonial forces were defeated by the Vietnamese communists on May 7, 1954, in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. This victory was one of the 20th century's most influential victories in the war against imperialism. It ensured Vietnam's independence and marked the beginning of the decline of imperialism in Southeast Asia. To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Dien Bien Phu victory, a wide range of activities have been held across Vietnam, honouring General Vo Nguyen Giap, and sending gifts to the Battle of Dien Bien Phu war veterans.

RMT decries “lies, smears and spin”

Peter Lazenby

BRITAIN: Tube staff leaders have hit back at a “barrage of lies, smears and spin” from bosses as talks resumed over cuts threatening staff and passenger safety.

London Underground (LU) workers will strike next week and May 5 in protest at a vicious attack on pay, cuts in jobs and closure of ticket offices.

Station staff who deal with issues such as anti-social behaviour and emergency evacuations are to be axed. But managers are waging a propaganda war on the

staff and transport union RMT. Top bosses have produced letters which are being handed out pushing a propaganda line saying “we won't push fares up to keep open tickets offices.”

RMT said this was “despite the fact that fares continue to increase and ignoring the fact that there has been a pay explosion among senior managers at the top of the company as their numbers also rise while those at the service end are lined up to take a kicking.”

The union also accused LU, including Transport Commissioner

Sir Peter Hendy and his boss Mayor Boris Johnson, of being “terrified” of carrying out a promised station-by-station review because of what it would reveal.

RMT acting general secretary Mick Cash said: “While talks continue today it does no one any favours that the management have resorted to spinning politically-motivated lies and smears at the same time as they have reneged on their promises for a full and thorough station by station review of the cuts and closures.”

Morning Star ✪

MAY DAY SYDNEY

Again our working rights are coming under attack, both from the NSW state government, and federal government, with the state government changing workers' compensation laws to cut injured workers off from support earlier than they are ready for, and the federal government is considering taking away workers' rights such as penalty rates. It is now more important than ever to celebrate our past wins like the 8 hour work day, and it is now more important than ever that we must fight hard for the future of our working rights and the working rights of our children, preserving the rights and conditions that we fought for in the past, and continue to enjoy today.

Join us: 11:30am Sunday May 4

Macquarie Street, outside State Parliament House, Sydney

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Unions vital for effective OHS&W

As many people are getting stirred up by the Abbott government's attacks on the building and construction unions, there are some who believe that unions are hurting us and that the days for fighting to improve wages, occupational health and safety and good working conditions are no longer necessary. They see these struggles as part of a past era.

These people might have a different point of view if they had friends or family members who had been killed, suffered greatly and or had their lives shortened dramatically because of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions.

In Adelaide recently *The*

Advertiser carried a front page story about the looming battle between CFMEU officials and the Fair Work Commission and Building and Construction Commission.

Many people have short memories and forget that a high percentage of the disputes in the construction industry occur because of poor working conditions. If this is not true, why do we see an unacceptable number of work-related deaths and diseases still occurring? There are still thousands of Australians dying too soon because of their exposure to asbestos dust due to weak OH&S standards.

We should not forget what happened in the Ark Tribe case a few short years ago in Adelaide. Ark Tribe, a CFMEU member and a Health and Safety Representative stopped work on a building project at Flinders Medical Centre in 2008. His action was supported by a SafeWork SA OH&S inspector.

However, this did not stop the Australian Building and Construction Commission, the Howard government's watchdog, suppressing union activity in the industry, from using its coercive powers to attempt to put Ark Tribe behind bars. He was forced to attend several court appearances for nearly two years before being cleared

of all wrong by the Adelaide Magistrates Court in November 2010.

One might ask if we can expect to see the same dramatic actions taken against corrupt and wilfully negligent employers as those that are currently being mounted against corrupt union officials. I suspect not.

We should oppose corruption by dodgy union leaders, but we should also ensure that corrupt and negligent employers, responsible for much of the pollution causing climate change, should face much greater scrutiny too. Hell will freeze over before the Abbott government or others like it will take action to deal with these people.

As we get closer to the International Workers Memorial Day on 28 April, we should not forget that far too many people have died from work-related causes at home and abroad. This day was established by the international union movement to recognise the great loss of life because of poor working conditions and is recognised officially by the UN International Labour Organisation and numerous governments and government agencies around the world.

Past improvements in OH&S standards have come about because

of union activity as will the future ones.

Despite arguments to the contrary, unions are still necessary in this day and age to protect the working conditions of ordinary working people.

Andy Alcock
SA

People can make a difference

Congratulations are definitely due to the brave *Sea Shepherd* campaigners for their wonderful efforts in pressuring governments to do more to stop the slaughter of whales in the Southern Ocean, by gaining publicity and support against Japan's appalling whaling activities there.

And thanks to *Sea Shepherd* for saving the lives of so many hundreds of whales by their protest activities. Also to the many other people who signed petitions, wrote letters, made

calls and other efforts that contributed to ending this terrible and absurd practice.

It shows how people can make a real difference to changing things for the better. The UN International Court of Justice decision was a great victory for the whales and all those whale supporters. It's a great shame of course that legal recourse takes so long.

It was fortunate that in the meantime there was *Sea Shepherd* there impeding the hunt and saving many of these beautiful mammals. In the 2013 operation alone, *Sea Shepherd* saved about 800 whales and the Japanese fleet killed 75 whales in that season, the lowest amount ever. Apart from anything else the actions of *Sea Shepherd* certainly made a big difference to those individual whales lives, allowing these precious marine creatures to continue to exist in peace.

Steven Katsineris,
Vic

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Write a letter to the Editor

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Economic mischief-making

The Ukraine is a major strategic prize in the hotted-up Cold War being waged against Russia and China by the US and its main European capitalist allies. Tactics in this war include the now very familiar one of fomenting "civil unrest" with the aid of disinformation campaigns by pro-imperialist mass media (much of it beamed in from abroad), promises of future power – coupled with outright bribes to persuade "opposition" politicians to get on board, and the organising and fostering of fascist youth groups willing – even eager – to physically assault either left wingers or police as directed (they don't mind which, so long as they get to have a stoush with somebody).

The tactics are not new. They have been used since the 1930s at least. But the power of monopoly media interests is much greater today, and a monolithic media front presents most of the world with only one view of what is happening – a pro-Western, anti-Russian view that seeks to portray the fascists as patriots standing up for their country's independence in the face of Russian attempts to take it over.

The Ukraine has been the most recent major battleground in this Cold War struggle (Syria is the most recent active, hot war struggle). Russia has offered Ukraine very favourable financial aid, including an offer to buy \$15 billion worth of Ukrainian government bonds and has already provided the \$3 billion first tranche. Yuri Solozobov, International Projects Director at the National Strategy Institute in Moscow, says: "Compare that with the €150 million pledged by the European Union and

conditioned by Ukraine's 'good conduct' and commitment to fulfil all the recommendations of the IMF.

"That means that the Ukrainian economy will be destroyed as happened in Russia in the 1990s. Also the new government [would have to] be politically loyal to the West ... The West is offering colonisation without integration. Russia is offering Ukraine a major economic development project, industrial renewal. We are offering industrial cooperation, intensive investments in the energy sector, aerospace branch and logistics modernisation," Solozobov declared.

No wonder the Ukrainian government decided to accept the Russian offer and decline the EU deal. The EU "deal" would have been so one sided that one must question the motives of the protesters (who incidentally seem to be able to stay in the city centre more or less permanently without risking their jobs – who is actually paying them?).

The protest organisers have been assiduously playing the anti-Russian card, playing on the remnants of bourgeois Ukrainian nationalism. The Nazis tried that card when the Ukraine was under German occupation in WW2, but with only limited success. Twenty years earlier, the British and the French interventionists encouraged the blue-coated Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists to support the "Whites" in the Russian Civil War as they tried unsuccessfully to put down the Revolution. The Ukrainian workers and peasants backed the Revolution, just as they backed the Soviet government and the Red Army in WW2.

One of the more disturbing aspects of the

organised unrest in the Ukraine has been the open reliance on fascist gangs. Terrorising your opponents is a valuable aid if your aim is to "win the streets" from the left forces, but the open parade of fascist groups, emblems, salutes and slogans shows just how morally and politically bankrupt the "opposition" really is.

The "spontaneous" protests against the government's decision have clearly been planned well ahead and are extremely well organised. As well as pro-fascist and anti-Russian groups, the "protesters" almost certainly include a large number of US and German intelligence agents and even special-forces personnel trained in just this kind of "false flag" civil disturbance operation.

Never hesitant about interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign nations, the EU and the USA have sent a veritable "task force" of politicians and economic advisers to the Ukraine to bolster the diplomatic and financial pressure being put on the country's government to sign an agreement with the EU. The capitalist media is presenting agreement with the EU as the country's salvation, but in fact the EU is offering the Ukraine only a subsidiary, inconsequential status. Most existing EU member states are loath to add the burden of supporting an economically struggling Ukraine to the EU's other economic woes.

And the EU does have economic problems. Its two main economic powerhouses – Germany and France – are experiencing "industrial and financial downturns". And the smaller economies in the EU, countries like Spain, Greece, Portugal and Ireland are in the

grip of IMF-imposed austerity programs as unemployment explodes, mortgage repayments falter, small business failures multiply and industries decline.

European imperialism may want to take over or at least dominate the Ukraine (as it earlier did with the Balkans), but it is still capitalist, and subject to the problems inherent in capitalism: cyclical crises, unplanned chaotic and unsustainable growth leading to overproduction, layoffs and recession, housing bubbles and mass evictions, homelessness and mass unemployment.

Alexei Vlasov, Executive Director of the Moscow-based North-South think tank told *Voice Of Russia*: "I am not sure Europe is that rich today to be able to subsidise Ukraine on the least favourable terms." Some seem to think the money will come from the USA, but the State Department has made it clear that any finance from that quarter will be tied to compliance with IMF directives that have already ruined the economies of several other European countries. "We are consulting with the EU ... and other partners about support Ukraine may need after a new technical government is formed as the country gets back on the path to economic health through the IMF", said State Department spokesperson Jen Psaki.

A "new technical government" sounds suspiciously like an appointed rather than an elected one.

Ironically, the demonstrators in the centre of Kiev are clamouring to be allowed to participate more fully in this economic chaos. They should be careful, for if they're not they may get their wish. ☹



A pro-communist rally in the Ukraine.



Sunday May 4–
Saturday May 10

A new series of *Inspector George Gently* starts this week (ABC1 Sundays from May 4 at 8.30pm). Set in the 1960s and starring Martin Shaw as Gently and Lee Ingleby as DS Bacchus, this *police procedural* is very well directed and acted. The writing's not bad, either.

This first episode starts off with the notorious "slum clearance" that carved a swathe through entire working class communities, replacing them with alienated tower block "estates" that have been a source of crime and unrest ever since.

Still recovering from being shot in the last episode of the previous series, Gently and Bacchus are given the task of investigating a death in custody, only to discover that the police force in question does not want the truth to be uncovered.

Sunday Best was supposed to be the slot where the ABC put the most prestigious documentaries, but this week it is given over to a piece of modern-day Cold War propaganda, plugging the notorious Russian female anarchist group Pussy Riot. They like to call themselves a "feminist art collective", but their most famous "art installation" involved a naked pregnant woman inserting a frozen chicken into her "pussy" (to use their word), or at least pretending to.

The attitude of most Russians towards them was that they were insignificant notoriety seekers who

should have had their bottoms smacked and been sent home like naughty school kids. But then in February 2012 Pussy Riot interrupted services in Moscow's main cathedral to perform a number that upset the believers, and outraged non-believers because it was just such a discourteous act.

Conscious that their activities were by now being guided by Western intelligence agencies, the Russian authorities reacted with unnecessary firmness, putting them on trial and then sending them to jail. Of course, their handlers made the most of their "fight for artistic freedom" and all sorts of international (mainly American) celebrities spoke up in their support.

If it were not for the vocal activity of numerous CIA front groups, Pussy Riot would have faded back into well-deserved obscurity by now. As it is, we even have the ABC becoming part of their publicity machine with *Pussy Riot A Punk Prayer* (ABC2 Sunday May 4 at 8.30pm).

By contrast, *Jamie: Drag Queen At 16* (ABC2 Wednesday May 7 at 9:30pm) is uplifting. A documentary, it follows the difficulties of English teenager Jamie Campbell, who is obviously gay but is nominally still in the closet. What he keeps hidden even from his friends in the former mining village in County Durham is his life-long ambition: to become a drag queen. He *loves* to dress up in women's clothes and sashay down an imaginary catwalk. As he approaches the end of high school, he resolves to attend his end-of-year prom in drag.

Unfortunately, he has told a few of his trusted female friends of his plan and one of them has told her mum, who in turn has complained to the school about this "disgusting" attempt to ruin Prom. The school warns Jamie that if he comes in a dress he will not be admitted. He is distraught. His mother, however, is very supportive and Jamie regains his nerve.



Jamie: *Drag Queen At 16* (ABC2 Wednesday May 7 at 9:30pm).

While preparing for Prom, Jamie makes contact with a local gay club and is invited to present a short drag number. The audience is small, but his act goes over well and he is seen doing follow up gigs. He makes a very glamorous drag queen and when he finally attends Prom in a slinky dress, the attempts of some of the staff to bar him from entering are stymied by other students and their parents who stand up for his right to attend. Several of the male students are very impressed by his appearance and openly express their desire to dance with him.

This week also sees a new series of *QI* (ABC1 Wednesdays at 8.00pm from April 23). It will not disappoint fans of this panel show to learn that it is just like its predecessors: quite interesting and quite funny (the latter aspect is helped by one of the panellists being David Mitchell).

First Dates (ABC2 Fridays at 8.35pm from May 9) is a British reality TV show in which

people "looking for love" are sent on a first date to a restaurant set up with hidden cameras and microphones so that everything they say or do is heard and seen.

Oddly enough some couples seem to survive this hideous introduction unscathed and agree to second and future dates. Others call it quits after the first date. It's voyeuristic, not terribly enlightening, and the format is rather repetitive.

There was a time when this kind of dross would have been beneath the ABC, but nowadays the ABC's bosses seem to think it will make the national channel "popular".

Finally, three drama series: The second episode of the new series of *Jonathan Creek* (ABC1 Friday May 9 at 8.30pm) is not bad. It starts with Jonathan rescuing a bound and gagged couple from a country house only to discover that they are the burglars who tried to rob the place and were overpowered by their intended victims, who have gone off to call the police.

Later Jonathan hurts his hand banging the bottom of the tomato sauce bottle in an attempt to make the sauce exit the bottle's neck. When he tells his hostess that he hurt his hand banging the sauce bottle she assumes he is referring to another activity that can also sprain your wrist. Despite these difficulties he does solve the mystery in the end.

This week's episode of the exotic British police series *Death In Paradise* (ABC1 Saturday May 10 at 7.30pm) is notable chiefly for being about wealthy Black people, for whom greed and money work just the same way they do for wealthy whites. Once again, it's not skin colour but class that matters.

In this week's episode of *The GODS of Wheat Street* (ABC1 Saturday May 10 at 8.30pm) two members of Odin's family talk to the ghost of his mother (and one of them is in a coma). Apart from the magic, this continues to be superior Australian drama. ✪

Event had to be postponed due to unforeseen circumstances.
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Nuclear warfare in the "New Cold War"

This is James Corbett of corbettreport.com reporting for Global Research TV in downtown Hiroshima, Japan in the Peace Memorial Park in front of the A-bomb dome that marks the hypocenter of the blast that tore through this city 69 years ago, claiming tens of thousands of lives in the blink of an eye and tens of thousands more through the ravages of radiation poisoning in the days, weeks, months and years that followed.

The Peace Park is a place of prayer and vigil, a place for quiet contemplation of the horrors of nuclear warfare, the silence punctuated only by the peals of the Peace Bell rung by those wishing for the abolition of nuclear warfare. But now, despite the best wishes of those here in the Peace Park and countless others around the world, the spectre of nuclear warfare once again hangs over the globe.

Last month's nuclear security summit at The Hague saw the usual politicians spouting the usual platitudes about the need to reduce the threat of nuclear warfare.

But this was far from your average nuclear security summit. Tensions in Ukraine between Russia and the NATO powers provided a dramatic subtext to the meeting, with the G7 powers meeting behind the scenes to suspend Russia from the G8 and make the boldest steps yet in what is already being dubbed the "New Cold War." And just as in the original cold war, the threat of nuclear warfare between the great powers is the unspoken fear raised by the conflict.

In line with the rising geopolitical friction, stories have begun to emerge that both sides have heightened their levels of nuclear readiness. NATO, for its part, has continued build-up of its European "missile shield". In February, the USS *Donald Cook* arrived at port in Rota, Spain to begin its deployment as part of the so-called Ballistic Missile Defence plan. It is the first of four advanced destroyers that the US is deploying as part of the shield, which they say is aimed at defending the continent from the theoretical future threat from a theoretically nuclear-armed Iran.

That these destroyers, and NATO's missile shield in general, is being deployed to counter a threat from Iran is not believed outside of narrow America-centric propagandistic circles, however.

In truth, the term "missile defence" is a misnomer, as it is a universally acknowledged tenet of nuclear warfare doctrine that advanced missile defence systems are integral to "escalation dominance", or the ability to engage in warfare at any level of violence, including nuclear warfare. And the threat that NATO envisions does not come from Iran, a nation that has never been shown to be pursuing nuclear weapons, let alone actually possessing them, but Russia, still the world's second nuclear superpower.

This was made explicit in the last round of Russia-NATO missile shield consultations, started in Lisbon in 2010 and now officially suspended by the Pentagon in the wake of recent developments in Ukraine. The consultations, launched on the premise that the two sides could work together on countering any supposed threat from outside Europe, had been deadlocked for years after Washington stonewalled Moscow's demands for a legal guarantee that their strike forces would not target Russia's deterrence capabilities.

Meanwhile, Russia, for its part, is also ramping up the nuclear posturing. According to a new study by the Federation of American Scientists,

Moscow deployed 25 new strategic nuclear launchers in the past six months, bringing its total of deployed launchers to 498 with 1,512 associated nuclear warheads. And just last week, the Russian military held a massive three-day nuclear exercise involving 10,000 soldiers in its Strategic Missile Forces.

These developments seem light years removed from the feel-good rhetoric about nuclear disarmament that the UN Security Council was spouting at the beginning of the Obama presidency.

This rhetoric, of course, was always just that: rhetoric. The US government has never seriously considered giving up its nuclear stockpile, or even renouncing a first-use nuclear doctrine.

As Dr Yuki Tanaka of Hiroshima University explains, the Obama administration has not simply continued the aggressive Bush-era stance on America's nuclear arsenal, but actually extended it.

In reality, the Obama administration has simply reaffirmed and even extended the existing US nuclear policy allowing for a first-strike, offensive nuclear war against its enemies.

In its 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the US government admitted that it reserves the right to wage a first-strike offensive nuclear war, although it hoped to work toward the goal of one day setting policies to restrict nuclear deployment to defensive situations. The Obama administration's 2013 Nuclear Employment Strategy document only reaffirms this:

"The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review established the Administration's goal to set conditions that would allow the United States to safely adopt a policy of making deterrence of nuclear attack the sole purpose of US nuclear weapons. Although we cannot adopt such a policy today, the new guidance reiterates the intention to work towards that goal over time."

Increasing the risk is the development and deployment in recent years of a greater number of so-called "tactical nuclear weapons", supposedly designed for battlefield use to focus a nuclear attack on a pinpoint target. The B61-11 nuclear bunker buster, for example, has been envisioned as one weapon that could be deployed in a future attack on Iran's underground nuclear facilities. As the Union of Concerned Scientists pointed out in 2005, however, such a strike would invariably cause an uncontrollable radioactive fallout that could lead to millions of deaths throughout the region.

The threat of nuclear warfare is not limited to the Middle Eastern or Eastern European theatres. The situation in East Asia, with nuclear-armed North Korea backed by nuclear-armed China increasingly coming into conflict with South Korea and its nuclear-armed US military backers. As Professor Michel Chossudovsky of the Centre for Research on Globalisation explained last year in a speech in Korea commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Korean armistice, the situation is exacerbated by the nuclear posture of the world global superpower, the United States.

As tensions continue to rise, and as the policies allowing for the use of so-called "tactical" nuclear weapons continue to be hardwired into place, the goal of the abolition of nuclear warfare seems as far away today as it ever has. And for the citizens of Hiroshima, Japan, the dream of a nuclear-free world remains just that: a dream, unrealised, in a fitful and restless sleep, punctuated only by the solemn admonition of the Peace Bell, "Never again! Never again!"

For Global Research TV, this is James Corbett. ✪



Doves fly around the Atomic Bomb Dome at the Peace Memorial Park after their release during a memorial ceremony in Hiroshima.



A family burns incense as they mourn atomic bomb victims before dawn in front of the altar at the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima.



A girl holds a paper lantern before releasing it in the Motoyasu River with the backdrop of the Atomic Bomb Dome in Hiroshima.



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