



# Criminalising the unemployed

Bob Briton

The Abbott government is maintaining its assault on the rights of underprivileged Australians. Plans and reports based on the notion of making life much harder for those on pensions and Centrelink "benefits" are popping up like mushrooms. Targeted again last week were the unemployed with further government announcements about the contemptuously named "Work for the Dole" scheme. Mining tycoon Andrew ("Twiggy") Forrest got into the spirit of the times with his own report recommending commercialised, bank-run income management for all those on pensions and benefits with the exception of age pensioners and veterans.

The changes to the Work for the Dole regime come in the wake of the federal budget measures to withhold payments from job-seekers under 30 years of age for six months of the year. That measure has struck a snag in the Senate but the government is not deterred. It will investigate side-stepping the legislative barriers preventing some of its attack and will see if the same ends can be achieved through regulation.

Last week's bombshell about the massive expansion of the Work for the Dole scheme underscores the Abbott government's disdain for the unemployed. About \$900 million will be squandered on a revised scheme that will oblige the under 30s to work 25 hours a week, those aged 30-49 will be required to do 15 hours as will those in the 50-60 age bracket. They will work in the not-for-profit sector doing administrative, building maintenance or landscaping jobs.

### Scapegoats

The verdict is in – if work for the dole schemes were ever designed to get the unemployed into jobs, they are a failure. Jeff Borland of the University of Melbourne has studied schemes in Australia and abroad to see if they help relieve unemployment. He conducted the only empirical study of the Howard government's scheme and concluded it, too, was a dud. "The international evidence is overwhelming," he said. "It's hard to believe that the government couldn't understand that this isn't the best way to improve a person's employability.

"I guess you have to conclude that there are other reasons for wanting to expand the program and the title of the scheme suggests it's being done for political reasons," Professor Borland said.

The people being forced into working



for the dole are being made the scapegoat for the failure of capitalism to deliver jobs. John Buchanan, director of the Workplace Research Centre at the University of Sydney, has noted that 13 percent of the workforce is either unemployed or under-employed. Work for the Dole won't change that underlying problem.

Neither will the requirement for the unemployed to complete up to 40 job applications a month. Employment Minister Eric Abetz cheerfully suggests this target could be met by doing "one in the morning, one in the afternoon".

This is the real meaning Treasurer Joe Hockey's "the end of the age of entitlement", essentially the end of the social security system.

The prospect of 40 million pointless job applications clogging the in-boxes of small businesses, in particular, has even the Business Council of Australia (BCA) worried. "We are concerned about the practicality of asking people to apply for 40 jobs each month in the current softening labour market," chief executive Jennifer Westacott said.

### Pack your swag!

The proposed \$5.1 billion government package includes rewards for job providers like Mission Australia, Sarina Russo and Ingeus to actually put a client in a job rather than just shuffle paper. The government also wants to discourage what it believes could be training for training's sake. A "loading" will be added for success in finding jobs in regional areas.

Professional services company KPMG is insisting the government do more to entice or oblige aspiring workers to move to find the

jobs. "In the United States you find a much more mobile workforce, and if you want more people to move you have to build the infrastructure and housing to make it more appealing," company chairman Peter Nash said. The government is sympathetic to this "hit the road" message and more "innovation" might be in the pipeline after the release of the McLure review of social security in Australia.

Regardless of realities, the image of the unemployed as work-shy or stuck in a self-indulgent rut – the dole bludger slur – is being hammered through all the news and commentary.

The social consequences of this latest escalation of the attacks on the disadvantaged has plenty of experts worried. David Thompson, chief executive of Jobs Australia, for example, says the experience of six months without any income will force some to crime and sex work. "For those who don't have access to other forms of support like their family, I just don't understand how anyone can imagine it's going to be possible for them to do these things.

"Some of them presumably will do things like steal things, maybe sell drugs, and maybe sell themselves. I just don't think we should be contemplating anything like this in this country," he said.

Work for the Dole participants could already be excused for feeling they are on the wrong side of the law. *The Age* recently reported the experience of Ashley Geelan, who completed court-ordered community service in 2009 and was later sent back to the same sites as his obligation under Work for the Dole.

He found it demoralising. "When you're trying to turn your life around and you end up at the same place you were doing community service, it's like you're being treated like a criminal," he said.

A spokeswoman for Assistant Employment Minister Luke Hartsuyker said the government could not ensure those forced into Work for the Dole would not be working alongside people completing community service.

### So what is the aim?

If work for the dole schemes, rules to compel the unemployed to send out 40 job applications per month and other forms of punishing the victim won't reduce the unemployment levels, what is their real objective? Other government actions point to the answer. Unions are being squeezed right out of workplaces and being criminalised in the current Royal Commission. Neutralised unions won't be able to fight for better conditions or wages.


Last Saturday, the Prime Minister launched his Green Army – a corps of 15,000 young Australians forced through unemployment and bureaucratic harassment to work on re-vegetation and waterway clearance projects for \$10 to \$16 an hour. This undercuts award rates and puts current, full-wage workers out of a job.

The unions are being targeted, the schemes are being rolled out and the psychological warfare is being engaged in with one objective – to force Australian wages down and strip workers of any power they might have over their working lives. It's the capitalist agenda shifting into high gear. It must be rolled back. ✪

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## Guardian

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### Coal industry's greed threatens humanity's future

Last week the Abbott government again demonstrated its subservience to the coal industry by approving development of the Indian mining company Adani's Carmichael coal mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin.

When the Abbott regime repealed the meagre carbon tax on July 17 it became the world's only government to have removed a price on carbon emissions.

It did so with the support of the opportunistic billionaire, mining magnate and parliamentarian Clive Palmer. He owns two coal reserves in the Basin with a potential annual output of 80 million tonnes of coal, and his party holds the balance of power in the Senate. Such a gargantuan conflict of interest is, apparently, quite acceptable in federal parliament.

Gina Rhinhart has a stake in another Indian company, GVK, whose mines could also produce 80 million tonnes of coal per annum. The Carmichael mine has an estimated annual production of 60 million tonnes. The Carmichael project would involve construction of a new 400 kilometre rail track and a massive new coal loading facility at Abbott Point, where the coal would be loaded before being shipped across the Great Barrier Reef. The project has been hailed by the Abbott government as capable of contributing \$300 billion to the Australian economy. However, it has huge potential for environmental damage. Facilitating the passage of ships would necessitate dredging thousands of tonnes of sludge from the sea bed, much of which would undoubtedly end up covering the Great Barrier Reef.

An extra 450 ships would cross the Reef each year, with a proportionate increase in the risk of some running aground and/or accidentally discharging coal onto the pristine coral. The UN may declare the Reef in danger when it reviews the situation next year.

Coal industry analysts have criticised the government's approval of the Galilee Basin mines, pointing out that the price of coal has actually fallen 50 percent in the last five years, and that boosting supplies could drive prices down another 10 to 20 percent. However, the fall in coal prices is directly related to environmental problems that have dogged the industry since the first large scale use of coal. The biggest problem is climate change, largely generated over the last 200 years by emission of greenhouse gases, most as a result of the combustion of coal and petroleum.

Climate change threatens to decimate entire populations this century because of (among other things) rising sea levels flooding low-lying coastal areas, rainfall changes that would devastate food production, an increase in catastrophic storms and the spread of tropical diseases. The process would be wildly accelerated by the mass emission of methane from thawing permafrost regions.

The Galilee mines, which could double Australia's production of coal to 560 million tonnes, have been described as a potential "carbon bomb", capable of producing 705 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum at full production, according to Greenpeace. Coal from Palmer's mines alone could produce 170 million tonnes, almost a third of Australia's current total greenhouse gas emissions.

Things are changing slowly. Governments and consumers around the world are beginning to turn to renewable energy to generate electricity. Last week economic ratings agency Standard and Poors warned investors that "changes in the coal industry could result in stranded assets – coal reserves with no economic returns."

The transition to renewable energy power generation must take place as rapidly as possible, to avoid the terrible climate "tipping points". The federal government should immediately prohibit construction of more coal-fired power stations and begin the difficult process of phasing out fossil fuel production and use. Instead, it has approved massive expansion of the coal and gas industries and attempted (so far unsuccessfully) to shut down the Climate Commission and other agencies that advise on climate change or assist the development of renewable energy.

Meanwhile, the owners of reserves are digging up and flogging as much coal as possible, while exerting maximum pressure on the major parties to prolong and if possible even increase the use of coal and other fossil fuels – and to hell with the environment.

That objective, which the Abbott government wholeheartedly supports, is in direct conflict with the interests of humankind.

#### PRESS FUND

In February Immigration Minister Scott Morrison falsely alleged that 26-year-old Iranian detainee Reza Barati was murdered after breaking out of Manus Island detention centre. Last week Morrison dismissed stories of a horrifying rate of mental problems among asylum seeker children, but a psychologist subsequently confirmed the stories, testifying that officials tried to get figures on the rate altered in his report. Another witness said when children arrived immigration staff threw out their medication and confiscated their hearing aids and spectacles. The *Guardian* intends to continue correcting the Minister's statements and shedding light on matters he would rather conceal, but we need your support, so please send in a Press Fund contribution for the next issue if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

Angelo Attard \$50, Eric Durston \$10, KM \$20, Mark Mannion \$5, Amador \$5, "Round Figure" \$15

This week's total: \$105 Progressive total: \$4,595

# More hot air on gas price debate

The gas industry's claims that domestic gas prices will fall if coal seam gas reserves are developed in NSW is nothing more than hot air, the Lock the Gate Alliance says. Responding to a report by ACIL Allen commissioned by energy giant ACL, Lock the Gate spokesperson George Woods said the link between the push to meet demands from the export gas industry and the hike in domestic prices was well established.

"Developing unsafe coal seam gas mines at Gloucester and Narrabri will do nothing to bring down the cost to domestic consumers of gas and the companies pushing to develop these resources know well that that is the case," Woods said.

"Even if Santos and AGL promised to keep prices down for

domestic consumers and even if we could believe anything they said the subsequent loss in productive farmland, the need to import food to fill that shortage and the cost of remediating water supplies poisoned by gas mining would end up costing consumers vastly more at the supermarket check-out for fresh produce than any supposed savings the industry might 'promise' to make on gas prices.

"The gas industry knows that its Achilles heel is the inevitable hike in domestic gas prices that will flow from the huge demand for export LNG being brought about by the overcapitalisation of gas hubs in Queensland.

"These hungry export gas hubs simply can't get enough to fill the contracts needed to keep them viable

so the companies who have caused this problem now want to threaten the health, land and water of our nation by drilling into farmland and nature reserves to get every sterick of available gas out of the ground.

"Unconventional gas mining is not clean, not safe and not necessary.

"We have enough conventional gas reserves in Australia to meet domestic demand and a sustainable export market. We don't need to be putting our land, our water, our health and our future at risk to meet demands from overseas investors."

Woods said the solution lay in legislation to protect Australian consumers and businesses from the price hikes and support for alternative sources of energy. ☘

## Release Iranian unionist Statement, CFMEU Construction

The Construction Forestry Mining & Energy Union (NSW Branch) writes to condemn the continued incarceration of Reza Shahabi, the Treasurer and Executive Board member of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Vahed Bus Company, known as "Vahed Syndicate", who has been imprisoned since June 2010. His only crime was to represent the members of his union and Iranian workers and people.

Mr Shahabi's treatment is unacceptable. He was brutally attacked and beaten during his arrest and

interrogations, and severely suffered both physically and psychologically. He spent 19 months in solitary confinement and during this time his family were not informed of his situation. He has been sentenced to six years of imprisonment, banned for five years from any trade union activities, and a fine of 7,500,000 Toman, (the equivalent of about US\$3,000), on the vague charges of "propaganda against the state" and "acting against national security".

As the result of enduring psychological and physical abuses, he now suffers from multiple illnesses,

including severe neck and back pain associated with disc herniation, numbness of feet and hands, liver and kidney complications, decaying of his lower vertebrates and heart issues.

The continued violation of Mr Shahabi's human rights is deplorable and the CFMEU, along with many other international activists, call for his immediate release, medical care and compensation for his massive injuries.

Yours in solidarity,

Rita Mallia  
State President

## Rally for end of occupation of Palestine

Richard Titelius

In Perth on August 2, 600 protesters gathered to listen to a number of speakers including Victoria Martin Iverson of Friends of Palestine WA, the organiser of the rally, ALP Senator Sue Lines and a Palestinian speaker amongst others.

It was the fourth rally in as many weeks since Israel commenced its third military offensive "Protective Edge" on July 8 against Palestinians

living in Gaza. Support for the Palestinian cause continues to grow.

People called for an end to the siege and the occupation of Gaza.

The protesters, replete with Palestinian flags and colourful banners, also marched around the CBD. They protested outside the Department of Foreign Affairs over the Australian government's support for Israel and its Zionist policies. The rally also condemned the continued sale of armaments to Israel by the US.

They vowed to continue their

actions and to resist the Israeli occupation and siege of the Palestinian area of Gaza Strip.

A further rally will be held in Perth next week joining the international chorus for an end to the siege and occupation of Palestine. The Communist Party of Australia joins the international call for an end to the occupation and respect for Palestinian sovereignty over land. ☘



Perth Rally, one of many held around Australia last week.



Film review by Ed Rampell

# Lucy

Writer/director Luc Besson's *Lucy* is arguably the most visually visionary science fiction movie since Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Scarlett Johansson portrays the title character, a foreign student studying at Taipei who is ensnared in a bad drug deal with Taiwanese mobsters. This leads to her ingesting a high dose of a chemical substance called CPH4 that causes Lucy to become hyper-intelligent.

This extraordinarily optically opulent film combines two of Besson's obsessions: Powerful female protagonists and sci fi. Besson's previous films include *The Fifth Element*, *La Femme Nikita*, and *The Lady*, the biopic about Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Besson's graphic depiction of Lucy's state of extreme ultra-cosmic consciousness is highly cinematic in this film full of stunning cinematography and Sergei Eisenstein-like montage sequences (not so much in terms of their timing but in regard to associational editing). It's interesting that the more intelligent Lucy becomes the more violent she is – one of the movie's many Kubrickian references. (In 1971's *A Clockwork Orange*

the thuggish droogie Alex (Malcolm McDowell) may behave like a soccer hooligan, but he's highly intelligent and a fan of Ludwig van Beethoven.)

Lucy is – as Johansson's character is reminded – also the name of our oldest human-like ancestor, who is glimpsed onscreen at various points in the movie. Her name may also be a reference to the Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," especially given the film's psychedelic cinematography. Lucy becomes a character similar to the saviour-like "star child" Dr Dave Bowman is transformed into at the end of *2001*; during *Lucy*'s end credits (which, remarkably, include the names of every musician who contributed to the movie's soundtrack) the lyrics of a song are about a "messiah."

Besson has previously helmed action-packed flicks such as *Nikita* (about a female assassin), and unfortunately *Lucy* is full of screeching car chases and blazing gunplay. Although Besson has demonstrated a penchant for violent films, this may be intended as box office insurance to lure the multi-plex and male adolescent crowds to buy tickets and popcorn. Given its sidewalk cafés, bookstalls and roundabouts, Paris is the world's

worst city for driving at high speed on the streets (especially since this is the first time Lucy has ever driven a car, as she tells detective Pierre Del Rio, played by Cairo-born Amr Waked). Besson should leave the mindless explosions to lesser directors like Michael Bay. They intrude on and mar what could have been a more philosophical sci fi cinematic treatise on the nature of knowledge, which, as *Lucy* shows, is flawed if not accompanied by compassion – therein lies true wisdom. The movie's negative depictions of Asians also leaves much to be desired.

Scarlett Johansson is fine as the CPH4 amped-up action star and genius who uses 100 percent of her brain power. Morgan Freeman co-stars as a scientist and it's fun to see Danish actor Pilou Asbæk – who plays the troubled spin doctor in the superb *Borgen* TV series about Denmark's first woman prime minister and co-starred in the 2012 movie *A Hijacking* – in a smarmy cameo role as *Lucy* opens. *Lucy* is for fans of Johansson, female action parts, sci fi and, above all, ecstatic cinema that imaginatively uses the attributes of the motion picture medium to the max.

People's World ✪



Scarlett Johansson as Lucy.

## Fears held for our kids' future

Rudi Maxwell

The head of the peak body looking after Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children believes that until responsibility for Indigenous programs is in Indigenous hands, we are doomed to repeat mistakes of the past. Frank Hytten, chief executive officer of the Secretariat for Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), said last month's release by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) of a report into child protection contained heart-breaking statistics regarding Indigenous children.

But, he told the *Koori Mail*, unfortunately, he was not surprised.

"Until we as society get serious about acknowledging the history of this country, until we start to rectify the mistakes of the past and make amends for the incredible

damage caused to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by colonisation, we won't be able to even start to reverse these statistics," Mr Hytten said.

"This continued practice of blaming the victim, blaming Indigenous people, only makes the situation worse. Colonisation hasn't stopped, assimilation continues in a variety of ways, sometimes subtle, sometimes overt."

The AIHW report found that in 2012-13, Indigenous children were eight times more likely (45.3 per 1,000) to be the subject of a child protection order, where a report has been made to state or territory authorities and substantiated.

Mr Hytten said there were three main reasons that Indigenous children were over-represented. "The obvious one is that Aboriginal families aren't coping with the

situations in which they live," he said.

"The second is that many Aboriginal people live in inter-generational poverty, have been dislocated, marginalised, and have to deal with the detrimental effects of racism. There are some causal issues that have to be dealt with, otherwise these numbers will continue to grow.

"And the third possible explanation is that there has been inadequate support to rectify 200 years of disadvantage. Many Aboriginal people don't want to talk about that; they want to talk about moving forward, but the analogy I like to use is with a car. No-one can move forward if their car's tyres are flat and if the tyres keep being punctured by government decisions then that will continue to disadvantage Aboriginal people."

The report found that the most common type of substantiated abuse for Indigenous children was neglect (40% of substantiations), followed by emotional abuse (34%).

Across all jurisdictions, sexual abuse was the least common type of substantiation for Indigenous children (9%). Nationally, the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care has increased since 2009, from 44.8 to 57.1 per 1,000 children. At June 30 last year, there were 13,952 Indigenous children in out-of-home care, ranging from 22.2 per 1,000 in the NT to 85.5 per 1,000 in NSW.

Nationally, the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care was 10.6 times the rate for other children. In all jurisdictions, the rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care was higher than for other children, with rate ratios

ranging from 3.9 in Tasmania to 16.1 in Western Australia.

Across all children, 42% who were the subjects of substantiations were from the areas of lowest socioeconomic status. Mr Hytten said the only way to get better results for Aboriginal children was to follow the Aboriginal-controlled health model, and put decision-making power and capacity in Indigenous hands.

"We'll keep fighting," he said.

"It's very frustrating that we don't get traction. All these reports don't seem to make any impression on bureaucracy. It's not about human rights at the moment, but it should be. Human rights have to be the bedrock of everything we do for Aboriginal children."

Koori Mail ✪

Pete's Corner



## Guardian Festival Guessing Competition

### Results

Congratulations to the following:

1st Prize	Jun S	Ticket number: 1259
2nd Prize	Andy Dennard	Ticket number: 1518
3rd Prize	Albert M	Ticket number: 4216
4th Prize	Kelepouris	Ticket number: 3887
5th Prize	Harry K	Ticket number: 2217
6th Prize	Maritime Branch	Ticket number: 3179

To those who didn't win, thank you for your support for the *Guardian* and good luck next time.



# "State sanctioned child abuse"

Anna Pha

**"That children who come to us seeking asylum are to be regarded as a significant threat requiring detention and deportation represents the utter moral failure of leadership in our country," a damning and telling conclusion by the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce, in its report *Protecting the Lonely Children*\*. There are currently around 4,380 children in the immigration detention system, with close to 200 of these on Christmas Island and more than 250 in Nauru.**

"The evidence is clear that children are experiencing terrible physical and mental suffering. This is state sanctioned child abuse which the Taskforce believes will warrant a Royal Commission. There is no sustainable resettlement possible in Nauru. It is a painful façade offering no real solution."

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison, a deeply religious Pentecostal, attends the American-style mega-church Shirelive where the gospel of prosperity is preached. (The church is an Australian branch of the US-based Assemblies of God and has close ties with the money worshipping Hillsong.)

Morrison claims his faith has imbued him with "the values of loving kindness, justice and righteousness", a faith that has not softened his cruel, punitive treatment of unaccompanied children seeking protection on our shores.

Morrison treats these vulnerable and already wounded children as pawns in a political game called "Stop the Boats". The government claims that the brutal treatment is necessary to deter people from embarking on the hazardous journey across the Indian Ocean. The Minister would have us believe that this treatment offers the most humane and Christian approach!

Hardline Prime Minister Tony Abbott adheres to an ultra-conservative brand of Catholic politics.

*Protecting the Lonely Children* report is based on a very different kind of Christian values to those of Abbott and Morrison. They put the best interests of the child first, not political opportunism, in line with one of the basic principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The report reveals how the government also runs roughshod over the other three underpinning principles of the CRC – non-discrimination; survival, development and protection; and participation, and a right to have a say in decisions that affect them.

"Children on Nauru are locked up behind wire, living in cramped, rat infested vinyl tents where the temperatures are extreme. They have poor access to the most basic of subsistence needs, such as water and are considered 'at significant risk of sexual abuse.' Children are witnessing adults self-harming, including by hanging, wounding, and starvation," the report notes.

## "Removing hope"

A former Immigration Department official, Greg Lake, who worked on Nauru told a Human Rights Commission's inquiry into children in detention that he understood the purpose of detention was to "construct an environment where people are used as examples to remove hope."

It is certainly successful in that regard judging by the rate of mental illness, self harm and attempted suicides.

## Conflicted interests

"The Minister for Immigration is the guardian, judge and jailer of unaccompanied children," the report notes. As legal guardian, Morrison has responsibility *in loco parentis* (in the place of a parent) for unaccompanied children but any parent or teacher, treating children in a similar fashion would be arrested, charged, tried and jailed.

As the report points out, Morrison has a conflict of interest and "should cease to be the legal guardian of unaccompanied asylum-seeker and refugee children" and an independent guardian appointed to treat the children in accordance with child-welfare and relevant international laws.

"Stop treating unaccompanied children like unwanted cargo – demonstrate strength by upholding children's best interests," the report demanded.

"The Minister locks up unaccompanied children, like animals, indefinitely behind wire in Australian immigration detention centres. These shocking environments are considered by the Minister to be acceptable places of care."

Deterrence does not address the question of refugees. "As Professor William Maley has pointed out, any success in stopping the people smugglers here, will 'not put an end to the phenomenon of people smuggling, for this is simply a market response' to the desperate need of people to find safety. Rather in his opinion, it simply pushes people towards other regions and other risks, such that the 'real message of the new Australian approach is a simple one: 'Go and die somewhere else'."

If the government were serious about saving lives, it would treat asylum seekers with humanity and warmth, accept them into our community. It would also address the reasons why so many people are fleeing for their lives. War is one of the main reasons, and Australia has played a role in its involvement in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and support for repressive regimes including Israel and Sri Lanka.

## Cover-up and lies

A "Letter of Concern", written by medical officers working for International Health and Medical Services Management (IHMS) on Christmas Island, detailed "numerous unsafe practices and gross departures from generally accepted, medical standards which have posed significant



An Action by ChillOut: The dolls inside the "cage" outside the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney symbolise the 983 children locked up by Australia. The public were asked to "free a child" – an action that involved entering the cage, removing the doll's ID card – which is a letter to Federal MP's (and Immigration Minister). (Photo: Anna Pha)

risk to patients and caused considerable harm."

The letter described an appalling situation of inadequate health care. The children and adolescents, the letter noted, "frequently had backgrounds of rape, torture and trauma, and were/are a high-risk group for mental illness such as depression, anxiety and PTSD".

It said, "Limited treatments were available, and their conditions were exacerbated by indefinite, mandatory detention." Most of the children on Christmas Island had been in detention for six to eight months.

Professor Gillian Triggs, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission observed after a site visit: "The overwhelming sense is of the enormous anxiety, depression, mental illness but particularly developmental retardation ... The children are stopping talking. You can see a little girl comes up to you and she is just staring at you but won't communicate."

The government has done everything it can to hide the truth from the Australian people and Parliament. The extent of the government's lies and cover-ups was revealed during the Human Rights Commission's inquiry.

Dr Peter Young, former medical director for mental health employed by IHMS (the private health care contractor) told the Human Rights Commission inquiry that the department had told IHMS not to publish a report exposing the high levels of mental illness caused by the harsh environment. Dr Young said they had collected data showing "significant" mental health problems among child detainees ... But he added – when pushed – that the Immigration

Department "reacted with alarm and asked us to withdraw these figures from our reporting".

Another doctor reported that written clinical decisions by doctors were "altered and routinely being downgraded". Dr Sanggaran said detainees' glasses, hearing aids and medication were taken when they arrived on the island. He gave an example of a three-year-old girl suffering epilepsy whose medication was taken from her when she arrived at Christmas Island leading to seizures.

Gillian Triggs noted when she visited Christmas Island, that nearly all the 174 children were sick, depressed, self harming, having nightmares, swallowing poisons, wetting beds, wandering aimlessly behind barbed wire. She said it was chilling to hear babies were not crawling.

Reverend Peter Catt, the Anglican dean of Brisbane, said, "We'll never again stand by and do nothing about child abuse. We have an absolute duty to make sure the events that came out from the Royal Commission aren't repeated in any setting." A number of other Christian church leaders made similar comments.

Last weekend Morrison secretly smuggled 157 Tamil asylum seekers (50 of them children) to Nauru, denying them the opportunity to speak

to their lawyers when they were in Australia.

It is important that Christian church leaderships have exposed what is happening and taken a strong stand in defence of the children. The refugee action groups and collectives are the backbone of the movement in support of these children and other refugees. The ACTU at its last Congress adopted a sound policy in support of the rights of asylum seekers but little action has followed. Unfortunately the Labor opposition's policies are little different to those of the government.

The Australian Greens have a strong position in defence of the children and other asylum seekers and deserve our support.

Unions for Refugees is seeking to build a network of unions and rank and file union members and activists as part of building a broad campaign to establish a humanitarian, "welcome refugee" policy in Australia. ([unions4refugees.org.au](http://unions4refugees.org.au)) The trade union movement has an important role to play in countering the racism that is being fostered by the government amongst workers.

\* **The Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce is an initiative of the National Council of Churches in Australia. The report, which is compelling reading, may be found at [australianchurchesrefugeetaskforce.com.au](http://australianchurchesrefugeetaskforce.com.au)** ✪

## Some key rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child

- children should not be detained unlawfully or arbitrarily (Article 37(b))
- children must only be detained as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period of time (Article 37(b))
- children seeking asylum have a right to protection and assistance – because they are an especially vulnerable group (Article 22)
- children who have suffered trauma have a right to rehabilitative care – recovery and social reintegration (Article 39)
- children have a right to family reunification (Article 10)
- children in detention should be treated with respect and humanity, in a manner that takes into account their age and development needs (37(c))
- children in detention should have the right to challenge the legality of their detention before a court or other independent and impartial authority (Article 37(d))

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# Another monstrous development threatens Sydney Harbour

Peter Mac

The NSW conservative coalition government has announced plans to redevelop 20 hectares of government-owned harbour foreshore land around Blackwattle Bay, Wentworth Park, Rozelle and White Bay west of the city centre.

The scheme, known as the Bays Urban Renewal Program (BURP, for short!) was developed by the Urban Growth Agency, a government-run organisation established to “address the barriers to private sector investment in development projects in NSW”.

Parts of the area, including the Sydney Fish Markets on the eastern side of Blackwattle Bay, are still being productively used. In the vintage ship repair yards on the northern shore of Rozelle Bay many early vessels have been repaired or refitted, including the steam pilot ship *the John Oxley*.

The vast, brooding White Bay Power Station, which dominates White Bay and Rozelle Bay, is disused, but has wonderful potential for other purposes.

According to the Fairfax media, the Blackwattle Bay and Wentworth Park area would be used for a “fresh food marketplace, mixed development” and “potential Fishmarket development”, and the Rozelle Bay area for “mixed development, residential focus, community use pool, harbour walkways” and “lightrail connectivity”.

The scheme would “transform [the Power Station] into a cultural landmark” and “connect [the] water [and] rail yards”, which would be used for “mixed use residential, links to existing parks and harbour foreshore”. The White Bay area and Glebe Island (actually a peninsular between White Bay and Rozelle Bay) would be dedicated to port uses.

However, the results of the government’s approach to developing prime publicly-owned harbour sites can be seen in its appalling decision to forcibly eject Millers Point tenants from homes which some families have occupied since the early 19th



The vast, brooding White Bay Power Station, which dominates White Bay and Rozelle Bay, is disused, but has wonderful potential for other purposes.

century and sell them to wealthy buyers, and also in the grossly excessive and inappropriate development of Barangaroo.

## A development battle site

The BURP area is included in the 94-hectare “Bays Precinct” of waterfront land that stretches along several bays from Darling Harbour west of the Harbour Bridge. In 1997 the then state Labor government reserved the Precinct for recreation and port uses and banned construction of apartments and hotels there.

In 2011 the government pressured the managers of the colourful Sydney Fish Market to redevelop their site, but they resisted fiercely and the government backed off. In 2012 an inquiry into the Precinct concluded that: “publicly-owned foreshore lands and harbour waters

[should] be retained in public ownership”.

The Urban Task Force, a developer lobby group, has pressured the government to release White Bay and Glebe Island for maximum 60 storey residential and commercial development. The group enthusiastically welcomed the government decision regarding the BURP scheme, declaring that it should include high and medium rise apartments and offices.

The government asserted it would allow some maritime industries to remain, but didn’t say which, and indicated that others would be relocated, but didn’t say where.

The Power Station has been used in recent years for guided tours, but otherwise has remained unoccupied. The government hasn’t explained what sort of “cultural landmark” would occupy the Station, or even whether it would be preserved.

The government has proudly

pointed out that the BURP area is four times bigger than Barangaroo, the former stevedoring area on the eastern side of Darling Harbour. But Barangaroo is now being shockingly overdeveloped, with gambling magnate James Packer pressuring the government to agree to his obscene proposal to construct a 270 metre high hotel/casino there.

Development of the BURP area would set a precedent for overturning the Bays Precinct development constraints. Like Barangaroo, the BURP project would doubtless be classified as “state-significant”, i.e. not subject to normal local government controls, and with the government directly responsible for development consent.

The end result for the BURP area would almost certainly be the same as for Barangaroo.

## A case for redevelopment

Massive housing complexes with tiny apartments are now being constructed in some inner city suburbs of Sydney. Rising council rates and the high cost of living are forcing ordinary working people out of the older harbour suburbs, which are being cleared and redeveloped for luxury apartments in high or medium density buildings. The stock of public housing is rapidly diminishing.

Redevelopment of the BURP area is certainly justifiable, but not as dictated by the government, which is clearly acting in the behest of big property developers.

The principal use of the area should be for recreation and cultural purposes. The foreshores should be opened up as public parks with walkways that connect with the existing “Bay run” paths west of the BURP area.

The existing uses, including the boat repair yards and the fish market,

should remain and should be supported. Their character contributes to the area’s unique sense of place and is highly evocative of its history.

The former guided tours of the Power Station were fascinating and drew big crowds. The Station’s built fabric and remnant equipment must be preserved.

Given its historic and technical significance, and given that human industrial history is at a crucial turning point, an appropriate use for the Station would be as a museum to interpret the history of energy generation, including the development of renewable energy in response to climate change.

The 1997 ban on construction of apartments and hotels in the Bay precinct should remain. There is some opportunity for residential development, but this must include public housing. Dwellings should only be built at the predominantly small scale of those in Rozelle, Lilyfield and Glebe and should not intrude on the foreshores.

But such an approach would certainly not meet with the approval of the Baird government, which believes its primary role is to remove “the barriers to private investment in development projects in NSW”, and which sees “water views” of Sydney’s lovely harbour as a commodity for the rich, not a public right.

At Barangaroo the promised idyllic walkways, extensive landscaping, recreation fields and cultural facilities have been quietly dropped or are being visually overwhelmed by the massed ranks of skyscrapers that are beginning to cover the majority of the site.

And now the government must be prevented from repeating the monstrous over-development of Barangaroo within the Bays precinct, this time on a site that’s four times as big. ✪

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# Israel: International anger mou

Felicity Arbuthnot

**The “most moral army in the world” from “the only democracy in the Middle East” has attacked hospitals, a home for the disabled, a geriatric hospice, demolished five mosques, razed entire neighbourhoods, erased entire families – the youngest – so far – just three days old if you do not count the unborn, as in the case of twenty nine year old Samar Al Hallaq killed with her two sons, aged four and five, other members of her family and carrying her third child. Her husband was critically injured.**

Yet again a war is declared against children and the young. Forty three percent of Gaza’s population is aged 0-14 and just under 21 percent, 15-24. (Index Mundi, 2013.) Thus 64 percent, 0-24.

As Israel trades on eternal victim status whilst murdering neighbouring, fellow Semites with seeming legal impunity, stealing land, obliterating homes, nullifying history preceding even the coming of Christ in the land of his birth, the UN bleats weakly, as ever, of “concern” and “regret” some countries have had enough.

Ecuador has recalled their Ambassador from Israel, Chile has suspended their free trade agreement negotiations. Bolivia’s President Evo Morales and Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro have called the assault on Gaza genocide and “extermination”, with Maduro demanding that the UN address the “systematic violation of the Human Rights of the Palestinian population in Gaza by the State of Israel and adopt the necessary measures to halt those violations.” Venezuela severed all relations with Israel after its last massacre, “Cast Lead” over Christmas and New Year 2008-2009.

As Prime Minister David Cameron calls the onslaught on the 1.7 million people of Gaza in their 40 mile long ghetto “not disproportionate”, President Maduro stated: “It is clear you cannot morally compare occupied and massacred Palestine with the occupying state, Israel, which also possesses military superiority and acts on the margins of international law.”

## Protests

Meanwhile, amid massive protests in South Africa, the African National Congress in Parliament (who suffered their own long years of apartheid) is calling for the Israeli Ambassador to leave with “immediate effect” and for the South African Ambassador to Tel Aviv to be immediately recalled.

The ANC Chief Whip, Steane Sizane, MP, in a blistering address said: “The office of the UN Secretary General issues statements which have no effect. The UN Security Council must stand up and act to support vulnerable Palestinian people at the time when they need their protection.

“The situation involving Palestine and Israel is an undeclared war, in which the aggressor, Israel, has destroyed the Palestinian economy, robbed people of their land, unilaterally changed borders, and unilaterally built a wall of exclusion to keep Palestinians out of their land. When it feels provoked, it unleashes the most sophisticated military hardware on a defenceless people. Palestinians have been reduced to cheap labour for the Israel economy.

“This relentless destruction of the Palestinian territory and its people by Israel must be stopped. The international community needs to act in unison on this matter.”

Mr Sizane’s call is backed by a host of

political and civil bodies including faith groups, the Young Communist League, the National Association of Democratic Lawyers, seventy two leading South African Jews and many others.

## Europe

In Europe, the Norwegian government is resisting pressure to expel the Israeli Ambassador from pro-Palestinian and human rights organisations with the leader of the Joint Committee for Palestine (Fellesutvalget for Palestina, FuP), Anna Lund Bjørnsen telling Norwegian Broadcasting (NRK): “Norway can not uncritically maintain close diplomatic relations with a state that does not show respect for human life, international treaties or UN conventions.”

Even the resisting Foreign Minister Børge Brende acknowledges: “The suffering you see in Gaza and the West Bank”, and cites Israel’s particular responsibility in driving the peace process because its illegal settlements were the key to the conflict.

Labor Party MP and Chairwoman of the Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee in the Norwegian parliament, Anniken Huitfeldt is widely backed by seven left leaning parties in her call for boycotting products manufactured by Israel in the occupied territories “without wasting time.”

Two parties supporting the boycott, the Labor Party and the Centre Party, are demanding a review of Norway’s policy of selling arms to third-world countries, which resell those arms to Israel.

In neighbouring Sweden calls are mounting by those involved in academic and cultural boycotts for all collaboration between Swedish and Israeli institutions to cease, with abstention “from participation in EU-funded projects in which Israel is involved. A letter was also addressed to the Board of the Royal Institute of Technology, which has a comprehensive cooperation program with the Technion University in Haifa.”

In Ireland, Dublin City Council unanimously called on the Irish government to enforce an arms and trade embargo on Israel and 17 EU governments have now “published online guidance warning their citizens and businesses about risks involved in trade and other economic links with illegal Israeli settlements.” The latest 12 to issue warnings did so last week, after the start of the assault on Gaza. They are: Portugal, Austria, Malta, Ireland, Finland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Greece, Slovakia, Belgium and Croatia, “in a move coordinated at EU level.” France, Italy and Spain issued similar guidelines the previous week.

## Worldwide

Across the world in the Maldives the government has scrapped three agreements with Israel and discussions are gathering pace to prohibit the import of Israeli goods. The tropical nation of 1,200 islands, at some potential cost to the economy has said they will also reject investors from Israel, noting international condemnation of Israel’s current actions.

On July 19, the UK *Guardian* published a letter signed by six Nobel Laureates, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Adolfo Peres Esquivel, Jody Williams, Mairead Maguire, Rigoberta Menchú and Betty Williams and numerous academic, intellectual, artistic and signatories from many countries, including João Antonio Felício, the president of the International Trade Union Confederation, and Zwelinzima



Vavi, the general secretary of the Confederation of South African Trade Unions calling for the UN and governments to impose a military embargo on Israel.

The letter underlines starkly the culpability of the international community in Israel’s ongoing genocidal actions: “Over the period 2009-2019, the US is set to provide military aid to Israel worth US\$30 billion, while Israeli annual military exports to the world have reached billions of dollars. In recent years, European countries have exported billions of euros worth of weapons to Israel, and the European Union has furnished Israeli military companies and universities with military-related research grants worth hundreds of millions.”

It concludes: “Governments that express solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza, facing the brunt of Israel’s militarism, atrocities and impunity, must start with cutting all military relations with Israel. Palestinians today need effective solidarity, not charity.”

One Nobel Laureate’s signature was not on the letter, President “Change we can believe in” Obama.

## The toll

As the death toll exceeded 1,300 and serious injuries towards 4,000 Norwegian Dr Mads Gilbert stated on *Democracy Now*: “This was truly a massacre, and the injuries were just horrible ... Children came in without heads and totally dismantled by the shelling of the residential areas.”

On the same day (Monday July 21) Obama merely said weakly that he had: “serious concerns.” Pathetic.

Israel too now has “serious concerns” of another kind. Hours after US airlines Delta, United and US Airways cancelled all flights to Israel on July 22, the US Federal Aviation

Authority issued an advisory banning all US carriers from flying to Tel Aviv. Air Canada has also cancelled their flights. The European Aviation Safety Agency has followed suit issuing a “strong recommendation” that airlines avoid travel to Israel until further notice. Air France, EasyJet, Germany’s flag carrier Lufthansa, and the Netherland’s KLM were among European airlines that had already cancelled services.

The financial implications for Israel can only be imagined. Having spent two weeks telling the world of the mortal danger the country faced (in spite of crowds of residents picnicking in the open, standing on car roofs to watch the destruction of Gaza) the Transportation Minister and Prime Minister Netanyahu declared that flying to the country is “safe” and that: “There is no reason whatsoever that American companies would stop their flights and hand terror a prize.” Somewhat contradictory all round.

Further, last year 3.5 million tourists visited Israel, boosting the economy by over US\$12 billion. This year Yahoo Travel cites Leon Avigad, the developer of Browns Hotels, a chain of boutique hotels in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, who says the conflict was already “devastating us economically ... We are losing tons of money by the minute. The entire profit from the summer (to date) is wiped out.” In the south of the country: “Hotels are completely empty ... almost everything is closed.”

Surprisingly, even Israel’s loyal friends, the US State Department, have been advising against all but most essential travel to Israel since February.

Especially courageous are the stands across the world by Jews themselves. Ten thousand orthodox Jews demonstrated in support of Gaza in New York, and across the world they, with other Jewish denominations have taken a visible and courageous stand.

## Jewish voices

Jewish Voices for Peace statement by their Rabbinical Council perhaps encapsulates what many believe. Headed “Stop the Bombing. Hold Israel Accountable” it reads in part:

“We are currently amidst ‘the three weeks’ – the annual Jewish period of quasi-mourning that leads to the fast day of Tisha B’ Av. This is the season that bids us to look deeply into the soul of our community and examine the ways that our sinat chinam – baseless hatred – has led to our communal downfall.

“Driven by the spirit of this season, we cannot help but speak out in response to the

**“Israel, has destroyed the Palestinian economy, robbed people of their land, unilaterally changed borders, and unilaterally built a wall of exclusion, to keep Palestinians out of their land.”**



nts

# Prepare to lose young talent to an independent Scotland

Niki Seth-Smith

**The Scottish often say that their most valuable export is people. It's accepted that the young, bright and adventurous leave their small nation for London or abroad, perhaps returning to their homeland only to settle down or retire.**

This has resulted in a brain drain that sucks talent out of the country, leaving an ageing and static population behind. If Scotland votes for independence on September 18, a priority will be to stop this trend. The Scottish government has laid out a raft of policy proposals to attract young people, students and skilled migrants into the country. Should the rest of Britain get ready for a loss of talent?

Scotland is now home to 5.2 million people, roughly the same as the English county of Yorkshire, but this number has barely grown since the 1960s, while its depopulation goes back for generations.

The two great rival cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow, have a more mixed population than the sleepy towns of rural Scotland, yet Glasgow, with its School of Art, club culture and dizzily rapid regeneration, has still to shake off its reputation as the jobless capital of the UK. Similarly, Edinburgh was recently voted the second-best place to live in Britain, but neither city has been able to compete with the allure of London. If Scotland breaks away from the rest of the UK, it would take significant steps to turn this around.

## Welcoming migrants

The Scottish National Party's (SNP) roadmap to independence, the White Paper, is packed with policies to help keep and attract new skilled, educated and ambitious young people. Key to this goal is the commitment to shake up migration policy, a target miles away from the British government's pledge to reduce net migration to the "tens of thousands".

The SNP would introduce a points-based system to prioritise skilled and educated migrants coming into Scotland, providing incentives for moving to remoter areas like the highlands and islands. People from outside the EU wanting to move to Scotland would get points for degrees, languages spoken and other skills, with less emphasis given to having a job lined up in advance.

Should the UK choose to exit the European Union (EU) in 2017, Scotland's pro-migration measures would prove all the more significant. Westminster's anti-immigrant rhetoric and increasingly punitive policies give immigrants a reason to leave, or stay away from, England.

However, immigrants have a significant economic impact – since 2000, they have made a net contribution of around US\$42 billion to the British economy, while EU immigrants are the most likely to make a positive contribution, paying more in taxes and receiving fewer benefits than the average person already in the country.

If its points system works, an independent Scotland might find itself in the enviable position of picking and choosing from skilled and well-qualified immigrants who are unwilling or unable to live in the rest of the UK.

## Educating the next generation

Scotland already has independence over its education system, one of the most highly rated in Europe. Its universities are free, and Scotland has had to prevent students flooding across the border, which explains the bizarre current set-up, where EU citizens don't pay,



but those from the rest of the UK cough up what they would at home, up to US\$15,000 a year.

However, if Scotland gets its independence, this would be illegal under EU law as it would be considered "discriminating on grounds of nationality". After marching in their thousands against higher tuition fees, what British student wouldn't grab the chance of studying for free in a neighbouring country? Even if they find a way around this problem, an independent Scotland could be faced with a stampede of students.

The SNP has also pledged to reintroduce the student visas and post-study work visas scrapped by Westminster in 2012, which had allowed students to stay on in the country for 24 months after their degree had ended.

Graeme Sneddon, spokesperson for Generation Yes, a non-party group of young supporters of independence, believes a Yes vote would attract young people from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. He points to the current provision of free education, the retention of the Education Maintenance Allowance for disadvantaged students and the creation of a post unique to Scotland, the Cabinet Secretary for Training, Youth and Women's Employment.

"With independence we can go further," Sneddon says. "Remaining within the Union will mean further cuts which will damage job creation in Scotland, as well as attacking vital public services that young people rely on."

## Good riddance?

The British government doesn't seem too worried about the prospect of students flocking to Scotland. After all, losing a section of young immigrants to Scotland would aid the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in its aims to reduce net migration, while cutting education funds and welfare.

Since the financial crash, the average income for those in their 20s has fallen by more than 10 percent. The jobless rate is highest amongst 16 to 24-year-olds. A demographic shift reducing the numbers of immigrants, increasingly scapegoated in Britain as the UK Independence Party (UKIP) sets the debate, along with young people who are more likely to be a financial burden, might not sound too bad to the powers-that-be at Westminster.

Scotland, on the other hand, knows it needs to keep its bright, skilled young people

in order to thrive. It's no accident that the Scottish government gave 16 and 17-year-olds the vote in preparation for the referendum.

Although this has been seen as a failure, given that the majority look likely to support staying in the Union, the government does benefit if young people feel they have a stake in the country's future. Adam Ramsay, UK editor of current affairs website Open Democracy and active Green Party member, is one of the Scots who would return home: "I couldn't resist the thrilling opportunity of being involved in the building of a new country," he says.

## Acting on a promise

There's no doubt an independent Scotland would enact policies designed to attract the young, bright and bold. However, the success of this strategy ultimately rests on the capacity for job creation and the health of the general economy.

With a would-be Scottish currency still up in the air, there is much uncertainty over Scotland's prospects going it alone. As a small nation, Scotland can't compete on equal terms with the size and diversity of the job market south of the border. Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond has dramatically called London the "dark star of the economy, inexorably sucking in resources, people and energy". He might like to think so, but independence won't magically change this.

As long as it is at the apex of power, London has a trump card. Money follows, and private companies will always covet headquarters in a "global metropolis", a centre for both finance and culture. As the capital of an independent Scotland, Edinburgh would attract some of this, but it would still be dwarfed.

An independent Scotland holds out the promise of investing in the next generation. On September 18, we may get the chance to see if it can deliver. Whichever way the referendum goes, the Scottish have spent the run-up to the referendum soul-searching over what kind of country they want to pass on to young people.

The London government has neglected this question. While Westminster argues over the trade of whiskey and salmon, they are forgetting their most valuable asset: the best and brightest of the future generation.

*New Internationalist* ✪



horrific loss of life currently taking place in Gaza, at the hands of the Israeli military. We deplore the Israeli government's military crackdown in the West Bank that led to its lethal, military onslaught on the people of Gaza. We mourn the deaths of hundreds of innocent people, including children.

"We condemn Hamas' rockets attacks on Israel and the anxiety, injury and death they have caused. But we cannot view this as a war between two equal sides. Israel has unlimited hi-tech weaponry; it dominates Gazan airspace, its borders, its utilities and economy ...

"We can not stand idly by as the Jewish State acts with such wanton disregard, with such *sinat chinam*, for the humanity of the mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, children and elders of Gaza.

"As Jews, we abhor the abuse of human rights that are standard practice of our fellow Jews in the Israeli government and Israeli military. This is not the path of justice."

Also grieving is NATO member Turkey, declaring three days of mourning for Gaza this week. Activists from Jewish Voices for Peace were arrested for a peaceful demonstration at the Friends of the Israeli Defence Forces on New York's Broadway.

In Israel, Peace Now and Hand in Hand participants are being "shouted down or physically attacked" for their principled stance. Last week, in Tel Aviv: "about 250 Jewish protesters were set upon, punched and pushed by a well-organised group of right wingers in an attack that left several people with bruises, black eyes, or other injuries. Another (of) about 1,000 people, was also attacked" with eggs and plastic bottles.

Perhaps it is time for President Obama to earn his Nobel Peace status.

This week Dr Mads Gilbert addressed a passionate appeal to him, writing:

"Mr Obama, do you have a heart? I invite you, spend one night – just one night – with us in Al Shifa'a Hospital. I am convinced, 100 percent, it would change history. Nobody with a heart and power could ever walk away from a night in Shifa'a without being determined to end the slaughter of the Palestinian people." If only.

The last word goes to increasingly intellectually challenged British Prime Minister David Cameron, who declared on July 21: "We can't stand by when a strong nation bullies a weak one." Indeed. Sadly, he was talking about Russia, who, for those fully bolted down, seems to have bullied no one.

*Pravda.ru* ✪



# It is not just an Israeli war on Gaza

Ramzy Baroud

To some, US secretary of state John Kerry may have appeared to be a genuine peacemaker as he floated around ideas during a Cairo visit on July 25 about a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian fighters in Gaza. But behind his measured diplomatic language, lies a truth not even America's top diplomat can easily hide. His country is very much involved in fighting this dirty war on Gaza which has killed over 1,050, injured thousands more, and destroyed much of an already poor, dilapidated space that was barely inhabitable to begin with.

## US War on Gaza

US economic and military aid to Israel is measured annually in the billions, and the US government continues to be Israel's strongest and most ardent ally and political benefactor. In fact, the US-Israel "special relationship" is getting more "special" by the day even though Israel is sinking further into the abyss of a well-deserved isolation.

True, there are some, even in the justice for Palestinians camp, who speak of how exceptional and fair the Barack Obama Administration has been in comparison to its predecessors. However, they neglect the fact that aside from a few particularly strong-worded statements, Obama has been a dedicated stalwart of Israel and copper bottoming its vision of its security by going as far as defending Israel's "Operation Protective Edge" war – the slaughter of thousands of innocent civilians in Gaza.

On March 5, 2014, a Congressional bill – The United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act – declared that Israel is a "major strategic partner of the United States." The sweeping bill covered many programs from energy, to "research pilot programs" between Israel and the US Department of Homeland Security. What is most important to note is that Congress now requires additional reports that would update the government on the US' commitment to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME).

This is merely one of many bills and government initiatives that continue to give Israel a special undeserved status. But this military edge is used mostly to maintain Israel's illegal military occupation. Most of Israel's victims in its latest war on

Gaza are civilians who are killed by US weapons. There is no escaping the fact that the US is a partner in the Israeli crimes in Gaza and the rest of Palestine.

But America's support for Israel is crossing new red lines. There are reportedly over 1,000 US citizens fighting in the Israeli army according to reports that are now resurfacing due to the recent killing of two US-Israeli soldiers – Max Steinberg, 24, of California, and Nissim Sean Carmeli, 21, of Texas. Like the rest of the IDF soldiers killed in recent fighting, they were killed while invading parts of the besieged Gaza Strip. But the number must be an understatement since some of Israel's most ardent Jewish settlers are also American, and happen to be armed and dangerous. Although this is causing a bit of a media buzz, there is no political crisis. Instead, only condolences are offered to the families of the Americans fighting the genocidal war on Gaza.

## EU duplicity

The US is not alone in this. European governments display an incredible amount of hypocrisy as they continue to utilise doublespeak in their approach to Middle East conflicts in general, and the situation in Palestine in particular. The pressure mounting from European civil society makes it a bit more challenging for EU governments to endow Israel with the same unconditional love and support as that bestowed upon it by the US. EU hypocrisy is too palpable even for clever politicians to hide.

The British government is shamelessly on the Israeli side, even while entire families in Gaza are being pulverised by western weapons and military technology. Meanwhile, the French government imposed a ban to prevent French society from showing its solidarity with the besieged and massacred Palestinians in Gaza.

But why ban mere demonstrations of solidarity while France, the US and other Western governments are allowing their Jewish citizens to be enlisted in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) which is actively killing Palestinian civilians? Shouldn't that be a much greater concern to the duplicitous French government than some protesters chanting some slogans during a solidarity rally that may or may not be deemed anti-Semitic?

Indeed, not only are western governments providing Israel with



A rally in Perth last month to show support for Palestine and protest the criminal attacks on it. (Photo: Richard Titelius)

arms, funds and political cover to sustain its occupation and war, but they are also contributing thousands of military experts and boots on the ground in order to fight a war in Gaza where war crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed on an hourly basis.

Consider this: While British citizens fighting against the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad are being detained and persecuted, British citizens who are fighting for Israel are not. The British government is turning a blind eye to what should be considered a criminal act.

## Belgium double-standards

Western hypocrisy on this is as profound as the phenomenon of westerners killing Palestinians, which some are now calling "Israeli Jihadists".

Belgium also stands accused of allowing such criminality. Although Belgian civil society is one of Palestine's strongest supporters, their government is cloaked with unmistakable dishonesty. Many Belgian

citizens are also taking part in Israel's lethal wars in Gaza and military occupation of the occupied territory, with little or no protest from their government. The recruitment of Belgians is mostly done through the same organisations that recruited thousands of foreign fighters for the IDF. Think of them as terrorist head-hunting organisations that operate in a perfectly legal environment.

Recently, Mayor of Antwerp, Bart De Wever, called on the Belgian government to cancel dual citizenship of "Syria jihadis". His call was made during a recent visit to a synagogue in Brussels after four people were shot by an alleged French-born citizen suspected of having spent time fighting in Syria. The country's Minister of Justice Annemie Turtelboom took the initiative further by calling on EU countries to block jihadists from going to Syria, suggesting the creation of a list of all known "Syria jihadis".

But what about the number of Belgians who are fighting, killing and committing war crimes on behalf of Israel? Why is the Belgian government keeping silent about those in the Israeli army, with no statement yet issued, even after the killing of Belgian citizen Eytan Barak?

## The French and others

Not only is the Belgian government miserably failing to prevent Belgians from fighting in Gaza, but the mainstream media is also failing to report such events. Only alternative media seems interested in what should be a major story in Brussels.

The same questions apply to other western governments. The hyper-sensitive French government turned a blind eye when a French citizen was killed during the Gaza onslaught. While the Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported on the killing of staff Sargent Jordan Bensemhoun, most of the French media and government have looked the other way. The very government that continues to make life difficult for African immigrants in France sees no problem of its own immigrants taking part

in foreign wars that are in violation of its own citizenship laws.

In fact, the French are now considering a six months ban on those travelling to Syria and Iraq, so as not to take any chances that some of them may be recruited in the ongoing strife there. As for travelling to Israel to join the IDF? Well, for Paris, that's a whole different matter.

The list of participating countries is growing as is the number of those suspected war criminals fighting and killing in the name of Israel. This is not met with enough civil society initiatives to bring criminals to justice for the sake of exposing the organisations that recruit them, the "support groups" that sustain them, and government silence and hypocrisy that tolerate the entire criminal enterprise.

## Israeli-western war

Western involvement in the war on the Palestinian people is indeed going beyond the usual and known support of funds, military technology and economic aid, to actual participation in the slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza. This is not a matter that can be addressed within the larger argument of Western double standards in Israel and Palestine, but an urgent issue that demands immediate attention.

By preventing those who leave their countries to kill Palestinians in Gaza, less civilians are likely to be murdered.

Legal cases should be brought before courts throughout western capitals to try known names of US-EU soldiers, and new lists should be composed of others who use dual citizenship status to further the suffering of the Palestinians so that legal action may immediately take place.

It is one thing to fail to stop war crimes from being committed; it is a whole other level of failure to defend, finance and take active part in carrying out these war crimes. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not the only leader culpable of Gaza's bloodbath; others in western capitals should also be held to account.

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# Argentina and dictated path to bankruptcy

Peter Koenig

**Why would Argentina default on debt that was settled more than 10 years ago? Not to everybody's content, for sure, but settlement all the same. Settlement agreements were reached with 93 percent of all creditors.**

Why would a New York Court have jurisdiction over a sovereign country? Basically declaring it bankrupt if it doesn't pay up – pay up 100% of outstanding debt, when all other creditors agreed to an average 20% repayment – which Argentina is honouring and is planning to continue honouring.

And why would Judge Griesa make his case in favour of NML Capital and similar Vulture funds? – Vulture is exactly what the term expresses – a merciless predator.

Because Argentina does not align with US foreign policy? Does not subscribe to Washington's exceptionalism? Does not submit to Obama's illusions of supremacy? So, Argentina must be punished. The White House's ever so blinding short-sightedness of sanctions and punishment.

There is no bankruptcy law for sovereign nations. In fact the sovereignty of a country is untouchable, according to one of the key declarations of the League of Nations which later became the United Nations.

Washington's arrogance is beyond bounds. It threatens not only Argentina, but the impact of this

ruling might boomerang to the US' own banks, Wall Street, and send ripples through globalised banks around the world. And this only, because the current corrupt western monetary system is still bound to the long defunct and over-indebted fiat dollar, under which all international transactions whether involving the US economy or not, whether dollar denominated or not – have to transit through a New York bank.

That's where the jurisdiction comes from. That's why criminally behaving Vulture funds can buy a judge in New York to rule the unruly for them – to the detriment of all the other creditors, who agreed with Argentina's goodwill settlement, but are now not allowed to be paid, unless the vulture is paid in full, i.e. at 100 percent. Unbelievable, if it wouldn't be coming from Washington, the capital of the only real rogue state in the world, the exceptional nation with the exceptional people, for whom no rule of international law and behaviour applies.

If this happens, if judge Griesa's decision prevails – it may set a nasty precedent, one that not only may backfire on the US, but on the rest of the western economy. It would create chaos. Every debtor nation could reason, why should we honour a debt amortisation agreement, if there is a US judge and US jurisdiction that can undo at will earlier agreements among sovereign nations?

But there is hope. Russia and

China are not playing along. They are not puppets. In fact, they are the last fortifications that the dying beast, headed by Obama is vying to defeat with all means possible to achieve world hegemony – the One World Order; with propaganda, lies and falsehoods, slandering of true world leaders, and – of course – with "sanctions", ridiculous self-defeating sanctions.

Rather sooner than later the world will seek an alternative monetary system, one completely delinked from the dollar; from Wall Street, from the US all-usurping dictate. It's already happening. When another outrageous US court punished the French bank BNP Paribas with a salty US\$ 9 billion-plus fine for dealing with Iran, the French Central Bank started negotiating with the Chinese Central Bank for Euro-Yuan swaps which would allow them in the future to transit directly through Beijing for international payments, sidelining the dollar and the New York banks.

Argentina must not obey judge Griesa, or any US ruling interfering in its sovereignty – in its handling of sovereign debt. Argentina may seek dollar-ruble and yuan swap arrangements with the central banks of Russia and China, and honour its debt amortisation by moving debt payment transactions from New York to Beijing and Moscow. Delinked from New York. Delinked from the dollar. End of story.

Information Clearing House ✪



## Region Briefs

On July 29 a conference was held in Hanoi by Vietnam's Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) and the Spanish Agency of Development Cooperation (AECID). The conference discussed the wage-gap between female and male workers. According to the report of discrimination in wage and income of labourers from 2006-2012 surveyed by the AECID and MOLISA, due to social traditions and prejudice on women, female workers were paid 83 percent of their male counterparts' wage, and it was even worse in foreign-invested sectors, as they were only paid a half of male workers' wage. The meeting called on the government to offer more support on women, promoting women's vocational education and higher education for increasing their income.

On July 30, at an executive meeting, the State Council of China said that it would provide better services for migrant workers who live in the cities. China's Premier Li Keqiang chaired the meeting and said that this decision would help the country to cultivate a high-quality work force and increase social equality which lets all people enjoy the fruits of China's development. There are 174 million migrant workers in cities away from their villages this year. The government will help them to find jobs in cities; providing job training and offering financial support, investment guidance and interest subsidies to help them start their own small business. They now are able to permanently settle in cities with access to pensions, housing, medical care and free compulsory education for their children.

On July 30 a reception was held in Hanoi by the Chinese Embassy in Vietnam to celebrate the upcoming 87th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Defense Le Huu Duc said that the friendship between the two armies was important to meet the expectations and interests of the two nations, two peoples and the two Parties. Military attaché of the Chinese Embassy in Vietnam replied that China would deepen mutually-beneficial cooperation with neighbouring countries including Vietnam, strengthening friendly cooperation with other militaries and enhancing mutual trust for peace. He added that China opposed any form of power politics and hegemonism. He also thanked Vietnam's efforts in searching for the missing Malaysian air plane MH370. Since the two countries established diplomatic relations, their friendship has withstood the test of time.

On July 31 the Lao government announced six decrees to boost its development and national security, after having a two-day government office meeting chaired by Lao Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong. The decrees include ensuring state-invested projects implementations, establishing domestic and social foundations and associations, promoting arts performance, managing internet information, developing the economy and sustainable hydroelectric projects.

## "No doubt" on British torture and rendition

Joana Ramiro

**A human rights charity has accused British troops in Afghanistan of imprisoning and torturing a man. Reprieve and Leigh Day solicitors are taking legal action in a bid to force the government to investigate claims that Yunus Rahmatullah was waterboarded, dragged around behind a British military vehicle and beaten until he was unconscious.**

Mr Rahmatullah was released earlier this year after spending 10 years in secret detention at Bagram airbase and Abu Ghraib prison. His arrest was publicly announced by former defence secretary John Hutton in February 2009.

Reprieve legal director Kat Craig said that there was "no longer

any doubt that the British government bears responsibility for his torture and illegal rendition to Bagram. The government must now come clean about the full extent of British involvement in this disgraceful episode in our history – only then will Yunus be able to move on."

Mr Rahmatullah claims that British soldiers made him lie for long periods of time in a coffin-type box. Later, in the custody of US military his torture extended to sexual humiliation. The government has told Reprieve and Leigh Day that it would be looking into the case, but the legal team representing Mr Rahmatullah believes the Ministry of Defence has been reticent and sluggish in its response.

A Ministry of Defence spokesman said: "These allegations of

wrong doing by UK soldiers, which have been made 10 years after the event, are already being investigated by the Iraq Historic Allegations Team. As the case is subject to ongoing legal action we are unable to comment further."

But solicitor Rosa Curling said that "to date, the UK government has refused to investigate its role in the decision taken to transfer our client in to US custody, when it knew there was a real risk such a transfer would expose him to torture, mistreatment and abuse."

Ms Curling added that Mr Rahmatullah's case exposed "a catalogue of errors on the part of the Brits." She said: "Justice must now be done and done swiftly."

Morning Star ✪

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Letters to the Editor  
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## Capitalism self-regulation

Amazingly, the recent Financial System Inquiry didn't mention the recent scandals surrounding the Commonwealth Bank, But it has revealed that the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC – national regulator of corporate entities) is underfunded and under-resourced.

Instead of calling for increased government funding, the government offers as an option giving ASIC "additional product intervention powers and product banning powers" and given greater independence from government and moving ASIC and the prudential regulator, the Australian Prudential Regulatory

Authority "to a more autonomous budget and funding process," by levying industry.

There are numerous other recommendations including eligibility for tax concessions on super savings, limits on the role of trustees of superannuation funds, investment of post-retirement savings, reverse mortgages on family homes, corporate bonds (as against shares or bank loans), credit and debit cards, e-commerce, internet banking, international integration, self-regulation of the sector, and the belief that "unfettered financial markets would generally lead to resources being allocated efficiently." And what to do when that doesn't happen.

Amazing.

T Southern  
Brisbane

## Global developments

Things are happening apace around the world. On July 19, at the 13th meeting of the China-Venezuela high-Level Joint Commission, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elias Jaua stated that Venezuela and China will

increase cooperation and mutual development in energy, agriculture, science, technology, industry, commerce and cultural exchanges in order to reduce poverty in both countries.

On July 21, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Venezuela's housing project in the capital Caracas and paid his respects to Chávez at his mausoleum. The next day, President Xi paid a state visit to Cuba where he met Cuba revolutionary leaders, Raul and Fidel Castro.

They pledged to foster and deepen bilateral cooperative relations between the two countries. Xi said that "China cherishes the traditional friendship between the two nations, no matter how the international situation changes, it will be a set policy of China to develop a long-term friendship with Cuba".

Raul Castro said that "Cuba's ties with China are at the best in history, and Cuba is willing to strengthen contacts with China on various levels, exchanging experience in socialist construction and learning from each other".

Things are happening!

Lynne Fox  
Sydney



## The Globalisation of Poverty and the New World Order

by Michel Chossudovsky

Paper back– 377 pages

Publisher: Global Research, 2003

**\$36 including p&h**

This is a second edition with valuable updates and additional chapters that not only deal with important economic questions but extremely well researched and revealing information on experiences in Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Latin America, the former Soviet Union and the Balkans. Michel Chossudovsky spent considerable time researching his topics, including extensive travels in many of the countries reported on. The part on the New World Order includes coverage of the dismantling of the welfare state, narrowing of the tax base, illusory independence of central banks and the crisis of the state.

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# Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

## Meaningless art and hysteria over dogs

It is very unfashionable these days to want art to actually mean something. Today, when people say a work of art "speaks to them", they merely mean that it gives them a momentary frisson, not that they perceive anything deep and meaningful in it. Art is divorced from the life of the mass of the people, and realism in art is scorned as so old fashioned it's not even worth talking about.

Meaningless art, however, doesn't seem to work in small sizes. To impress the viewer and make up for its lack of content, art with nothing to say has perforce to grow in size often to gigantic proportions. Considering the huge prices paid for "major" artworks these days, large size at least suggests value for money.

That may sound cynical, but if we look at the \$9 million being spent by the City of Sydney on proposed outdoor "artworks", in at least some cases size does seem to be the principal consideration. Certainly they don't seem to have anything to say so there must be some other factor to justify their huge price-tags!

And just what are those price-tags? Well, a Japanese artist is being paid \$2.5 million for a 75-metre-high steel sculpture that resembles nothing so much as a wiggly line vaguely suggesting the outline of a cloud. This huge oddity is going to be erected adjacent to Sydney's Victorian-era, crenulated, sandstone Town Hall. Harmonious? I wouldn't have said so. But if the French government can

erect a disfiguring glass pyramid in the courtyard of the Louvre, I suppose we can shove a giant piece of twisted steel opposite the Town Hall.

Meanwhile Sydney-based artist Hany Armanious is set to receive a cool \$1.7 million for a giant milk-crate made of fibreglass. I kid you not. And apparently it is not a joke, either. In fact, it is actually being touted as a "sculpture". This epitome of art-without-meaning will measure 13.5 x 15 x 15 metres and is to be erected in Belmore Park, by Central Railway Station. Well, lots of rallies and demonstrations are held in Belmore Park so I suppose a giant milk-crate might come in handy to hang banners from (or on).

Apparently, the Sydney City Council has a surplus of \$600 million in the bank and is concerned that construction next year of a light rail system running along the city's main drag, George Street, will disrupt commerce. So they have decided to install the outsize "art works" in order to bolster visitor numbers. This is a shrewd move as tourism brings in huge amounts of money into the city's coffers, and tourists need lots of curiosities to look at or they feel their trip has been "a bore". One can't help wondering however just how empty-headed will visitors have to be to want to travel to Sydney to look at a giant milk crate?

If it comes to that, how uncultured do you have to be to pay good money for such a travesty and then to inflict it on the people of Sydney? What this decision has

done is to hand a very convenient club to the opponents of Sydney's otherwise progressive Lord Mayor Clover Moore, a club they have been quick to beat her over the head with. Rupert Murdoch's popular tabloid, the *Daily Telegraph*, devoted the front page and two full pages inside to lampooning and lambasting the whole project.

It would be a real pity if the many good and worthwhile projects and initiatives for which Clover Moore has been responsible were to be overshadowed by ostentatious "public artworks" that have nothing to say and instead of enriching our lives merely provoke bewilderment or – worse – derision.

Still with the *Telegraph*, but on a different topic: Murdoch's rag was crowing on its August 21 front page that "in a win for the *Daily Telegraph* Muzzle the Mutts campaign, the state government will bring in tougher dog laws to better protect the community".

Those "tougher" dog laws include penalties of up to five years jail and fines of \$77,000 for "negligent" dog owners. And that's the whole extent of the *Tele's* response to the complex problem of people living with pets in the modern urban world. Nothing about educating people about how to interact with animals, how to recognise risks, what constitutes provocative or stupid behaviour when encountering a strange dog, or anything along those lines.

People used to be closer to nature, even those living in cities. Every family had a dog.

Dogs were cheap to buy (often "free to good home") and relatively cheap to feed. Many people came from farming families, but whether they were rural or urban, they were used to living with pets, especially dogs. Having a pet dog leads to lower blood pressure and other health benefits to do with both physical and mental well-being. However, young males in particular are encouraged to think it "macho" to have a powerful fighting dog, such as a "staffie" or some variety of pig dog.

These dogs need responsible owners, educated in how to train and care for their pet. In future, dogs that "menace" people, even though they do not actually attack anyone, can result in their owners being forced to have them desexed and muzzled. But in country areas, at least, there are now many properties where flocks of sheep or goats are guarded by Maremmas or similar large breeds. These dogs live with the flock and treat intruding people with the same hostility they show towards intruding dogs or foxes. They are very effective, but people need to know how to behave around them – as they do around any dog.

Fines and jail sentences are no substitute for education, training, and understanding. Dogs have been the companions of humans since time immemorial. Our alienation from actual contact with the animal world is producing a generation who are so unfamiliar with our main companion animal that they do not know how to interact with dogs and in fact are unreasonably afraid of them. ☺







Sunday August 10 –  
Saturday August 16

It has the title of a DIY manual and some of the format of a video game – it proceeds by stages from the lowest level (street dealer) to the highest (international king pin) – but it is in fact a powerful documentary exposing the futility, racism, hypocrisy and sheer wrong-headedness of the USA's "war on drugs". It is the deceptively-named *How To Make Money Selling Drugs* (ABC2 Sunday August 10 at 9pm).

Don't be fooled by the format: this feature-length documentary is actually an important film.

The war on drugs began early in the US when Harry J Anslinger, the first Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics brought in the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 which in effect criminalised the drug and set the stage for marijuana prohibition that continues to this day. Anslinger told the US Congress that (amongst other things) drugs caused white women to sleep with Negroes and encouraged homosexuality.

Despite the nation's disastrous experience of Prohibition as a means of controlling one social drug, alcohol, and despite the undeniable fact that drug addiction – like alcohol abuse – is essentially a medical problem, US legislators' response has always been to opt for prohibition. The ludicrous result has been to theoretically criminalise half the population of the country and – just as it did with Prohibition in the 1920s – to hand organised crime a tremendous,

willing market that could no longer be supplied from legal sources.

The huge money that drug dealers can generate in turn leads to corruption of officials and police, to investment by organised crime in legitimate businesses, and by the sourcing of funds by "legitimate" businesses from organised crime to fund takeovers or other ventures for which an entrepreneur needs to be "cashed up".

And while US governments waged the "war on drugs" at home, they organised the cultivation or manufacture and marketing of narcotics abroad, wherever they had a need of non-public sources of money for interfering in other countries' internal affairs or waging undeclared wars. This US-backed drug trade began in Laos, moved to El Salvador, then Afghanistan and most recently has been active in Colombia. Drugs from all these regions have been fed back into the USA.

As this program shows, there are other downsides to the war on drugs. With huge amounts of federal funding being provided to police forces to wage the war, US state police departments are becoming militarised at the cost of their policing skills. Continued funding requires continued evidence that police SWAT teams are raiding drug dealers, so heavily-armed teams of 15 to 20 men with assault rifles and automatic shotguns are crashing through the front doors of more and more houses in poor neighbourhoods because that's what police are expected to do now – if they want to keep their funding.

Police are also expected to get convictions if they want to keep their federal funding, so they routinely plant evidence. In the film, ex-cop Barry Cooper explains how he used to do it. Now he advises people accused of drug dealing by crooked cops on how to bust the police evidence. He is at serious risk of being bumped off.

And yet, more drugs are available on the street, and more drugs are consumed now, than ever before. In some US cities, the drug trade is the only economic activity that is buoyant. Faced with a choice between



Celia Pacquola (Nat) Luke McGregor (Hugh) and Rob Sitch (Tony) – *Utopia* (ABC1 Wednesdays from August 13 at 8.30pm)

selling drugs or being unemployed, for most young Americans there is no contest.

Written, directed and narrated by Matthew Cooke, *How To Make Money Selling Drugs* features testimony from veterans of the US drug trade including Curtis Jackson, better known as 50 Cent; a rumpled ex-coke dealer; and the convicted Los Angeles kingpin Freeway Rick Ross, the man who invented crack. There are also telling contributions from rights advocates Russell Simmons, Susan Sarandon, and David Simon (creator of TV series about crime and drugs *The Wire*), as well as former lawyers and police.

It is obvious that the situation in the US is worse than elsewhere in the world: there is more disappointment and more blighted dreams than elsewhere in the world, combined with more black market money, more guns and more organised crime. But most of all, there is more determination to treat drugs as a criminal problem not a medical one.

I approached *Utopia* (ABC1 Wednesdays from August 13 at 8.30pm) with some trepidation.

Described as "a satire about the difficult process of taking grand, uncensored, inadequately planned, fundamentally flawed schemes and passing them off as "Nation Building", it raised all sorts of fears. The ABC has a sorry record when it comes to home-grown comedy series, but I should not have worried. For the ABC has also – occasionally – been very successful with home-grown comedy: think *The Games*, the mockumentary television series by John Clarke and Bryan Dawe about the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney.

That series was originally broadcast on the ABC in 1998 so it's been a long time between drinks, but frankly, I think it has been worth the wait. *Utopia* has the same clever writing, the same delight in the inanities of bureaucracy, the same fierce determination to expose the absurdities of public posturing. I have only seen the first episode, but it actually made

me laugh, and that is surely what you want from a comedy!

The eight-part series is set inside the offices of the "Nation Building Authority", a newly created government organisation responsible for overseeing major infrastructure projects. In short, *Utopia* examines the forces that go into creating a very well-designed white elephant.

*Utopia* is written and produced by Santo Cilauro, Tom Gleisner and Rob Sitch, and is directed by Rob Sitch. It features an accomplished comic cast led by Sitch himself, backed up by Celia Pacquola, Dave Lawson, Luke McGregor, Kitty Flanagan, Anthony Lehmann, Emma-Louise Wilson, Michelle Lim Davidson and Toby Truslove.

In the first episode, excellent comic use is made of Rhonda's (Kitty Flanagan) decision to re-design the Authority's logo, and from the attempts to squeeze a community garden into a multi-million dollar waterfront development. ★



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EXPANSION OR CONSOLIDATION?**

Graeme Gill, Prof, Department of Government, Sydney University;  
Ben Goldsmith, Prof, Department of Government, Sydney University;

August 14

**AFTER MANDELA: WHAT NOW FOR SOUTH AFRICA?**

Ken Davis, Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA;  
Geoff Hawker, Dr, Department of Modern History, Politics and  
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**INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS –  
THE GAP IS NOT CLOSING – WHY?**

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Reconciliation (ANTaR);

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# Protesters question airport expansion

Ylenia Gostoli

A group of climate activists and local residents staged a protest earlier this week inside London City Airport, to oppose plans for its expansion. Climate change campaign group The Future questions the logic behind expanding London's only inner-city airport when air pollution levels in the capital are already the highest in the country. In some areas, they are linked to one in 12 deaths per year.

"Did you see the irony the way they call it 'Field of hope'? Field of choke," says Julie as we walk along the aptly named playground adjacent to the airport's terminal building. For the past eight years, Julie has lived right under the planes' landing path. "From six o'clock in the evening, we just know that we can't keep the doors or windows open," she says. She has joined 10 other campaigners for a silent 20-minute protest at the entrance to the airport's terminal building. The Future drew a circle around their right eyes – their symbol, which stands for "we are watching".

The group is protesting because they believe a decision is due to be made any day now. However, a spokesperson for Newham Council, which is currently considering the airport's planning application, said: "We're having an ongoing discussion with [London City Airport] and their application isn't likely to be heard until later this year." The council declined further comments "on an application that hasn't been heard".

"They've been creeping in," says Julie. "We've been getting more and more flights earlier in the morning, and on weekends. When I first moved here, I was aware we had the airport, and that was fine, that was what we'd settled with. Most of the residents knew what

we were getting, and that was 73,000 flights a year." Since it was opened in 1988, the airport has grown from an initial 133,000 passengers to over 3 million, 25 times as many, in 2013.

Last September, the airport unveiled US\$340-million plans to expand its current infrastructure, needed in order to nearly double its capacity to 120,000 flights a year over the next 10 years. In 2009, London City Airport received planning permission to increase the number of flights, and is now seeking to build a new terminal extension, new parking stands and a taxiway. Last December, 1,000 local residents handed in a petition to Newham Council against the proposals.

## Empty promises

The airport occupies 500,000 square metres in the Royal Docks, in the heart of East London – one of the city's most economically deprived areas. Newham has the second-largest unemployment rate in the capital and, despite being one of London's six Olympics boroughs, it saw much larger increases in unemployment between 2005 and 2010 than the rest of London (44 percent compared to London's 21 percent).

Proponents argue that the airport facilitates trade, catering as it does to business executives from nearby Canary Wharf and the City of London, and that its expansion would create new jobs. However, there is a sense that the local community not only feels worlds apart from the cash and careers of most of the airport's customers, but also feels let down by empty promises. "Jobs? We haven't seen any jobs. We've seen nothing. No-one I know got a job at the airport," says Ted, who has lived in the area all his life.

London-based think-tank the New Economics Foundation (NEF) recently published a report arguing that the airport creates little



value for local people and should be closed. Its exclusive clientele, they argue, make up only 2.4 percent of London's overall passengers and could use one of the other four nearby airports, further facilitated by planned improvements to transport links to the business districts. NEF makes the case for the Royal Docks to be redeveloped sustainably with mixed housing, business, shared cultural spaces and tourist attractions that would directly impact on the lives of its residents and create opportunities.

Near King George V station, one of the areas set to be most affected by the expansion, the high street is eerily empty. A number of local shops in the nearby square are open, but there's hardly the bustle you would expect. Towering council blocks follow crumbling Victorian buildings, followed by shiny new apartments, looking as if no-one ever quite knew what to do with these streets.

There is confusion among residents as to whether some of the housing blocks in the area are likely to be bought off by London City Airport which, under its noise management

scheme, has an obligation to offer to purchase properties suffering from noise pollution over 69 decibels, if the owner of the property lodges an application.

"They're lifting our hopes, saying that we have a choice of where we would like to end up," says Tammy, who lives in a social housing block. In London, a chronic lack of social housing paired with skyrocketing rents means that social housing tenants are sometimes offered to be re-housed outside the city. Some residents fear this might be on the cards for them. "I don't want to end up in Hastings, or Bristol," says Tammy.

"What we're saying today to anyone using the airport is look, your flight is fine, we are just protesting against it expanding further into the community," says writer and activist Tamsin Omond, who masterminded the protest. But the issue is larger, she says: "It's about what can we make of London rather than what will be pushed down on London. It's a different way of building a vision."

*New Internationalist* ✪

# Lessons on peace from WWI

One hundred years ago, on July 28, 1914, socialist representatives from across Europe gathered in Brussels. Austria-Hungary had declared war on Serbia. Much of the rest of Europe was expected to join in.

French socialist leader Jean Jaures stood with his arm around the co-chair of the German Social Democrats, Hugo Haase. They insisted that whatever governments and capitalists might do, working-class people must refuse to fight each other. Thousands of people marched against war in cities throughout Europe.

A few days later, Jean Jaures was shot dead by a pro-war French student in a Paris restaurant. The French socialists, like their counterparts in Germany and Britain, split over the war, with the majority in all three countries voting to support it.

If you believe certain historians, that was the end of the opposition to the war. Recently, other historians have drawn attention to the peace movements that some are so keen to

overlook. In Britain, the semi-illegal anti-war newspaper *The Tribunal* had 100,000 readers at its height, while over 6,000 people were locked up for opposing the war. Anti-war feeling played a major part in the revolutions that ousted the rulers of Russia and Germany, as well as in anti-colonial rebellions from Mali to Ireland. The French government only narrowly survived a string of mutinies in 1917. The US socialist Eugene Debs was still in prison for anti-war campaigning when he received over a million votes in the presidential election of 1920.

As we campaign for peace today, what can we learn from our predecessors of a century ago?

Firstly, any peace movement must be international. "We do not recognize the Austrian, the Serb, the Russian, the Italian or the French," declared a German syndicalist newspaper on the eve of war. "We know only brother workers. To prevent this enormity we hold out our hand to the workers of all countries." The next year, activists from

countries at war endured police interrogations and public suspicion to travel to the Women's Peace Conference in the Netherlands. The event proved that solidarity across boundaries is more than possible.

For a modern equivalent, have a look at the Facebook pages of Israel-Loves-Iran and Iran-Loves-Israel, set up by Israelis and Iranians who believe they have more in common with each other than with warmongers in either country.

Secondly, we must not be fooled by justifications for war. In 1914, many on the left were dismayed to find that so many of their comrades supported the war. In Germany, pro-war socialists argued that they had to fight against Russian Tsarist autocracy. In Britain, the pro-war left claimed to be fighting against imperialism in resisting the German invasion of Belgium.

As we have seen with Iraq and Afghanistan, there are always some on the left who are persuaded that *this* time war is different, that *this* time we must unite with capitalists

and oppressors to fight different capitalists and oppressors. It's about time we learnt from history and stopped believing it.

Thirdly, we can be united despite differences. The British peace movement was split, not between socialists and Christians as is sometimes assumed (many peace campaigners were both) but over the question of accepting "alternative work" to military service. Some were prepared to do so if the work did not help the prosecution of the war. Others argued that even working on a farm freed up a farm worker to go and kill. These "absolutists" formed the majority of the thousands imprisoned in Britain for their anti-war views, although they were joined by others locked up for illegal activism. Despite sometimes bitter differences, records show a remarkable understanding of other activists' positions. The No-Conscription Fellowship, the leading anti-war group in Britain, managed to keep its diverse members broadly united against militarism.

By now, you may be shouting at your computer screen, "But they were not effective! They didn't stop the war!" I have no illusions about the failures of the World War One peace movement. But to dismiss them as ineffective is to overlook the rebellions seen in Germany, Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Elsewhere, negativity about war became a far more acceptable attitude by the end of the war than it was at the beginning. Public sentiment in Britain forced the government to abolish conscription and most wartime censorship, despite a clear desire on the part of several ministers to keep them both.

Yet, as Israeli bombs rain down on Gaza and the Western media talks up a new conflict with Russia, we could be forgiven for thinking that nothing has changed. That's why we must learn from the activists of 100 years ago, building peace campaigns that are united, diverse and international. If we don't learn from our history, we are condemned to repeat it.

*New Internationalist* ✪



**Communist Party of Australia**

**Guardian**

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