



Guardian

Abbott commmits Australia to US's endless war

Anna Pha and Tom Pearson

The first of Australia's combat troops are on their way to the Middle East to join US and other forces in Iraq. The Abbott government, with the full support of Labor leader Bill Shorten, has committed Australia to a long and expanding conflict in the Middle East and beyond, if all goes according to US plans.

Abbott initially claimed the forces would not be used in conflict, now he is saying a decision has not been made. *The Australian* was a little more forthcoming. "*The Australian* understands the decision to engage in combat will be almost automatic once ADF members and their equipment are in place," writes Brendan Nicholson. ("Special forces head back to Iraq as PM sends 600 troops to take on jihadis", 15-09-2014)

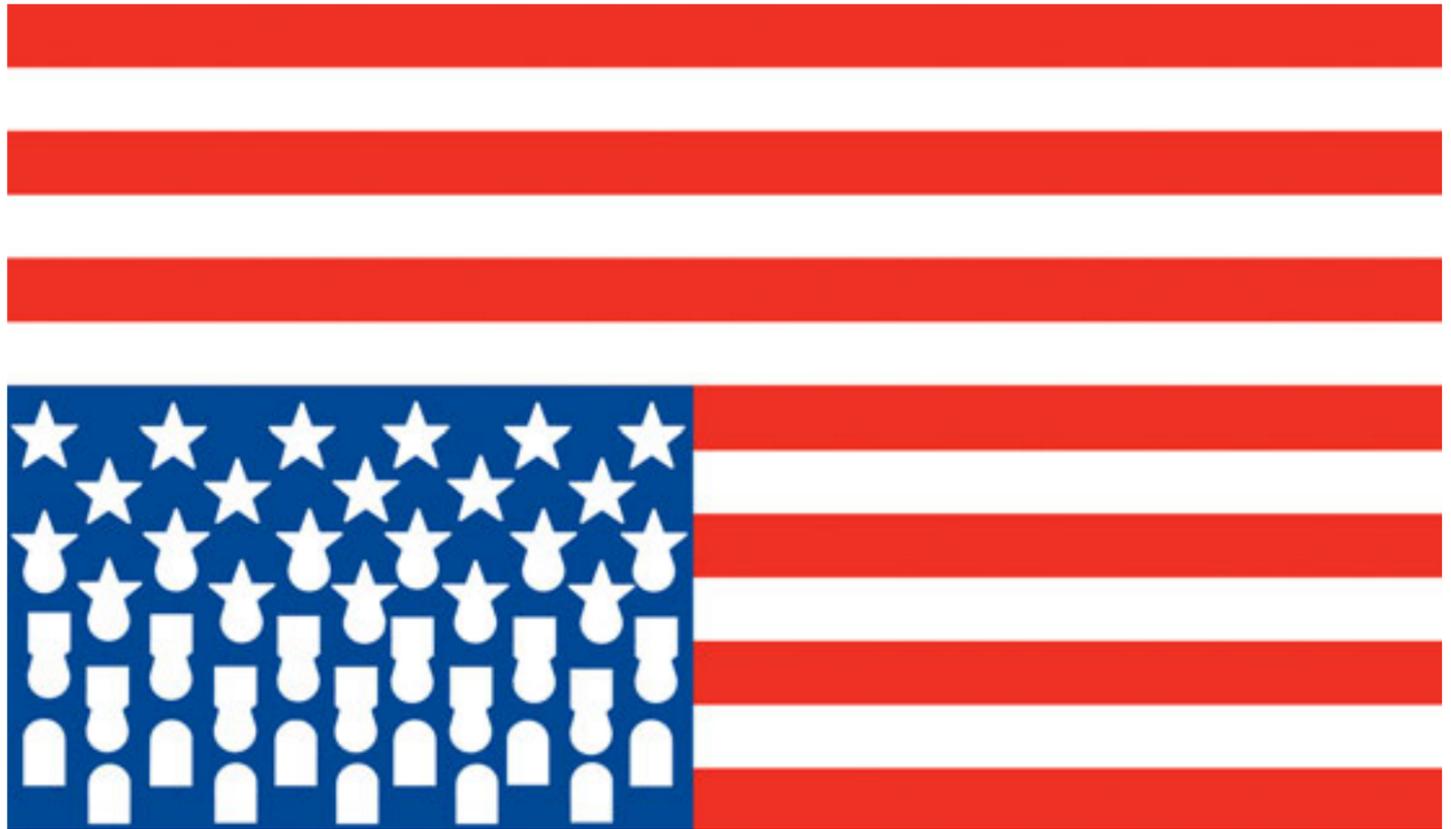
The government is sending an initial 100 special forces to be deployed on the ground in Iraq, part of a 600-strong force to the Middle East. Four hundred Australian Air Force personnel will be stationed at the Minhad air base in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Eight Super Hornet fighters, a C17Globemaster and C130 Hercules transport aircraft will also be used. The special forces deployed in the Ukraine will also be diverted to the UAE. The deployment is open-ended, as is the conflict itself.

In addition to Australia, the US's new Coalition of the Willing, with an estimated 10,000 personnel, includes Britain, Canada, and 10 compliant Arab states – Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar and the UAE.

There are strong parallels with the methods used by the Howard government to try to justify Australia's involvement in the invasion of Iraq in 2003. There is "be alert, not alarmed" rhetoric, putting Australia on "high alert" meaning a "terrorist attack is likely", and the lies. The Howard government used the threat of terrorism as an excuse to increase ASIO's powers and introduce other laws restricting people's democratic rights, which went well beyond fighting terrorism.

As the then General Secretary of the CPA Peter Symon said commenting on the government's legislation, "It is part of the offensive being undertaken by conservative governments in a number of countries which, overtime, will be used to silence opposition to their war policies."

"The capitalist system is now in very serious economic and political crisis and wants to silence all criticism of its policies." (*The Guardian*, "Resist anti-democratic ASIO laws", #1115, 30-10-2002)



This time, Attorney General George Brandis, has a raft of so-called anti-terror legislation before Parliament and is using the threat of terrorism to try to justify a further erosion of democratic rights. There is also the additional threat of Australians now fighting with Islamic State (IS or ISIS) forces returning to Australia and continuing their jihad here.

The Australian Greens are the only parliamentary party to oppose the government's war plans. Back in 2004, Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty said Australia was at increased risk because of our involvement in the Iraq war. Greens Leader Christine Milne says the same applies now.

"It is not as simple as extremists hating us because of our way of life. They are also fuelled by our past engagement in Iraq with the Coalition of the Willing. Fighting [with] US-led Western imperialism is a rallying call for jihadis," Milne said.

"Extremists need vulnerable young people to feel isolated and alienated in order to win them over. We shouldn't make that easier for them. We should focus on strengthening our community ties and policies of inclusion."

"The Prime Minister must focus on making sure all Australians are included in our wonderful multicultural society. The problem isn't Islam or Christianity, it is the discrimination and hatred that drives social isolation and violence," said Milne.

Endless war

Obama, was elected to office six years ago on the promise of ending the war in Iraq and moving away from a "perpetual wartime footing". He brought home 150,000 troops from Iraq, but has continued with the wars and regime changes (overtly or covertly) since then, including in Libya, Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.

"This effort will be different from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan," Obama said. He said "no American troops were being sent in a combat role. The attacks will be focused on defeating the ISIS forces in Iraq and Syria and on training and strengthening the Iraqi military forces."

Like the Australian government, Obama only told half the story. This is not a new war; it is the next stage, of the "endless war" launched

by GW Bush in 2003. But it will not stop with ISIS in Iraq or Syria.

The next objective is to bring down the Syrian government. The US and its backers Britain and Australia are supporting and funding IS forces in Syria while claiming to be about to fight against IS in Iraq.

The main objective in this strategy is to close in on Russia in a pincer movement with a coalition of the willing that is by then experienced and well co-ordinated for the big battles ahead. Ukraine is part of that strategy.

Australia has no right to wage war in Iraq, Syria or anywhere else.

To quote *The Guardian* in 2002 again, "The 'war on terrorism' is a campaign launched by imperialism to justify war against any number of countries, to justify their occupation and the taking over of their economy by the transnational corporations. It is by these means they are attempting to re-impose worldwide colonialism." The government should withdraw from the Coalition and spend the money on social security. (*The Guardian*, Editorial, #1115, 30-10-2002) ✪

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Guardian

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Job destroyers

State and federal governments are sacking thousands of public servants regardless of the consequences to services or the pressure placed on remaining employees.

In the private sector, Qantas, banks, telecommunications companies, auto industry (closing down), Australia Post and countless other corporations are in the process of sacking workers and offshoring work where possible.

The government has no job creation programs and has turned its back on the development of the Australian economy and well-being of the people.

Instead it focuses on making Australia more attractive (lower wages, tax breaks) to foreign investors and promoting exports – resources sector and related infrastructure, finance, tourism, education, jobs and to a lesser extent agriculture – to the detriment of the economy and short-term and long-term employment. Important skills bases are disappearing. The deindustrialisation and restructuring of the economy is taking Australia back decades, and leaving the economy extremely vulnerable to economic crises.

At the same time prices continue to rise. Health services, education, transport and the utilities are set to become more expensive. Public housing is being run down, sold off, with more people joining the ranks of the homeless or forced to live in sub-standard accommodation.

The private housing market, in Melbourne and Sydney in particular, is still overheated yet the government is doing nothing to control prices or limit foreign purchases. Resentment towards Asians (identified by the media as buying up Australia's real estate) is being fuelled by the media as Australian workers are closed out of the market.

Higher prices, lower wages, cuts to social security payments along with rising unemployment and underemployment is a toxic combination. Apart from reducing living standards and imposing hardships on workers and their families, it is a recipe for economic crisis and even more hardship.

Fewer workers on lower wages means less money to purchase goods and services. This will only lead to a crisis of "overproduction". Overproduction in the sense that there is surplus to what people can buy, not necessarily surplus to what they need. When this happens, production is cut, workers sacked, companies go bust, and the downward spiral sets in.

Yet the government stands by and watches as whole sectors of the economy are destroyed. It does nothing to plan economic development, nothing to create jobs, nothing to control prices or provide the services that are needed. Instead it continues to deregulate the private sector and privatise public assets and government functions.

Neo-liberal economics and ultra-conservative politics are heightening the exploitation of workers around the world and swelling the profits of global capital and mining magnates like Clive Palmer and Gina Rinehart.

The CPA calls for pro-people policies including:

- an immediate rise in wages, in pensions, unemployment and other social welfare benefits
- a shorter working week with no loss in pay
- a halt to privatisation of essential services and a start to reversing the process
- an increase in spending on public services and infrastructure – health, education, housing, pensions, unemployment benefits, as well as infrastructure for improved public transport, an expanded rail freight system, improved urban and rural water supply system and alternative sustainable energy
- the introduction of laws guaranteeing basic trade union and workers' rights including the right to strike.

(For more information on CPA policies, see *CPA Policies* under *Resources* at cpa.org.au or go directly via cpa.org.au/policies)

PRESS FUND

Inconsistencies abound in the news lately. Last week US President Obama vowed to defeat the fundamentalist terrorist organisation IS. However, he then contradicted himself by offering military support to the Syrian opposition, even though IS is actually the main opposition force within Syria, and the Syrian government is in the middle of a protracted war against it. Perhaps it has something to do with the Syrian government's moves to dump the US dollar as the oil trading currency. But back to Australia! What is absolutely consistent here is our need for Press Fund contributions, which help us cover our production costs, and that's why we'd be really grateful for you sending us something for the next edition if you possibly can. Many thanks to those who contributed this week, as follows:

R Girvan \$10, Mark Mannion \$5, Peter Reed \$100, "Round Figure" \$15

This week's total: \$130 Progressive total: \$5,450

CPA Secretariat statement Proposed visit to Australia of representatives of Golden Dawn

According to reports in the Greek community media, the neo-fascist party of Greece "Golden Dawn" is sending a high level delegation to Australia shortly, comprised of their two European Parliament members, for the purpose of promoting the ideology of this party among Australia's Greek communities, and fostering support for it, including collecting money from Australia in order to financially support their criminal activities in Greece.

The policy of this party is to divide the people on the basis of race and nationality, promote extreme forms of nationalism, cultivate racial and national hatred among people, engage in savage physical attacks against all migrants and people rejecting their ideas and generally embrace all backward, reactionary and violent social behaviour.

Their activities are so extreme and outside the law and norms of democratic life, that some of their leaders, including prominent

parliamentary members, have been convicted for criminal activities and are serving prison sentences for serious violations of the country's penal code.

This violent and extremely dangerous Party is now sending two of its leading members to Australia to carry on their divisive and destructive activities. Their presence in a multicultural society like Australia, comprised of people of various ethnic backgrounds from all corners of the earth, can only spell trouble for Australia's communities.

Their extreme violence and their doctrines of national and racial superiority must be of great concern not only to Australia's Greek communities but to all people of Australia who in their overwhelming majority reject violence of one national group against the other and the fascist policies of discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity.

The Australian people should never allow our country to become

the breeding ground of violence divisions and hatred and become the source of financial support for fascist activities abroad.

For all these reasons we call upon the Australian government and the Prime Minister to refuse to issue visas and so deny this delegation entry into Australia. Further we call upon all progressive and democratic members of the Greek communities and of the wider community, as well as democratic organisations, trade unions and others, to raise their objections to this visit in any way possible.

Such methods include sending letters of protest to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Immigration, protesting vigorously to their local member of Parliament and Senators, organising a petition to collect signatures from interested people and by sending a delegation to Canberra to present the petition and press upon the government to take the steps required to prevent this visit. ✪

"Keep the water trigger"

Former Member for New England Tony Windsor has urged Cross Benchers in the Federal Senate to retain the so called water trigger when debate on the issue is raised this week.

Mr Windsor introduced the Water Trigger Amendment to the Environmental Protection Biodiversity and Conservation Legislation (EPBC) towards the end of the previous Parliament and received majority support.

The Amendment allows for impacts of proposed coal seam gas and large coal mining developments on water resources to be comprehensively assessed at the national level and gives the national Minister the capacity to set appropriate conditions as part of the approvals process.

The fully funded Independent Expert Scientific Committee (IESC) has also been established to provide transparent advice to the process.

The Abbott government is attempting to water down the water trigger under the guise of removing red tape and supposedly delivering a one-stop-shop for environmental

approvals by accrediting state planning authorities to make those decisions that would previously have required the Commonwealth to assess the impacts on water resources.

"There are a number of reasons that the Cross Benchers should seriously consider before agreeing to any changes" Mr Windsor said.

(1) Given that after more than 100 years the Commonwealth and state governments have finally agreed on an across border Murray Darling Basin process of resolving issues it is absurd to revert to a state based arrangement for extractive industries that could impact on water quality, end of valley flows, water budgets, consumptive use and existing land uses.

(2) The loss of faith by the community in relation to the previous state based decision making processes really demands that a national approach is preferable. This distrust has been exacerbated by recent ICAC findings in relation to both Labor and Liberal Parties in NSW and detrimental water impacts in Queensland to the extent that there

is now a real need for independent scrutiny at a federal level.

(3) The need for Bioregional Assessments of catchments that are potentially sensitive to groundwater impacts prior to the granting of approval for extractive activities. This was a recommendation of the Australian Minerals Council as far back as 2008 and was recently raised by former CEO Mitch Hooke. The Federal Independent Scientific Committee is ideally placed to provide trustworthy advice on such assessments.

(4) The need for much more information in relation to the inter-connectivity issues between groundwater and surface water and how those issues relate to sustainable agricultural practices and the integrity of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

(5) The chronic under-resourcing of the state Departments to carry out this work under federal accreditation will lead to conflict issues and legal challenge.

Mr Windsor said the removal of the water trigger in the Senate would be a retrograde step.

"Those who believe that removing Commonwealth scrutiny will lead to a quicker approval process will be sadly mistaken. Any policy that doesn't have the confidence of the community will eventually fail. We need to maintain an independent process that people trust.

"Given the deteriorating trust of government generally the Senate has the opportunity to maintain one thread of that trust and avoid any potential civil unrest" he said. ✪

Vale John Ondawame

The Australian West Papua Society offers its condolences to the family and friends of John Ondawame.

John had dedicated his life to the liberation of West Papua. In Australia

John was a founding member of the West Papua group in Sydney. He helped raise awareness of the West Papuan issue in Australia.

He will be sorely missed. ✪

Millers Point scandal just the tip of the iceberg

Peter Mac

The NSW coalition government is suspected of having “underquoted” the anticipated sale price of two publicly-owned Millers Point houses this month to benefit the small group of buyers specially selected by the government to attend the private auction.

The intention of deliberately underquoting is to reduce competition and deter interest, and this may be assisted by collusion between the buyers. The price guide for one Miller Point house was \$1.3 million, but it sold at \$1.9 million, and one real estate agent has claimed that the bidding should have reached at least \$2.5 million.

Labor opposition housing spokesperson Sophie Cotsis called for a halt to the sales and an official inquiry into the auction, to which she was denied entry.

The government intends to sell another 292 Millers Point houses, and to relocate more than 300 public housing tenants who occupy them, but it hasn't prepared a plan for the relocation. Ms Cotsis remarked: “The government says they will build more [social housing], but where?”

Ms Cotsis also described the government's plan to “sell an entire suburb” without proper economic planning as incompetent. However, selling the houses within the 18 month time frame would undoubtedly drive prices down, suiting potential purchasers very nicely.

The houses, which enjoy fabulous harbour views and proximity to the city and nightlife, have long been coveted by the real estate market, but members of the Millers Point community have close personal relationships, and the area has deep significance for them.

Many of the families have lived there since the early 19th century. They helped build the Harbour Bridge, survived the Great Depression, fought in the First and Second World Wars, and were involved in the Builders' Labourers' 1970s green bans which saved the early buildings in the Rocks from demolition.

But the government refuses to acknowledge that public housing funding is inadequate, or that the forcible relocation of a community of 300 people over eighteen months is an act of social vandalism.

Instead, it is arguing that by selling the houses the residents currently occupy it could build many times more with the proceeds of sale. But the proceeds would be partly offset by the cost of re-housing the residents, and the remainder would simply be returned to consolidated revenue, rather than being dedicated to increasing the public housing stock.

A Harbour virus

The Millers Point battle is just one of many struggles being waged over the Sydney Harbour foreshores.

Post-WW2 industrial relocation provided great opportunities for sympathetic redevelopment, including the foreshores of the former Callan Park Asylum and adjacent sites, which were adapted to form the Bay Walk, now treasured by local residents and visitors.

However, the development industry is now overriding the public interest. The most spectacular example is the gross overdevelopment of Barangaroo, the former stevedoring area immediately west of the city on Darling Harbour.

The government also proposes to redevelop the old White Bay power station and adjacent industrial areas, probably with as great a site density as at Barangaroo, but on a site four times larger, and to build new hotel and entertainment facilities within the Royal Botanic Gardens and Sydney Domain.

And now it wants to form a new agency to create a “strategic vision” for the foreshores extending from the Bays Precinct and Darling Harbour west of the Bridge to Millers Point, the Rocks, Circular Quay and the Royal Botanic Gardens.

The Sydney Harbour Foreshores Authority currently oversees development of that area, and owns more than \$1 billion in publicly-owned real estate there. The cabinet is considering abolishing the Authority, and has asked a committee of the heads of government departments to report on the Authority's future.

The government has already placed its property development agency Urban Growth in charge of the Bays Precinct. Shadow Opposition spokesperson on planning, Luke Foley observed: “... government policy concerning the Sydney Harbour foreshore seems to be directed at development and commercialisation



The government intends to sell another 292 Millers Point houses, and to relocate more than 300 public housing tenants who occupy them.

rather than developing the public realm”.

He's right. Developers lobby group Urban Taskforce is campaigning for sale of government foreshore land in the Bays Precinct and elsewhere. It wants the private sector to take over Harbour events now managed by the Foreshore Authority, and to act as landlord and strategic planner for public foreshore lands.

Urban Taskforce CEO Chris Johnson commented: “... we are most concerned that some organisations have suggested that all [foreshore]

lands must remain in public use”. He urged the government to “ensure development opportunities are fully explored, including the Bays Precinct”, adding: “The government should also consider selling [its] buildings within the Rocks ...”

He remarked: “It would appear that [the review] is only related to the urban parts of the foreshore and this needs clarification”. Developers are very interested in largely undeveloped former Defence lands at Chowder Bay, Georges Heights, Middle Head, North Head, Neutral Bay, Cockatoo and Snapper Islands, Watsons Bay and the Woolwich dock.

Those areas are currently managed by the NSW government's Sydney Harbour Federation Trust. But the government now requires the Trust to operate like a commercial entity, funding maintenance or remediation of these sites itself.

The Trust's dwindling financial resources have effectively overridden its responsibility to “provide a lasting legacy for the people of Australia by helping to create the finest foreshore

park in the world and provide places that will greatly enrich the cultural life of the city and the nation.”

The minutes of a recent Trust board meeting noted: “The Trust will be focusing on its core business – leasing – in the coming months”. The NSW Trade and Investment office in Shanghai recently advertised North Head and Middle Head sites for long term lease and “unique development opportunities”.

It declared that the sites' unspoiled settings and wonderful harbour views offered great potential for development, including construction of a boutique hotel.

After a public uproar the Trust withdrew the advertisement, but the incident vividly illustrates the government's intention to privatise its foreshores operations and sell off or lease public land.

The big developers' greed in exploiting the remaining undeveloped or redundant industrial sites could well bring about the destruction of the Harbour's exquisite beauty and unique character. ✪

Pete's Corner



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Exploitation ratchets up

Anna Pha

According to the Reserve Bank wage rises have declined to a 15-year-low. The latest figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show the gap between men's and women's wages is widening rapidly. Employers are slashing wages and working conditions, the number of hours of unpaid work is on the rise. If the government's latest plans go ahead then there will also be an influx of low wage workers from overseas on temporary 457 work visas.

The global giant Coca-Cola Amatil is typical of an offensive being waged by companies on workers. It is freezing wages of existing workers at its Victorian warehouses. New staff will be paid up to 38 percent less and employed on inferior conditions while doing the same work as their colleagues. Following the freeze in 2015, there is the promise of around \$30 a week rise in 2016.

The union and its members opposed the agreement but were outvoted by a majority of workers who were not members. The company's employees in Queensland and Western Australia are being hit with a cut of around \$5 per hour, a cut of \$240.

It is not alone in freezing or cutting workers' wages. Employers are making the most of growing job insecurity and the decline in the rate of unionisation to drive down wages and conditions.

They are also pressuring the government to get rid of penalty rates, reduce or abolish the minimum wage and bring back individual employment contracts.

Lower paid workers, in particular, are feeling the brunt of these attacks. The majority of them are women. Past gains have been eroded. The average ordinary full-time wage for women is now 78 percent of that for men. It was 85 percent 10 years ago, and 83 percent in November 2013. (Source: federal Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Gender pay gap statistics, www.wgeo.gov.au)

Women are also being hit hardest by the increase in part-time and casual employment and being less likely to do paid overtime – total average weekly earnings for working women are 65 percent of men's.

Modern day slaves

Employers are increasingly seeking to import workers on a temporary basis on 457 work visas. At present, the minimum wage for skilled workers on 457 visas a year is \$53,900,

not that all bosses pay anything like that. The plan is to allow employers to pay 10 percent less – \$48,510. In mining, construction and some other sectors where union agreements have been negotiated, wages including allowances, etc, might be double that rate or more.

So far the majority of these workers have not joined trade unions that could represent their interests. They are treated poorly, as though they are disposable, and fear deportation if they demand their rights or try to join a trade union.

The government has plans for dozens of employment categories to be opened up to visa workers so that childcare workers, disability carers, mechanics, bricklayers, office managers, carpenters, chefs, nurses and many others can be brought in for super-exploitation.

Employers would be able to sign non-union, individual agreements with the workers under new "Designated Area Migration Agreements". As of June this year there were 108,870 workers on temporary visas in Australia. The area is not tightly regulated; workers are all too often forced to accept the most appalling conditions and lack of basic freedoms.

Apart from providing cheaper,



vulnerable workers, employers aim to use these workers to drive down the wages and conditions of local workers. With over 760,000 unemployed workers in Australia, they are used to foster racism and xenophobia and pit worker against worker in a race to the bottom.

The claim is that there is a shortage of skilled labour. But the government is making huge cuts to education and training, TAFE courses are shutting down due to loss of funding. University and TAFE fees are another barrier to gaining skills.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) is calling for all temporary visa workers to be given permanent residency and the possibility of

citizenship. Foreign workers should be paid the same wage rates and have the same working conditions and other entitlements as local workers and encouraged to join the relevant trade union.

If united with other workers on the same wages and conditions, then these corporations cannot succeed in their agenda. It will become pointless importing labour unless there is a genuine shortage.

The CPA is also calling for a public inquiry into the operation of 457 visas that investigates abuses of this system, its impact of wages and the potential role of the trade union movement in its operation. ✪

16 years is too long!

Vinnie Molina

Since the very onset of the Cuban Revolution, Cuba has been subjected to an inhumane blockade that amounts to an act of war. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba was left under two economic blockades, the loss of a major trading partner in the former Soviet block and the US 50-year long economic, financial blockade.

In the first half of the '90s the US and several groups in Miami thought Cuba's socialism would collapse following the experience of the Eastern European countries. However, Cuba's revolutionary leadership and people managed to implement measures to adjust to the special period created by difficult economic situation.

At that time Cuba stimulated its economy by encouraging tourism to the island. This meant foreign investment in hotels and other infrastructure and services for the industry. The US responded by strengthening the US blockade by

sanctioning third countries from trading with Cuba. At the same time terrorist groups in Miami planned and carried out terrorist attacks on hotels in Cuba killing an Italian tourist at the Copacabana hotel on September 4, 1997.

Cuba exercised its right to defend itself, sending volunteers to infiltrate and gather information about plans for terrorist activities being hatched by the terrorist groups in Miami. Their activity has been strengthened by the US desire to bring about regime change in Cuba. US administrations have allowed and often funded terrorists' activities against Cuba from US soil.

Cuba sent the information gathered by the Cuban Five to President Clinton who organised FBI officers to visit Havana to receive the information about these terrorist plans. It was expected that Clinton would intervene to arrest the terrorists and end their activities. However, the FBI instead detained the Cuban Five on September 12, 1998. They were kept in solitary confinement



Sydney: Marking the 16th anniversary of the jailing of the Cuban 5. (Photo: Tom Pearson)

for 17 months and charged with conspiracy to commit espionage and tried in the hostile city of Miami. The Five were sentenced to very long terms from 15 years to double life plus 15 years.

Two of them, Rene Gonzalez and Fernando Gonzalez, are back in Cuba after completing every last

minute of their unjust sentences. On September 12 millions of people around the world including Perth, WA and Sydney protested the unjust incarceration of the three remaining prisoners, calling on President Obama to release them.

In Australia we all demand their freedom and pledge to continue the

struggle until their return to Cuba with the families.

The Communist Party of Australia joins millions of voices calling on President Obama to release the other three of the Cuban Five, Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino and Antonio Guerrero. Sixteen years is too long! ✪

Letter from Cuba

Keith Headland

For the tenth consecutive year the Colloquium for the Freedom of the Cuban Five and Against Terrorism was held on September 11-12.

It was previously held in Holguin but this year the meeting took place in Havana with over 300 delegates from over 50 countries taking part.

A delegate from South Africa said that the Five are heroes world wide and are an inspiration and symbol of the struggle against terrorism and for freedom in Africa and Latin America.

Some documentaries and

speakers during the conference outlined the background to the case of the Five.

Cuba has had a history of sabotage and terrorist bombings since the victory of the revolution in 1959 which have caused the deaths of almost 3,500 people and over 2000 have been incapacitated. These groups are still active today and in May this year four terrorists were arrested trying to enter Cuba planning to carry out attacks.

These counter revolutionary groups are operating from the USA and Cuba quite justifiably infiltrated them so as to have advance warning of their plans to be able to counter

them and prevent more injury and damage to people and property.

In 1998 a meeting with the FBI was arranged in Havana by Cuba where the FBI were presented with boxes of documents on the activities of these groups. They left with the assurance that they would respond to the documents.

But what happened? There was no response from the FBI and the Cuban Five were arrested while the terrorist groups remained untouched.

The USA classified Nelson Mandela as a terrorist, and Cuba is on the list of countries that support terrorism, which are false allegations.

At the same time terrorists such as Luis Posada Carriles and others who were responsible for numerous murders and crimes in various countries, including the bombing of a Cuban aircraft in 1976 which crashed killing all on board after leaving Barbados, have admitted to their crimes on national television but are walking the streets of Miami, USA with impunity, and calls from affected countries for extradition from the USA to face justice in the countries where their crimes were committed are ignored.

The Colloquium analysed the activities and results emanating from the decisions taken at last year's event and in the final declaration a

plan was drawn up which can be best summarised that we need to be more creative and try to attract more people, especially in the US through our contacts in organisations such as trade unions.

Also to attract more actors, parliamentarians and other public figures to break the press-imposed wall of silence and web of lies to inform more people about the case of the Five to arouse public opinion.

All over the world bike rides, mountain climbing, danceathons, banners unfurled and numerous other imaginative and novel activities have been organised to publicise the case. ✪

Hopes crushed amid asylum seeker policy chaos

Bob Briton

The death of 24 year-old Iranian asylum seeker Hamid Kehazaei has put paid to Immigration Minister Scott Morrison's claims about the "outstanding care" available for detainees at the detention centre at Manus Island. A cut on his foot that was left untreated for five days became septic necessitating a dash to Brisbane's Mater Hospital for desperate (and ultimately unsuccessful) treatment. Hamid's was a needless death caused by neglect. His family in Iran gave consent for the donation of his organs to help those in need in Australia.

The case sent shock waves through the community in Australia as the full horror of the federal government's "stop the boats" policy continues to sink in. "Like Reza Berati [who died during a violent invasion of the camp in February], Hamid is a victim of the offshore processing regime run by the Coalition government," said Ian Rintoul of the Refugee Action Coalition. "There are 1,000 potential Hamids on Manus Island. Infections and skin disease are endemic in the detention centre. It is unhygienic and unsafe."

Reports of some other grim realities of Manus Island are seeping out. *The Sydney Morning Herald* carried a report on leaked papers detailing the functions of the "Chauka" compound in the centre.

This is where allegedly disruptive detainees are housed in a collection of shipping containers and subjected to a harsh Behavioural Modification Program. Witnesses report detainees being kept on a diet of bread and water for up to three days and forced to sleep on muddy ground. Arbitrary judgements are made about "non-compliant" and "anti-social" behaviour among asylum seekers.

Peter Young, who until July was director of mental health for International Health and Medical Services (the private contractor operating in the network of detention centres) is not surprised at the reports. "What we are talking about here is a total institution where there is no scrutiny of what goes on and we know that, within these types of institutions, abusive practices inevitably arise," he said.

Self-harm is rife at the camp as it is elsewhere in the detention centre regime. The scale of it at the Christmas Island facility is taking its toll on staff. One female Serco staff member attempted to take her own life and a male is considered at serious risk of self-harm.

"The pressure of being with clients, for 12 hours a shift with no relief, and seeing slashings and attempted hangings is taking a toll," a Fairfax source said. Australian Human Rights Commission president Gillian Triggs recently noted there were 13 mothers on suicide watch on Christmas Island.



Meanwhile, it has been revealed that the bill for the government's month-long detention of 157 Sri Lankan nationals aboard a prison ship has come in at more than \$12 million. That includes the cost of a five star stay by Immigration minister Morrison in Delhi where he tried to convince the Indian government to accept the return of the refugees. It also includes the two cricket bats valued at \$695 each for

Indian officials. So much for the cost benefits of the "stop the boats" policy.

The unfortunate asylum seekers at the centre of the fiasco have been taken to Nauru to the last man, woman and child. The Coalition's fanatically protected record of zero boat arrivals was thus shattered.

The government has failed to stitch up an agreement with PNG for resettlement of asylum seekers in that country. The hairbrain scheme drew the attention of the incoming United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, Jordan's Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al-Husseini. In his maiden speech to the Human Rights Council he criticised Australia's policy of intercepting and turning back ships at sea and the idea of resettling refugees in "countries that are not adequately equipped."

Elsewhere, the defence force chief in charge of border protection under Howard, Admiral Chris Barrie, has called Scott Morrison's handling of his portfolio a "mess that reflects badly on all of us." At the launch of a book by Jane McAdam and Fiona

Chong entitled *Why Seeking Asylum is Legal and Australia's Policies are Not*, he questioned the use of the term "mandatory detention".

"I'm not sure we should continue to use the term 'mandatory detention' when we actually mean jail," Admiral Barrie said. "At least in Australian jails the incarcerated have rights of access to legal support and representation. In these jails no such rights exist."

As the Abbott government rushes to join the US' latest military adventure in the Middle East with its inevitable bi-product of waves of refugees, it is simultaneously making a ham-fisted hash of its indefensible and illegal asylum seeker policy. Too many have suffered and died at the alter of the Coalition's "fortress Australia". Hamid Kehazaei's death must not be in vain. "All the detainees on Manus Island must be brought to the mainland," Ian Rintoul said. "While we mourn for Hamid, we are determined to fight for justice and continue the fight to close Manus Island." ❖

Labour turnaround on East-West Link

After months of community pressure, specifically aimed at both the major parties, the Labor opposition has once again been forced to change its position in regards to the proposed East-West Link project in Melbourne.

Daniel Andrews is now saying that if Labor comes to power on November 29 the newly elected government will support, rather than defend, the Yarra and Moreland Council legal challenge. This gives the Supreme Court case against the planning process a much greater chance of success.

Yarra Councillor Stephen Jolly, one of the instigators of the case and a spokesperson of the community campaign, said "The community should be congratulated for this new development. It was the act of getting out on the streets that has taken this debate out of the academic realm and made it a central issue in Victorian politics.

"If it wasn't for the community campaign Labor would never have come to this conclusion. Let us not forget that this project was their idea back in 2008. Under pressure they were forced to come out against it last year but they always said they would honour any contracts signed.

"Now after a number of pickets, and political pressure on Labor, they have been forced to adopt the position of the community campaign.

The campaign has turned public opinion and Labor's decision has been poll driven. They know that if they didn't change tack they would lose a number of inner city seats.

"Regardless of this announcement the community campaign will continue. The election is still many weeks away and there is still plenty of time for Labor to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

"Even if Labor does win the election their public transport platform is inadequate. We will continue to fight for world class public transport in this state". Stephen said.

East-West Link protest organiser Anthony Main said "This is a welcome development but even the legal action from the Councils wouldn't have come about without pressure from the community campaign. We had to drag many of the Labor Councillors into it kicking and screaming.

"We have consistently recognised Labor as a weak link in this dispute hence our focus on targeting them in recent months. It seems now that those actions have worked.

"We will continue to keep up the pressure on the government, and on the consortium led by Lend Lease, until this project is buried once and for all.

"If there is one lesson people should take from this it's that mass action works". Anthony said.

The East West Link is a

proposed 18 kilometre tolled freeway-standard road link, to run from the western suburbs to the Eastern Freeway. The Victorian government allocated \$294 million in its 2013 Budget for the first stage of the project – a 4.4 kilometre tunnel from Hoddle Street, Clifton Hill to CityLink at Parkville – with work due to begin at the end of 2014 and be complete by 2019. The state government says it expects to start the western part of the road link, between Parkville and the Western Ring Road by the end of 2015. The cost of the project's first stage is estimated to be between \$6 billion and \$8 billion, with the total cost estimated at \$15 billion to \$17 billion. The federal Coalition government has pledged \$3 billion towards the project.

The project has attracted public criticism over its effectiveness to reduce congestion, prioritisation ahead of public transport, transparency of business case and local impact on Royal Park and Melbourne Zoo. Local councils and public transport advocates opposed the project and several community groups were formed to block its construction. By August 2014 the project was the subject of two separate Supreme Court challenges and a further case in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. ❖

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Corporations at the very heart of power

Phil England talks to author Owen Jones

Owen Jones' latest book, *The Establishment: And how they get away with it* (Allen Lane) is a pithy retelling of recent political scandals, studded with dozens of revealing interviews with power brokers.

It has hugely important things to say about the state of our democracy, the shocking pace at which the gains of the post-war settlement (the NHS, the welfare state) are being rolled back, and the extent to which bankers and corporations are now sitting at the very heart of power. It concludes with a call for a democratic revolution and sets out proposals for reform.

One of the things I found most disturbing in your book was the extent to which those at the heart of government enjoy close personal friendships with the people they are supposed to be governing and regulating – this can't be healthy for a democracy.

The most extreme example is Tony Blair, who ended up as godfather to Rupert Murdoch's kids and turned up to the ceremony dressed in a white robe, next to the River Nile. You get these social relationships, whether it's think-tank breakfasts or off-the-record dinners or going on holiday with each other.

Then there's the revolving door where journalists, for example, end up working for politicians and politicians end up working in the media. If you take associate editor of *The Times*, Danny Finkelstein, he's not only a friend of [Chancellor] George Osborne, he helps write his speeches. *The Times* was formerly the paper of record, yet one of its top members of staff is basically an adviser to the government that the paper is supposed to be scrutinising. And that helps this sense of "we're one coherent elite with similar interests who are bound together" rather than having – in the case of the media – this independent scrutinising of power.

Geoff Hoon, who was Secretary of State for Defence, gave a contract to a helicopter company, which he went on to work for after he stepped down; Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Health, ends up working for private healthcare firm BUPA; same with Alan Milburn, Secretary of Health, who now works for private healthcare companies.

And people are frequently "seconded" into government from corporations or accountancy firms, doing what looks like almost writing government policy...

You have accountancy firms that work for government, helping draw up tax laws; they then tell their clients how to avoid the laws they themselves have written up. You have energy companies seconded to the Department for Energy and Climate Change.

People work for government and business at the same time. Of the 50 top publicly trading companies, 46 have a member of parliament that is either a shareholder or director. A quarter of Conservative Party MPs are private landlords, which ensures that their interests align with landlords and tenants. That helps cement this sense of a corporate political elite, whose interests are very much

aligned to those of big business; they know that it's a springboard to lucrative contracts, jobs and posts. David Miliband made £1 million (US\$1.6 million) in his last year as an MP, for his work with private equity companies and the dictatorship of the United Arab Emirates.

I'm not sure we yet have the popular language for what's going on. It's cronyism, isn't it?

Yes, it is, clearly. I think the idea that so many MPs work for private companies, so that rather than looking out for their constituents' interests – the people who vote them in – they're looking out for their rich friends, is quite an accessible idea, really.

What phrase do you think best describes the ruling elite we have now – corporatocracy, plutocracy, corporate oligarchy?

I think those terms go over most people's heads, to be honest. I use the word "establishment", because it's a word most people understand. The challenge is reaching people who aren't consciously political. The term "establishment" was coined by a conservative journalist, Henry Fairlie, but there's no reason why it can't be reclaimed to mean what I regard as the people who have power in this country. I think it has more resonance than those other words.

So the current situation is that the majority of people no longer have a major political party that represents their interests. And that includes the Labour Party. Obviously, the Labour Party grew out of the trade union movement and used to represent the interests of working people – until Tony Blair.

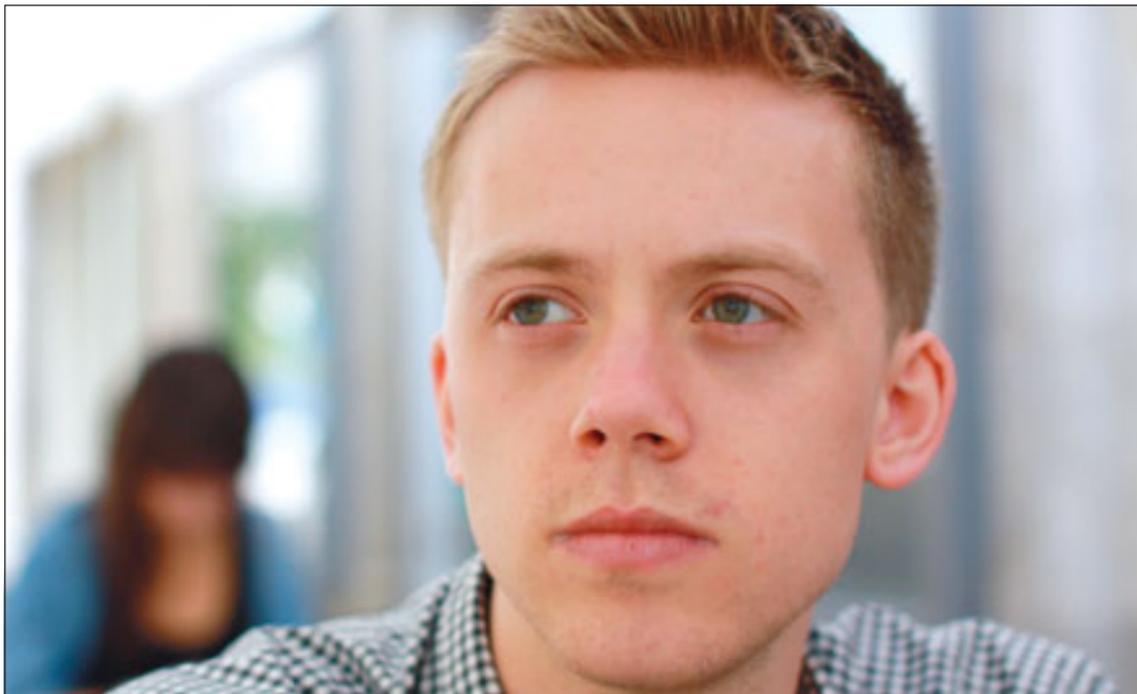
You have Cameron's Conservatives, Orange Book Liberal Democrats and Blairites. They could happily coexist in the same party. They're all socially liberal neo-liberals. By that I mean they're generally accepting of LGBT rights and all the rest of it whilst believing very passionately in free markets, privatisation and cutting taxes on the rich. The whole New Labour project played a big part in consolidating that, by branding ideas that were once mainstream and acceptable as defeated. "Go back to the 1970s where you belong, you old dinosaur" sort of thing. And a lot of the things this government is doing, New Labour laid the foundations for, like the privatisation of the NHS.

You have accountancy firms that work for government, helping draw up tax laws; they then tell their clients how to avoid the laws they themselves have written up.

Most MPs are drawn from relatively privileged backgrounds and there is the growing phenomenon of MPs who have only ever worked in the political world.

So there's a sense that there's a single political elite sharing all the key underlying assumptions, personally profiting from the order they helped create. That's what we've got and that's what we need to sweep away.

When it comes to the media, we have a disproportionately right-wing press that has immense power and reinforces the ideology of the ruling elite.



Owen Jones.

Yes, the media helps police the acceptable boundaries of debate. So most of the population – according to the polls – want re-nationalisation of the railways, energy, utilities; they want higher taxes on the rich, they want rent controls, they want a program of council-house building, accountable publicly owned banks. That's all mainstream public opinion, but obviously the media regards that as ludicrous and that's because we don't have a free press: we have a press which is in the hands of a small group of politically motivated moguls who use their power to subvert democracy.

And what they do is keep the conversation constantly on the terms of the interests of those at the top. Even mild policies, such as [Labour Party leader] Ed Miliband's policy of freezing energy bills, mean that the media swoops in and characterises him as some reincarnation of Vladimir Lenin, who's going to nationalise your grandmother.

Genuinely radical ideas are seen as completely beyond the pale. The biggest democratic movement in the country is the trade unions, representing over six million workers, who either don't appear in the media, or if they do appear, they're demonised. It's as if they have no legitimate role.

The question is whether the hegemony of the mainstream media will be maintained. With social media, the position of the mainstream media is more open to challenge and that's what we've got to hope for.

How do you think the media should be reformed?

I think you should ban any media owner from having any more than one national media outlet – that would mean breaking up any big media empire like the Murdoch empire. It would mean abolition of all unpaid internships, which help turn the media into a closed shop for the privileged people who can afford to get in in the first place, and instead have apprenticeships and scholarships for people with different backgrounds.

At the same time, it's important

what we all do in civil society; I think there's the opportunity to create genuine alternative news sources online, which challenge the existing order and give voices to those who are otherwise ignored. Not just marginalised sources but appeal to lots of people and help challenge this establishment.

In the final chapter of your book you call for a democratic revolution. What are the six key proposals you would make to reform our democracy, so that it starts working for the 99 percent?

It would take more than six! Take on the revolving door by banning those MPs from ending up in those sorts of jobs. Ban MPs from being directors or key shareholders of businesses. I would have a genuine crackdown on lobbying, rather than the gagging bill this government has introduced, which has a go at unions and NGOs. Cap donations from wealthy individuals and businesses. I would have a massive devolution of power over the nations and regions. Strengthen the trade unions in local government so that they can get more working-class people elected. And we need to look at proposals for taking on the City and its domination.

There's a sense that there's a single political elite personally profiting from the order they helped create. That's what we've got and that's what we need to sweep away.

But it's about democracy everywhere. It's about democratic social ownership of the economy. So with re-nationalisation, I'd want workers and consumers helping to run those services and utilities. I want democracy in the workplace with a new charter of workers' rights to shift the balance of power from employer to employee. I want a living wage, rather than corporate welfare, where we subsidise poverty-paying bosses. And instead of subsidising landlords, let councils build houses.

So it's about learning from our enemies, where you ratchet in a different direction and shift the terms of debate. The more you do that, [the] more radical proposals can come

into play. It's about how you build a society based on people's needs and aspirations, rather than profit for a small group of people.

How do we make change happen?

The traditions of this country are such that the way we get change isn't through the goodwill and generosity of those in power, it's through the struggle and sacrifice of ordinary people from below. And that goes back to the Levellers and Diggers of the English Revolution, the Chartists – the world's first working-class political movement – in the 19th century, the Tolpuddle Martyrs – the early trade unionists who fought for the rights and dignity of working people, the Suffragettes who were demonised and despised, force-fed in prison. So we have to learn from those traditions of ordinary people organising from below. [Labour politician and MP] Tony Benn once said the way you get change is by burning a flame of anger at injustice and burning [a] flame of hope for a better world.

And there's lots of anger at the moment, but the media is redirecting it from the people at the top with the power, to people's neighbours, using the politics of envy. So they say to low-paid workers: "your wages are falling, your tax credits are being cut, so envy the unemployed person next door who's living it up in luxury". Or to public-sector workers, whose pensions have been decimated: "don't be angry at your boss, envy instead the nurse or the teacher because they've still got a pension intact".

Frederick Douglass, the 19th-century African-American statesman, said: "Power concedes nothing without a demand, it never has and it never will". And that means building a broad coalition of all those who want to change society – people in the Green Party, or in the Labour Party, but angry at the leadership, people in other parties, or in no parties. That's not easy, but it's the only chance of forcing change.

New Internationalist ✪

9/11: The mother of all big lies

Stephen Lendman

They're an American tradition. They date from the republic's inception. Notable ones began in the mid-19th century. They facilitated annexing Texas. Half of Mexico followed. America became Cuba's colonial power.

Controlling the Philippines, Guam, Samoa, Hawaii, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Canal Zone, Puerto Rico and other territories followed.

In 1917, Woodrow Wilson manipulated public sentiment. He did so with Big Lies. They turned most Americans into raging German haters. Big Lies work this way. Wilson got the war he wanted.

FDR manipulated Japan to attack Pearl Harbour. Doing so let him wage war.

He had to convince Congress and a pacifist public to go along.

What better way than by manufacturing terror.

Washington and Seoul conspired against Pyongyang. Numerous 1949/1950 cross-border incursions provoked its June response. Truman got the war he wanted.

War against North Vietnam followed the fake August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident. Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Doing so authorised war without declaring it.

Reagan's 1983 Grenada invasion had nothing to do with rescuing US medical students. It was about replacing leftist New Jewel Movement governance with pro-Western stooge allies.

In December 1989, manufactured incidents precipitated America's Panama invasion. Former US ally Manuel Noriega was deposed. At issue was forgetting who's boss.

In August 1990, Washington colluded with Kuwait's al-Sabah monarchy. Saddam Hussein was entrapped to invade. In January 1991, the Gulf War followed. Over two decades of sanctions, war, occupation, and destruction of the "cradle of civilisation" followed.

It bears repeating. 9/11 is the mother of all Big Lies. Thirteen years of imperial wars followed. They continue. One country after another is targeted. Ravaging, destroying, colonising, exploiting and controlling them reflect official US policy.

Homeland wars target Muslims, people of colour, Latino immigrants and working Americans.

Award-winning author David Ray Griffin researched 9/11 exhaustively. He did so in 10 books, many articles and lectures. He provided vital evidence too important to ignore.

In April 2006, he discussed "9/11: The Myth and the Reality," saying:

"It would seem, for many reasons, that the official story of 9/11, which has served as a religious Myth in the intervening years (and still does), is a myth in the pejorative sense of a story that does not correspond to reality."

In September 2008, Griffin headlined "September 11, 2001: 21 Reasons to Question the Official Story about 9/11."

The FBI admitted it "had no hard evidence connecting" 9/11 to bin Laden.

So-called devout Muslim alleged hijackers drank heavily, frequented strip clubs and paid for sex.

Technology in 2001 made cell phone calls made from above 30,000 feet impossible.

The FBI lied, claiming Mohamed Atta's left behind luggage contained "decisive evidence" about Al-Qaeda responsibility for the attacks.

Passports allegedly found at United 93's crash site were fake.

Alleged hijackers weren't aboard the four fateful flights.

Standing operating intercept procedures weren't followed.

Then Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta said Dick Cheney "apparently confirmed a stand-down order" prior to an alleged plane striking the Pentagon.

The 9/11 whitewash Commission deleted Mineta's comment from its official report.

Secret Service agents let Bush remain at a Sarasota, Florida school for 30 minutes after learning about the second twin tower strike. Standard procedure calls for securing his safety immediately in case of potential danger.

Jet fuel doesn't heat high enough to melt or cause rigid steel columns to crumble.

Doing so is "scientifically impossible." Controlled demolitions destroyed both towers. Building 7 fell the same way. Griffin explained other Big Lies.

He concluded saying growing numbers of "physicists, chemists, architects, engineers, pilots, former military officers, and former intelligence officers reject the official 9/11 myth."

In June 2010, he headlined "Did 9/11 Justify the War in Afghanistan?"

Asking is verboten. It's "off-limits," said Griffin. It's "not to be raised in polite company, and certainly not in the mainstream media."

It's forbidden "to ask whether the original invasion was justified by the 9/11 attacks."

No evidence linked them to Afghanistan. Attacking a country posing America no threat is lawless aggression.

War without mercy continues. It does so without Security Council authorisation, Griffin explained. Claims otherwise are false.

No moral justification for war exists. Contrary arguments were Big Lies. America decided to invade Afghanistan two months before 9/11, said Griffin.

Reasons for doing so differ from official Big Lies. Invading had nothing to do with "captur(ing) or kill(ing) Osama bin Laden," Griffin explained.

Or defeating Al-Qaeda. Or other nonexistent threats.

It was about advancing America's imperium. It was to colonise and control a strategic territory.

Afghanistan is a geopolitical prize. At issue is controlling Eurasia's vast oil, gas and other resources.

It's controlling the world's largest opium supply. It floods global markets with heroin.

It provides enormous profits for Wall Street. It gives CIA access to billions of dollars in illicit drug money.

Occupied Afghanistan gives America a strategically located land-based aircraft carrier. It's part of Washington's plan to encircle Russia and China with bases.

9/11 was a convenient pretext. It was the mother of all Big Lies. Wars without end followed.

Griffin calls America's Afghan war "an abomination." The "official rationale (given) is a lie. We are there for other reasons," he stressed.

No legal or moral justification exists. "The fact that the official story is a lie makes (America's) war crimes even worse." They continue daily out of sight and mind.

In his book *Freedom Next Time: Resisting the Empire*, John Pilger called Afghanistan "the grand illusion of the American cause."

At the same time, "through all the humanitarian crises in living memory, no country has been abused and suffered more, and none has been helped less, than Afghanistan," he said.

America's presence exacerbates horrific conditions. Death, destruction and daily violence persist. They haunt daily life. Human misery is extreme.

Peace, stability and freedom remain distant hopes. Maybe "next time," says Pilger. For sure no time soon.

Not as long as permanent US occupation continues. America has no plans to leave.

On Thursday, September 11, this writer's Progressive Radio News Hour features new Consensus 9/11 information. Elizabeth Woodworth will discuss it. She'll explain newly discovered truths. "Best evidence" proof is presented. It dispels official Big Lies. Consensus 9/11 is founded on:

"(1) The opinions of respected authorities, based on professional experience, descriptive studies, and reports of expert committees.



(2) Physical data in the form of photographs, videotapes, court testimony, witness reports, and FOIA releases.

(3) Direct rather than circumstantial evidence."

It's based on "integrating individual professional expertise with the best available documentary and scientific evidence."

Doing so is similar to how doctors diagnose illnesses. It's how forecasts based on best judgments are made. Revisions based on new evidence are encouraged. Doing so reveals important truths.

No airliner black boxes were found at the World Trade Centre site. New evidence refutes the official claim. Woodworth will explain.

Over a three-year period, 24 Consensus 9/11 panel members produced 44 peer-reviewed Big Truths. They refute official Big Lies. New information keeps surfacing. Consensus 9/11 is dedicated to explaining what everyone needs to know.

For example, 10 so-called Muslim hijackers allegedly broke into the cockpits of four aircraft. Supposedly they commandeered them. Yet none of the pilots or co-pilots "squawked" the 7500 hijack code. Nor does proof exist to verify numerous other official Big Lies.

9/11 is the mother of them all. Truth is its mortal enemy. Revealing it is crucially important. Spreading it lets many others know. Growing numbers of Americans and others worldwide reject the official 9/11 myth.

They do so for good reason. It's a bald-faced lie. It's by far the most harmful one in living memory. Millions of corpses attest to America's barbarity. The mother of all Big Lies persists. Imperial wars rage without end.

Freedom in America is dying. Obama targets it for elimination altogether. He presides over a ruthless police state apparatus. No one

is free and safe. Big Brother watches everyone. Mass surveillance is official US policy.

So is targeting anyone resisting US authority. Monied interests alone matter. Advancing America's imperium serves them.

Whistleblowers exposing government crimes are targeted. Dissent is increasingly criminalised. Constitutional rights are vanishing in plain sight. The Patriot Act alone eliminated fundamental freedoms. Nancy Chang once asked "what's so patriotic about trampling on the Bill of Rights?"

The American dream is more myth than reality. George Carlin once said "you have to be asleep to believe it."

Obama won't prosecute CIA torturers. He facilitates Wall Street grand theft. Corporate crooks run America. War-profiteering is the national pastime. Thirdworldizing America is official policy. So is waging war on humanity.

Habeas protection no longer exists. Or due process and judicial fairness. Anyone can be criminalised for any reason or none at all.

Police states operate this way. Obama is judge, jury and executioner. He usurped diktat power. He can claim emergency authority to declare martial law, suspend the Constitution for national security reasons, deploy federal and/or National Guard troops on city streets, and suppress whatever he calls disorder.

Included are peaceful protests. At issue is abolishing fundamental First Amendment rights. Without them all others are at risk. They include free expression, a free press, public assembly, religious freedom, and right to petition government for redress. No longer.

America is unfit to live in. It's on a fast track to tyranny. It's perilously close to full-blown. Perhaps just another 9/11-type False Flag away. The fullness of time will tell.

globalresearch.ca ✪

Korea: 69 years since US invasion



US forces in south Korea.

Pyongyang, September 5: A spokesman for the Institute for Disarmament and Peace of the DPRK released the following statement on the lapse of 69 years since the US occupied south Korea:

The upcoming September 8 marks 69 years since US forces occupied south Korea.

After illegally occupying south Korea under the pretext of "disarming the Japanese army" following Japan's unconditional surrender at the end of the Second World War, the US forces in south Korea took the lead in carrying out Washington's strategy for escalating confrontation and tensions on the Korean peninsula and in the rest of Northeast Asia during the Cold War.

The landscape of the relations in Northeast Asia has undergone a drastic change since the demise of the Cold War but the US forces are still present in south Korea. This cannot but be an anachronistic mistake.

What is most serious in the activities conducted by the US forces in south Korea are the joint military exercises that cause an evil cycle of tensions on the peninsula. The US and the puppet forces in south Korea try to justify those joint military exercises as "annual and defensive ones" but even the Western countries admit that they pose a serious threat to peace and security on the peninsula. The US-led joint military exercises can never be tolerated as they are very dangerous sabre-rattling that can cause catastrophic consequences on the peninsula in the light of their nature, scale and frequency.

Before and after the Cold War

there took place in Europe frequent joint military exercises between the eastern and western blocs but coercive measures were taken to restrict their scale. Each party undertook not to carry out simultaneously more than three military activities, each involving over 13,000 troops.

No party was allowed to carry out within two calendar years more than one military activity involving over 40,000 troops. The 1986 Stockholm CSBM Document stated that they would refrain from the threat or use of force against any state, regardless of that state's political, social, economic or cultural system.

But the joint military exercises under various codenames which the US forces in south Korea stage in collusion with the south Korean puppet forces number more than 40 each year and the troops involved in them reach over 500,000.

They apply even the "tailored deterrence strategy" aimed at a preemptive nuclear attack on the DPRK and openly stage the drill of "occupying Pyongyang" with the involvement of strategic nuclear bombers, nuclear carrier and nuclear-powered submarines.

The US should have sought settlement through negotiation of the questions of the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Korea, the peaceful settlement of the Korean question within three months and

have had its forces withdrawn from south Korea as was stipulated in the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement. It was also obliged to immediately implement the resolution made at the 30th Session of the UN General Assembly in 1975 that called for disbanding the "UN Command" and pulling US forces out of south Korea.

In 1992 the north-south agreement was adopted and an alternative arrangement was also provided as requested by the US. And the north and the south agreed on their political will and ways for solving the question of the country's reunification and peace by the Koreans themselves in the June 15 north-south joint declaration in 2000 and the October 4 declaration in 2007. This left the US with no justifications to keep its forces in south Korea. It is, therefore, self-evident that had US forces pulled out of south Korea, the situation would not have deteriorated due to the military exercises on the peninsula.

But the US concluded the "mutual defence treaty" with south Korea, introduced nuclear weapons to south Korea, formed the south Korea-US "Combined Forces Command", staged Team Spirit, Key Resolve, Foal Eagle and Ulji Freedom Guardian joint military exercises and attempted to reorganise the "UN Command" on an expansion basis, thus highlighting the aggressive nature of its forces in south Korea.

US forces in south Korea are not under the control of the UN nor peace-keeping forces sent to

dispute-torn areas under the UN resolutions. The purpose of their presence in south Korea and the program of their operations are all aimed to invade the DPRK and hold a military edge in Northeast Asia.

They are the root cause of instability not only on the Korean peninsula but in the rest of Northeast Asia. To cope with the joint naval exercises staged among the US, Japan and south Korea every year from 2012, neighbouring countries also staged regular joint naval military exercises in waters around the peninsula.

As the US increases its military pressure on the DPRK with its forces in south Korea as a main player, the DPRK is also taking measures for self-defence on an annual and regular basis.

Not only the neighbouring countries but the UN and the international community should pay due attention to the joint military exercises seriously threatening the peace and security on the peninsula and in the region and the US forces in south Korea which play a key role in them. ✪

Yahoo faced fines over surveillance refusal

Yahoo has revealed that not cooperating with email surveillance could have cost the company a quarter of a million dollars a day in fines.

Newly released documents showed the US government tried to impose the huge fine in 2008 if Yahoo didn't cooperate with an expansion of surveillance by surrendering online information.

"International terrorists ... use Yahoo to communicate over the internet," claimed then director of national intelligence Mike McConnell in the documents. "Any further delay in Yahoo's compliance could cause great harm to the US, as vital foreign

intelligence information ... will go uncollected."

The outlines of Yahoo's ultimately unsuccessful court fight against government surveillance emerged when a federal judge ordered the unsealing of material about Yahoo's court challenge. Yahoo said the government amended a law to demand user information from online services, prompting the challenge in 2007.

"Our challenge and later appeal in the case did not succeed," Yahoo general counsel Ron Bell said. "We had to fight every step of the way to challenge the US government's surveillance efforts," Mr Bell added. *Morning Star* ✪

"Refuse Israeli ships campaign"

Palestine Solidarity War Coalition in Vancouver blocks Israeli ship

In a four-day standoff pitting human rights groups and organised labour against Israeli shipping giant Zim, the giant was defeated in Vancouver, Canada.

The huge container ship *Zim Djibouti* first docked at the high-tech Deltaport facility on September 5, only to discover that the workers had agreed to respect a picket line set up by human rights advocates. The coalition of picketers, under the name Block the Boat Vancouver, were trying to prevent the unloading and loading of the ship, as a solidarity protest against Israel's 47-year blockade of the port of Gaza and the recent Israeli attack on Gaza that killed more than 2,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, as well as 72 Israelis, almost all soldiers.

The ship then returned to open

water along the Pacific coast and stayed there several days. At that time it set course for Port Angeles, on the US side of the passage to Vancouver. By unloading at an unexpected US port, the company apparently hoped to circumvent the blockade.

It didn't work. Perhaps the logistics of arranging passage by land through another country for the hazardous cargo on board was too much, or perhaps the docking facilities were inadequate for the huge ship, but it turned back and returned to the open sea. At the time of this report, it has still failed to declare a new destination and arrival time.

This is a huge victory for the Vancouver coalition, undoubtedly costing Zim enormous sums in fuel, delays, and having to carry excess

cargo to unintended destinations, impeding the other operations. It also continues the string of Block the Boat actions at ports on the US west coast that began with the August picket in Oakland, California of another Zim ship that ended with similar results.

Let's all congratulate Vancouver and encourage ports all over the world to refuse Israeli ships and ships from Israeli companies. Customers will have to think twice about using an Israeli line for their cargo, as delivery becomes less certain. Hopefully this is just the beginning of a worldwide campaign against Zim and all other Israeli shipping, until Israel reconsiders its policy of blocking all shipping to and from Gaza.

Free Palestine Movement ✪

Sydney

PAUL

(Philippines Australia Union Link)

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Huong Huong Restaurant
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RSVP: Eric 0400 437 824 by 26th September

All proceeds to fund KMU organisers through the PAUL-KMU-APHEDA project

Colombia

Defending political prisoners

WT Whitney

David Ravelo, arrested on September 14, 2010, remains in a Colombian prison. He is innocent of any crime, yet received an 18-year sentence. Through independent thought, action, and courage, he confronted an oligarchic, militarised, US-backed regime. He attracted attention and so was vulnerable to political persecution.

A year ago, judges rejected his appeal, and news coverage of his case slackened even among leftist media. He now returns to the news: in late August the British Bar Human Rights Committee (BHRC) sent an "amicus curiae" report to the Colombian Supreme Court. As indicated by lawyers handling Ravelo's defence, "the Supreme Court has the opportunity to do justice in a case of obvious persecution against a defender of human rights in Colombia."

Kirsty Brimelow, BHRC international litigation head, and Reinaldo Villalba of Ravelo's legal defence team held a joint news conference in Bogota on September 1 to discuss his case. A remarkable YouTube rendition of the conference recounts circumstances leading to Ravelo's imprisonment.

Ravelo led the fight in Barrancabermeja, his home city, against right-wing paramilitary domination. The charge against him of participating in the 1991 murder of a city official stemmed from accusations by two jailed paramilitary heads. They were in prison because Ravelo had implicated them in a 1998 massacre that took the lives of 32 people. Their vengeance served the state.

Villalba indicated that William Gildardo Pacheco Granados, Ravelo's prosecutor, had spent a year in a military prison in 1993 because, working as a police lieutenant, he helped "disappear" a young man. Under Colombian law such criminal behaviour disqualifies him from

serving as prosecutor. He remains on the job, however.

David Ravelo is used to international solidarity. Overseas delegations have visited him, and British parliamentarians, NGO's, international human rights groups, unions, and hundreds of individuals have communicated with Colombian authorities on his behalf. Yet he and 9,500 other Colombian political activists remain in prison.

The question arises: How can the impact of international solidarity for Colombian and other political prisoners be sharpened? In essence, how can numbers and intensity of those fighting for them be augmented?

Colombian Communist Party Secretary General Jaime Caycedo recently traced history that might help with answers. He looks at US use of Colombia as an anti-communist bulwark in Latin America. He mentions the Truman-era Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, formation of the Organisation of American States in 1948, US military support for destroying the newly born FARC guerrilla organisation in 1964, and assistance thereafter with building the military and state – security capabilities of the Colombian state. Colombian troops serving in the Korean War was symptomatic: "Colombia was the only Latin American country that took on such an act of vassalage to the empire."

Caycedo explains that, "The pretext was and continues to be the spectre of communism, of socialism, of revolutionary ideas, and even of critical thought." He sees "criminalisation of the right to protest, to be non-conformist, to dissent, to complain, and to organise and mobilise the people. They managed to project an imaginary enemy within the people itself against whom persecution, intimidation, and murder becomes 'legal'."

That's where persecution of David Ravelo fits in. In the early

1990's he served the Patriotic Union leftist electoral coalition as a city official. He organised community-based political and economic educational programs. Among human rights groups he was involved with, the Regional Corporation for the Defence of Human Rights (CREDHOS) stands out. He was a founding member and later head of that group, which served as a platform for Ravelo to oppose the paramilitaries. In 2009 the local Catholic diocese gave Ravelo an award for 35 years of defending human rights. He's a long time member of the Central Committee of the Colombian Communist Party.

Cruel persecution, with death in the offing, was constant. The state jailed him in 1993 for two years on baseless charges. He and his family received regular death threats. Nine Credhos leaders are among the "countless" social and political leaders assassinated in and around Barrancabermeja over the years.

US imperialism set the stage for repression in Colombia. That includes persecution of human rights defender David Ravelo. Surely it's a scenario playing out elsewhere. If so, then it makes sense to broaden campaigns for political prisoners by linking anti-imperialism and prisoner defence. Activists, those with empty hands, or others already busy, might leap at the chance actually to apply their ideas for resisting the pretensions of empire.

Maybe it's time now to revive International Labour Defence. That organisation launched by the US Communist Party in the 1920s maintained chapters throughout the United States. It defended Sacco and Vanzetti, the Scottsboro Boys, besieged unionists all over, even in Cuba and Mexico. The idea was to start first with anti-imperialism, and then look for prisoner victims. Perhaps that's the approach that would work now.

People's World ☪



David Ravelo.



Region Briefs

On September 5, thousands of workers picketed the front of the Kompong Cham shoe factory in Cambodia. Five thousand workers had gone on strike four days earlier, demanding higher pay. About 40 percent of the workers returned to work after the provincial labour department had intervened in the process. However, the factory manager admonished the returned workers and blamed them for following their union leaders on strike. The manager threatened not to pay them if they continued to follow the union's lead. The angered workers decided to walk out of the factory and strike again in protest to the manager's insult.

On September 7, China celebrated the 60th anniversary of the founding of the National People's Congress (NPC). The NPC is China's top legislature, designed to represent the people's voice. The first Congress was held on September 15, 1954, and since then, it has developed a socialist consultative system. Speaking at an NPC anniversary rally, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for improvements to the NPC system to make the people's democracy more successful in scope and in practice. He pointed out that "advancing socialist democracy is a must for modernising China's governance system and governance capability".

On September 10, at the 66th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Premier Pak Pong Ju claimed that the maintenance of peace, independence and friendship were the main principles in the DPRK's foreign policy. He added that the country was advancing on the road of independence and socialism, and it strove to improve North-South relationships, as well as improve the relationship with countries that respected the DPRK's sovereignty.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla visited Vietnam and had meetings in Hanoi with his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Binh Minh. During the meeting, the two countries agreed to foster solidarity and comprehensive collaboration. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla praised Vietnam's socialist achievements and valued its support for Cuba. Pham Binh Minh said that Vietnam always valued the traditional friendship and fraternal solidarity with Cuba. The two countries recently signed a series of high-level agreements to increase collaborations in construction, agriculture, biotechnology, oil, gas, and commerce.

On September 10, Vietnam's National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung held a reception to welcome China's new ambassador to Vietnam, Hong Xiaoyong. He said the Party, state and people of Vietnam valued the traditional friendship and comprehensive cooperation with China. He also invited his Chinese counterpart Zhang Dejiang to attend the 132nd Assembly of the International Parliamentary Union to be held in Hanoi 2015.

Hewlett-Packard pleads guilty

Computing giant Hewlett-Packard has pleaded guilty to felony charges that its employees bribed Russian government officials for a contract.

The company was fined US\$58.7 million after Hewlett-Packard's Russian subsidiary admitted violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), the US Department of Justice said.

The department alleged that the

HP division had paid US\$2 million to retain a technology contract with Russian prosecutors.

"In a brazen violation of the FCPA, Hewlett-Packard's Russia subsidiary used millions of dollars in bribes from a secret slush fund to secure a lucrative government contract," said principal deputy assistant attorney general Marshall Miller.

"Even more troubling was that

the government contract was with Russia's top prosecutor's office."

The plea and sentence were part of a larger agreement reached in April.

HP agreed to pay a total of US\$108 million in criminal and civil penalties for bribing officials in Russia, Mexico and Poland.

Morning Star ☪

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Dire outcomes in Medibank sale

Selling Medibank Private – one of the most profitable and bigger money makers for government, will eventually result in calls for more austerity i.e. more cuts to hospitals, increase the proposed GP co-payment to \$20 (and introduction of a fee, say \$50, to be seen in the Emergency Department as nothing should be free or without price signal according to this government), another hike in tertiary education fees, more cuts for pensioners and setting the bar even higher for youth unemployment benefits etc.

How does the sell-off of such a profitable revenue stream sit with the federal governments narrative of “emerging fiscal catastrophe”, “spending beyond our means” and alleged desire to “balance the budget”?

Surely the more pertinent question for Mr Hockey and Mr Cormann, would be not what they will do with the one off windfall, but how they intend to fill the resultant annual (i.e. forever) \$500 million budget black hole of their making – i.e. who will pay for it?

Dr C Costa
President,
Doctors Reform Society

Resistance justified

What has been happening in Palestine for the past 60 years is the same acts of ethnic cleansing, massacres and displacement that several Western countries like the US, Britain and Australia are rightly expressing their concerns and horror at what the cruel IS regime is doing in Iraq and Syria

and sending aid to these suffering peoples.

But in the case of the profound injustice being inflicted on the Palestinian people, these same countries are showing blatant hypocrisy by not only not expressing any compassion, empathy or support to those being oppressed, but instead are continuing to condone, excuse and aid the brutal Israeli occupation, crippling blockade of Gaza and military onslaughts on these people.

The only way this situation will really change, is when people have had enough of their governments supporting this immoral state terrorism against the Palestinian people’s just national and human rights and take a stand to make it stop.

This is the only way unjust imperial wars, dispossession, slavery, racism and other evils have been defeated in the past. It should be obvious to many people by now the Palestinian people are justified in resisting Israel’s occupation, repression, land seizures and illegal settlements.

Steven Katsineris,
Vic

Sydney MARCH ON ABBOTT’S OFFICE SAVE MEDICARE Bust the Budget

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Manly Park
Corner Belgrave St & The Corso, Manly

The “pivot” and Taiwan

Considering the US “pivot to Asia” and Obama’s promise to sell a new US\$18 billion arms package to Taiwan, Chinese (PRC) officials will surely be looking closely at US attempts to bring Ukraine into the NATO alliance.

Success against Russia would only embolden the US hawks in and around the US administration, to settle the question of Taiwan (is it an independent state or a province of China) by threatening it up the ante with a more binding military alliance with Taiwan.

At the moment there is the

US-Taiwan Relations Act that appears as ambiguous as the ANZUS treaty, where if Taiwan is “threatened” the US President would consult with Congress on what to do. Not really a military alliance set in stone like NATO.

By provoking China over Taiwan, the US would clearly show the “pivot to Asia” to be more than “containment” but would be seen as an aggressive strategic plan to pressure its Pacific allies – Japan, Philippines, South Korea and Australia – into a military alliance (remember SEATO?) aimed at war with China.

RH
NSW

Culture & Life

by
Rob Gowland

Outsourcing lies and propaganda

Outsourcing, which has plagued the Australian clothing industry (amongst others), is all the rage with capitalists everywhere. They detest state enterprises because they make no money from them. They assiduously push instead the idea that somehow it is better for a country’s economy if private enterprise (which seeks to make a profit) takes over the provision of services and facilities instead of the government (which doesn’t).

In the USA, observers have been startled by the revelation that the country’s Special Operations Command is outsourcing many of its most sensitive activities, including its clandestine counter-terrorism and other overseas operations.

Integrating for-profit corporations with the Pentagon’s global military and surveillance apparatus is producing billions of dollars in profitable rewards for those corporations lucky enough to score one of these Special Ops contracts.

Jon Queally, writing in the US on-line publication *Common Dreams*, commented that a report entitled *US Special Operations Command Contracting: Data-Mining the Public Record* shows that the US has outsourced such sensitive activities as “flying drones and overseeing target acquisition, facilitating communications between forward operating locations and central command hubs, interrogating prisoners, translating captured material, and managing the flow of information between regional populations and the US military”.

The report was written by researcher Crofton Black and commissioned by the UK-based Remote Control Project. Explained Black in a statement: “Remote warfare is increasingly being shaped by the private sector.”

Caroline Donnellan, manager of the Remote Control project, said, “This report ... reveals the extent to which remote control activity is expanding in all its facets, with corporations becoming more and more integrated into very sensitive elements of warfare. The report’s findings are of concern given the challenges remote

warfare poses for effective investigation, transparency, accountability and oversight.”

Commenting on the report’s findings in *The Intercept*, Ryan Gallagher rightly described it as a “corporate bonanza” for the four contractors (Tennessee-based Jacobs Technology and Virginia-based Booz Allen Hamilton, CACI-WGI, and SRA International). The contract with Special Operations Command is worth a cool US\$1.5 billion. It starts innocuously enough, with the contractors required to provide support with “Psychological Operations related to intelligence and information operations.”

But then it starts to go into details: Prospective contractors were told they would have to provide “military and civilian persuasive communications planning, produce commercial quality products for unlimited foreign public broadcast, and develop lines of persuasion, themes, and designs for multi-media products.”

The contract suggested that the aim of these “persuasion” operations would be to “engage local populations and counter nefarious influences” in parts of Europe and Africa.

As Jon Queally points out, “while some 3,000 contractors provided service in some capacity to USSOCOM [US Special Operations Command], just eight of the contractors earned more than 50 percent of the \$13 billion total identified in Black’s report. Those were: Lockheed Martin, L-3 Communications, Boeing, Harris Corporation, Jacobs Engineering Group, MA Federal, Raytheon, and ITT Corporation.”

That’s an awful lot of money to be spent on “persuasion”. No wonder they can aim to turn out “commercial quality products for unlimited foreign public broadcast”.

It’s a pity that the Pentagon doesn’t spend some of its billions on publicising things like the following extract from a speech delivered in 1933 by Major General Smedley Butler, of the US Marine Corps. The plain-spoken General Butler told his audience: “War is just a racket. There are only two things we should fight for. One is the defence of our homes and the other is the Bill of Rights. War for any other reason is simply a racket.



Major General Smedley Butler.

“It may seem odd for me, a military man to adopt such a comparison. Truthfulness compels me to. I spent 33 years and four months in active military service as a member of this country’s most agile military force, the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from Second Lieutenant to Major-General. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high class muscle-man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. I suspected I was just part of a racket at the time. Now I am sure of it.

“Like all the members of the military profession, I never had a thought of my own until I left the service. My mental faculties remained in suspended animation while I obeyed the orders of higher-ups. This is typical with everyone in the military service. I helped make Mexico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys.

“I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican

Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested. During those years, I had, as the boys in the back room would say, a swell racket. Looking back on it, I feel that I could have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.”

Commented reader Terry Evans: “Poverty plus propaganda = increased enlistments. The Army will make a man out of you. Be all you can be. The Marines need a few good men. We must fight them over there so we don’t have to fight them over here. It is your patriotic duty. Become a hero. Become a Warrior. Kill inferior subhuman beings. Kill evil doers. ... You are fighting to preserve our freedoms. ... It goes on and on and it is everywhere.”

It sure is. And yet US Special Ops doesn’t think there’s enough of it. With corporate help they are going to dream up more sophisticated forms of it – but still with the same basic message: “Do the right thing – the patriotic thing – lay down your life for Wall Street.”

To which working people can only respond “No!”. ✪



Sunday September 21 –
Saturday September 27

The two overlapping but convoluted plot lines of *The Code* (ABC1 Sundays from September 21 at 8.30pm), written by Shelley Birse, are concerned with a journalist's accidental (or is it?) discovery of a link between a highly secret research facility, the disappearance of two Central Australian teenagers and the government's throwing of one of its ministers to the wolves over a minor indiscretion committed months before.

The journalist's disturbed brother, an IT whiz, tries to use his hacking skills to find out more and is kidnapped by masked men and interned in what appears to be an Australian version of Guantánamo Bay. The series has a stellar cast and can afford to take its time, but the plot line – while not exactly a cliché – is nevertheless ripe for inclusion in a textbook as "Political thriller plot number four: dirty work in high places."

Monty Python's Life of Brian (SBS ONE Sunday, September 21 at 10.00pm) was rightly thought a rather daring undertaking at the time of its making. A spoof of the life of Jesus, ending with a melancholy if somewhat upbeat sing-along on the cross, it was calculated to outrage all sorts of bigots. And of course it did. *Not The Nine O'clock News* did a very funny piece in response where the boot was securely on the other foot, as a bunch of outraged (and very devout) Pythonists took

the Synod (in the person of Rowan Atkinson in a clerical collar) to task for daring to make a film about some mythical person called Jesus. As one of them points out in shock, he even has the same initials as the prophet John Cleese!

Life Of Brian is a film of remembered scenes and moments: the debate about who is the real enemy (the Palestine Liberation Front, the Liberation Front for Palestine or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – anyone but the Romans); the imaginative way Jesus' words are transmuted as they travel through a crowd of listeners at greater and greater distances from the rostrum; the marvellous way an attempt to scrawl anti-Roman graffiti on a wall becomes a lesson in Latin grammar ("motion with the feet takes the dative!" or is it the accusative?) at the hands of John Cleese's Roman soldier, and many more.

Like most of Monty Python the film, apart from poking fun at a sacred cow, had no serious point to make. Hence it does not actually qualify as satire. But it remains a very funny film with inspired moments.

Space is awesomely vast with distances so immense they are hard to grasp. Travel even to the outer planets of our solar system would take an age, let alone travel to another star. Although there have been a number of sci-fi stories about the multi-generational time-span required for a journey even to one of the nearer stars, most sci-fi films and TV shows have chosen the much simpler path of abiding by a convenient if very unscientific convention of assuming that somehow we have discovered how to travel faster than light.

Such a thing would defy the laws of physics, but science fiction does that all the time. To abide by them is just too limiting on the imagination. Where would science fiction be without the ability to beam down (or up) when convenient? Or to travel vast distances in a moment of screen time? Or the convention that depicts other worlds as dusty outposts from America's Old West or the even more absurd one (which has been around



Lucy Lawless as Alex Wisham with Aaron Pedersen as Tim Simons – *The Code* (ABC1 Sundays from September 21 at 8.30pm)

since *Flash Gordon*) that puts futuristic weapons in people's hands but places those people in some kind of medieval society complete with the wearing of swords?

This week's episode of *The Real History Of Science Fiction* (SBS ONE Monday September 22 at 8.35pm) is concerned with the exploration of space, but I found the really interesting aspect of it was the realisation that when NASA wanted to recruit young people to the US space program they did not put forward a scientist to front their recruitment drive. No, they used an actress, Nichelle Nichols in her persona of Lieutenant Uhura in *Star Trek*.

Children Of The Sex Trade (ABC1 Thursday September 25 at 9.30pm) is an interesting – even disturbing – account of an unofficial investigation by three

former members of the Australian Federal Police into Australian men who go to the sex bars of Subic Bay in the Philippines in search of sex with underage girls. It is also an account of the efforts of an Irish Catholic priest to rescue the girls and to stop the trade.

When critics assailed Stanley Kubrick saying his 1971 film *A Clockwork Orange* glorified violence he was shocked. He thought the violence in the film would horrify spectators. But if you watch the film you can see where he went wrong. Whenever the film starts to show violence, the camera pulls way back, safely disengaging the viewer from the violence on screen, curiously sanitising it. The result is a film meant to expose violence in modern life that is hugely enjoyable to thugs and oafs.

I feel his war film about the

Vietnam conflict has similar defects. Kubrick clearly has no love for the US military, but his depiction of the formation and training of a US Marine unit spends too much time relishing the abuse heaped on the recruits by the drill instructor (abuse designed to break down utterly any humanity the "maggots" may have left so that they can be rebuilt as mindless killing machines that will obey any order no matter how perverse). As the Soviet director Mikhail Romm put it in his classic *Ordinary Fascism*, "turning boys into beasts".

Full Metal Jacket (SBS ONE Saturday September 20 at 8.30pm) has irony and madness aplenty, plus a culminating skirmish that no one wins, while Kubrick has the marines march off singing the Mickey Mouse Club Marching Song. Obvious, or what? ☹

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MEDICARE: AUSTRALIA'S KEY PLANK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE NOW UNDER THREAT BY THE ABBOTT GOVT
John Dwyer, Prof, Emeritus Prof of Medicine, Uni of NSW;
Con Costa, Dr, National President, Doctors Reform Society;

September 25
SYRIA & IRAQ – AN UPDATE
Noah Bassil, Dr, Dept of Modern History, Politics and International Relations, Macquarie Uni;
Ahmed Shboul, Prof, Dept of Arabic & Semitic Studies, Sydney Uni;

October 2
AN EVENING WITH GREG COMBET, FORMER FEDERAL LABOR MINISTER
Greg Combet, Former Federal Labor Minister (including Portfolios Climate Change & Industry); in conversation with Frank Stilwell, Sydney Uni;

October 9
ABBOTT'S CUTS TO THE ABC – DISEMPOWERING DEMOCRATIC DEBATE
Quentin Dempster, Journalist, author and presenter
ABC 7:30 (NSW);

Every Thursday 6:30 pm 'til 8:15 pm
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This Sydney newsagent regularly stocks *The Guardian*

Report on MH17 "not worth the paper it's written on"

Peter Haisenko*

"Weasel wording" consists in using "words and phrases aimed at creating an impression that a specific and/or meaningful statement has been made, when in fact only a vague or ambiguous claim has been communicated, enabling the specific meaning to be denied if the statement is challenged. ... Some weasel words may also have the effect of softening the force of a potentially loaded or otherwise controversial statement through some form of understatement."

(Gary Jason 1988)

One thing must be stated outright: This report does not lie.

It just can't lie since there is nothing new in it. I myself have never seen such a meaningless plane crash report. What comes as a surprise, however, is the report's diplomatic, sophisticated choice of words, which loses itself in ambiguous terminology.

It was probably planned this way, so each party can continue to defend their version of what happened with zeal.

Let's take a closer look at this report.

At the beginning we find, as usual, detailed statements about the plane; who it belonged to, that it was in perfect condition and details about the crew.

Technical issues or weather conditions are excluded as causes for the crash.

Then, it confirms that the flight recorders were virtually undamaged and that they have not been tampered with.

The report continues with the description of the debris scattered over a vast area and from this observation is drawn the amazing conclusion that this aircraft had blown up in the air.

I apologise for the slight sarcasm, but I will have no choice but to continue to make some sarcastic remarks about this "report".

14 minutes of silence impossible

It is reported that the cockpit section was probably completely broken off from the aircraft because it fell almost vertically from the point of shelling to the ground and was found at some distance from the rest of the debris.

The report indicates that the damages done by external forces were recorded almost exclusively in the front of the plane, namely the cockpit, and this led to the break-up of the aircraft.

So far so good, nothing new. Then there is a transcript of the radio communication between MH17 and air traffic control taken from the voice recorder.



At this point the expert starts to ask himself questions.

The transcript of the radio communication starts at 13:08:00 and ends at 13:22:02, a 14 minute time frame.

From my experience as an aircraft captain I cannot imagine that during 14 minutes no other dialogues or sounds were picked up in the cockpit by the voice recorder.

When the cockpit receives radio transmissions from other aircraft, those are also recorded by the device. As I said, there are no lies, but in all likelihood, not everything is being said. The published conclusion points out that:

"Crew communication gave no indication that there was anything abnormal with the flight."

Everything was normal, but the possible (and very probable) conversation in the cockpit is concealed, as well as radio transmissions from other aircrafts.

High Energy Objects

The conclusion of this report is a prime example of a situation in which one knows something with certainty, but the facts are presented in such a way that nothing is revealed:

"The damage observed in the forward section of the aircraft appears to indicate that the aircraft was penetrated by a large number of

high-energy objects from outside the aircraft. It is likely that this damage resulted in a loss of structural integrity of the aircraft, leading to an in-flight break up."

Aha! says the astonished reader. We knew that already. We must take a closer look at this conclusion. In fact, it is not a conclusion.

The report speaks of possibilities and probabilities: "appears to indicate", "it is likely". But this is the less enigmatic part.

The wordings "penetrated" and especially "high-energy objects" are interesting. It remains unclear how far these "objects" entered, or even if they went through the entire cockpit and came out on the other side of it, thus completely "penetrating" the cockpit. The background picture of the cockpit section shown in this report is of lower quality and in smaller scale than the one I provided myself and published in my analysis.

"Weasel Wording"

Again it must be noted: The report does not lie, but the Commission shows less information than it has at its disposal.

The term "high-energy objects" is totally "original". What is this?

I myself know this term from astrophysics or quantum physics. Otherwise, I have not commonly seen it in the context of aviation or

plane accidents. So how should this concept be understood? I asked English speakers about this. They spontaneously replied bullets, projectiles from a cannon or fast moving freight trains. They also noted that this term is unusual in "normal", colloquial terms, except in astrophysics or quantum physics. This strange wording leaves everything open.

License to interpretations

Those who want to follow the Western description can conclude that a surface-to-air missile discharges "high-energy-objects". This is precisely the interpretation that I observed in the German media today.

Our newspapers are reciting like a creed the American version of the cause of the disaster, issued immediately after the MH17 crash, by claiming that the present report confirms that the Boeing 777 was shot down by a surface-to-air missile.

That is not exactly what the report states, but it allows this interpretation – and that's probably the point of this very flexible choice of words. Everybody can interpret what they want to believe according to their own taste. Especially if they are not native English speakers who spontaneously think of bullets.

This "report" is not worth the paper it is written on.

This is not surprising, because the Kiev Maidan government had to give their OK to what could be published.

The report leaves open everything which could actually contribute to an explanation. The MH17 could have been hit by a missile, whether surface-to-air or air-to-air. It could have been shot down by a fighter jet or, sarcastically, according to the astrophysics or quantum physics terms, by a large number of "high-energy objects" that rained down on the cockpit from the far reaches of the universe.

*Peter Haisenko is a pilot and author
globalresearch.ca ✪

From my experience as an aircraft captain I cannot imagine that during 14 minutes no other dialogues or sounds were picked up in the cockpit by the voice recorder.



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