



Corporate tax rip-off

Anna Pha

Eight of the top 200 companies publicly listed on the Australian stock exchange (ASX200) paid no taxes on profits averaging \$50 million to more than half a billion dollars over the decade to 2013! More than 20 (10 percent) corporations paid an average tax rate of five percent or less. Instead of rectifying the situation the government is telling the people of Australia that there is a "budget crisis", sacking thousands of public servants and slashing spending on social security, health, education and other services.

As a report released on September 29 by the Tax Justice Network and United Voice reveals, "Almost a third of Australia's largest companies are paying less than 10 cents in the dollar in corporate tax, which has created a gaping hole in government revenues over the past decade." (<http://taxjustice.org.au/reports>)

The report found that overall the effective tax rate of ASX 200 companies over the last decade is 23%, compared with the official statutory rate of 30%. "If the ASX 200 companies had paid at the statutory rate it would have produced an additional \$8.4 billion in annual revenues" or more than \$80 billion over those ten years.

Tax havens

Fifty-seven percent reported having subsidiaries in secrecy jurisdictions (most likely zero or very low tax havens), between them a total of 1,078 subsidiaries. How many others there are is anyone's guess. Subsidiaries "overcharge" parents for goods and services, transferring profits offshore to low tax havens.

Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, British Virgin Islands, Mauritius, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey are amongst the most common tax havens. Bermuda and Jersey are home to at least 119 entities belonging to the ASX200. Their tax rate is zero.

The report also revealed that 60% of the ASX200 companies reported debt levels in excess of 75%, which is suggestive of tax avoidance set-ups. They also borrow from offshore subsidiaries and between subsidiaries, so the tax deductible interest payments are in countries like Australia and the interest is in a tax haven with zero or close to zero tax rates.

Other offenders include Commonwealth Bank, Telstra and Westfield., BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and Toll Holdings: the larger and more profitable the corporation the lower the tax rate paid.

These alarming figures do not include Australian private unlisted companies such as Visy Industries (\$4 billion in revenue), 7-eleven stores (\$3.3b), Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting (\$2.4b), St Vincent's Health (\$1.9b), St John of God Health Care (\$1b plus, etc). These figures are their revenue from sales, patients, etc. Their profits or tax paid is not public.

Community Chest



**PAY YOUR TAXES
SO CORPORATIONS
DON'T HAVE TO.**

Another unlisted suspect is Murdoch's 21st Century Fox which has 117 known subsidiaries in tax havens and paid an effective tax rate of 1%.

Apple not so sweet

They also do not cover the foreign-based transnational corporations like Google, Apple and News Corporation where it seems billions more in taxation is being avoided.

The ABC reported an analysis by *The Australian Financial Review* which shows that while Australians have bought \$27 billion worth of Apple products since 2002, the company has paid only \$193 million to the Australian Tax Office (ATO) – implying its profit was little more than half a billion dollars. (ABC News, 07-03-2014) What capitalist business would remain in Australia if that were the case! The newspaper estimates that around \$9 billion in profit has been shifted offshore to minimise taxation.

"Apple worldwide in the past four years have avoided paying tax on \$US44 billion," said Antony Ting, a senior lecturer in taxation law at Sydney University.

"It's basically what we call transfer pricing – so Australia Apple purchased the iPads from Ireland and ... of course, the Irish company is in fact a paper company, it has virtually no employees, very small costs and all the

products are manufactured in China by third party manufacturers," he said.

"With the global transfer pricing arrangement, Apple Australia has to pay out of this \$600 purchase... \$550 to Ireland, so by that payment of the bulk of the profit it shifts from Australia to Ireland and where it escaped tax anywhere in the world."

Transfer pricing

Ting continued, "There are currently 2,156 companies listed on the ASX, with a total of 26,096 reported subsidiaries. Roughly a quarter of these companies (524 in total) reported subsidiaries in secrecy jurisdictions. These companies had 15,564 subsidiaries, and of these 15% (2,262 subsidiaries) were registered in secrecy jurisdictions."

United Voice National secretary David O'Byrne said, "The community will be shocked to learn that many of Australia's largest corporations can legally eliminate the need to pay tax at all or reduce their tax bill to 10% or less."

As previously reported in the *Guardian*, research by The Australia Institute found that the government would have had an additional \$38 billion for the 2012-13 federal budget and would have collected an extra \$169 billion over the previous seven years had it not been for unsustainable personal income tax cuts that were made in the lead-up to the global financial

crisis. ("The hidden tax agenda", the *Guardian*, #1641, 04-06-2014)

Add that \$38 billion to the \$8.4 billion being lost from tax avoidance by the ASX200, the loss of income is well over \$45 billion per annum. And that doesn't take into account the overseas-based companies like Apple, Google, Microsoft or the non-listed private companies whose books are not open to public scrutiny.

Corporate welfare

At the same time as the government is losing tens of billions of dollars in potential income it is handing out billions of dollars in corporate welfare.

The federal government pays a fossil fuel subsidy of more than \$10 billion per annum. The private health insurance companies receive a direct subsidy of more than \$6 billion per annum in the form of the PHI rebate (30-40%) of cost of premiums. This indirectly subsidises the private hospitals and other private health services.

The only corporate subsidies being axed are the ones that seek to address climate change.

The report notes that "over the last five years, the proportion of income tax from business shrank from 23% to 19%, while the proportion from individuals rose from 37% to 39%."

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Culture & Life
Scotland, Ukraine ...

Guardian

Issue 1659

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Answer offensive
of the right with unity of the left

A poisonous cloud of intolerance is descending on Australia. Xenophobia and racism, including institutional racism, have long been features of Australian society but these blights are worsening with encouragement coming from the highest levels of government. Progressive Australians need to face some disturbing possibilities in the current political situation and stand firm on the principles of inclusiveness and solidarity.

In Europe the trend is clearer. Thugs from neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn roam the streets of Greece beating immigrants and activists from the political left. The anti-immigrant UK Independence Party (UKIP) has welcomed two defecting Conservative MPs into its bigoted ranks in recent times as its electoral fortunes continue to rise. Jobbik is confident it will govern Hungary in its own right in the near future as the post-socialist political and social crisis deepens. Marine Le Pen's far right National Front recently won its first senate seats in France as part of its seemingly relentless rise. And, of course, anti-Semitic and openly fascist forces spearheaded a pro-NATO coup in the Ukraine at the beginning of the year with ongoing, devastating consequences.

Ambitious politicians of the familiar opportunist type are sensing that there is a future in promoting ideas and policies that would once have been considered fringe or red-neck. In Australia, the incessant attacks on asylum seekers carried out in the media and the right-wing of Australian politics are bearing their putrid fruit. There is also the airing of intolerant views regarding the wearing of the burqa worn by some Muslim women. So has the anti-terrorist hysteria being whipped up as the Australian military is deployed once more in the Middle East. The results were inevitable – there has been a spate of attacks on Australian Muslims, including women and children, and damage caused to their property.

The current burqa debate regarding spurious "security" concerns at the Federal Parliament has been instructive. Most right-wing parliamentarians line up behind Tony Abbott's disdain for the head-covering. He finds it "confronting" and wishes it wasn't worn at all in Australia. The PM has expressed belated reservations about moves to isolate women wearing the burqa inside the chambers of Federal Parliament. At the same time as stirring up antagonism towards wearers of the garb, he doesn't want to alienate the Coalition's remaining (but dwindling) numbers of small 'l' liberal voters and supporters.

South Australian Senator Cori Bernardi has spent a lot of his political career crusading for his own very conservative brand of "Christian" values. He advocates a zero tolerance approach to the burqa as does PUP senator for Tasmania, Jacqui Lambie. They have been busy feeding the corporate media what it loves the most – fuel for controversy and division.

Outside the Federal Parliament, far-right "Christian" party Rise Up Australia will welcome climate change denier Lord Christopher Mockton and disgraced Victorian MP Geoff Shaw to a campaign meeting as the group prepares to step up its challenge to right-wing status quo. Party head, Catch the Fire Ministries president Danny Nalliah, is pushing hostility to Islam to its limits. "Tony Abbott called the ISIS group in Iraq and Syria a death cult. I go one step further. I call Islam the death cult," the pastor said.

The potential for various demagogues and other opportunists to come together in a political party or alliance with an even more extreme agenda than the one currently being pursued is deeply disturbing. An Australian UKIP, Jobbik or even Golden Dawn is not unimaginable. One Nation was killed off by the Coalition when it essentially adopted Pauline Hanson's xenophobic immigration policies. But new forces are busy working out how to capture more political territory for the extreme right. Mr Nalliah says he has been approached by current politicians keen to stitch up preference deals and Rise Up Australia, the Australian Christians and the Democratic Labor Party have agreed to direct preferences to one another.

This growing unity on the right and its potential must be answered by the unity of left and progressive forces, including those within the trade union movement. The attacks being directed at Muslims in Australia must be resisted with action grounded in the principles of solidarity and inclusiveness. This struggle is a crucial part of the fight back against the whole anti-people agenda of the Abbott government.

PRESS FUND

Last week Treasurer Joe Hockey launched a verbal attack on corporations that evade tax. However, over the last 30 years conservative governments have cut the rate of tax levied on business profits, and reduced Tax Office staff numbers so much that corporate tax evasion can no longer be tracked. The government proposes to cut another 3,000 ATO positions, and has indicated that corporate liability should be assessed by private firms hired by the corporations, not by Tax Office staff! We're determined to expose the government's phoney policies on this and other issues. However, we're also short of resources, so we're asking you to send us a contribution for the next issue – and to make it a habit, too, if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

Eddie Seymour \$50, "Mad Dog" \$20, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$15

This week's total: \$90 Progressive total: \$5,900

Jewish-Israeli
academic's marathon
walk for Palestine

Jewish academic, Marcelo Svirsky has completed his marathon 10-day walk from Sydney to Canberra to promote the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign (BDS) against Israel for its continuing subjugation of the Palestinians.

Marcelo Svirsky, a lecturer in politics at the University of Wollongong is an Australian-Israeli Palestine activist. He is the author of several academic works on Israel-Palestine, activism and colonialism and is an active member of the National Tertiary Education Union.

He began his 10-day walk from the Sydney Opera House to the Federal Parliament in Canberra to raise awareness about BDS in Australia on September 23. The walk was to culminate in the submission to the House of Representatives of a petition calling on Federal Parliament to endorse BDS.

"I've lived in Israel most of my life as a Jew," Svirsky said, "and I'm certain that it's a moral obligation to support the Palestinian Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of Israel until it abides by international law.

"I'm walking to Canberra to make a simple statement: Israel must end the occupation, give full equality to its Arab citizens, and respect the right of return of Palestinian refugees. This isn't just what's right and decent: it's what international law mandates."

Svirsky arrived in Canberra on October 2, having passed through the Illawarra, the Southern Highlands, Goulburn, and Bungendore. He has participated in public meetings at Wollongong and Mittagong and spoke in Goulburn.

"The shocking butchery in Gaza means that nations that support peace must act to end Israeli violence," Svirsky said. "The international BDS campaign is a non-violent mechanism to put pressure on Israel to halt its oppression of Palestine and my individual walk for BDS, corresponds with the growing in prominence of BDS in Australia in recent months."

Staff and students at Svirsky's university issued the following declaration and commitment: "This meeting of students and staff of the University of Wollongong resolves to support the boycott,

divestment and sanctions movement. We resolve to support any students or staff who implements BDS. We call on the Wollongong University Students' Association and the unions representing workers on campus, but in particular the UOW Branch of the NTEU to support BDS and implement on campus."

University of Sydney academic, Jake Lynch recently won a case brought against him by an Israeli law centre for spearheading the call for the academic boycott of Israeli institutions. In a major victory for the BDS movement in Australia, Lynch was awarded costs.

In Sydney last month, calls to boycott the Israeli Film Festival because of its sponsorship by the Israeli government, led to the Supreme Court of NSW banning a protest outside the festival's opening night.

Svirsky is one of 164 Jews who signed an open letter in August calling on Jewish people "to break their silence, to take a public stand for an end to the underlying conditions of siege and occupation which defy elementary morality, decency and humanity". ✪



Anna Pha presenting a gift to the Cuban Ambassador from the Communist Party of Australia at his farewell in Sydney on Saturday October 4. The second Cuban Ambassador to Australia, Pedro Monzon and his wife, will be returning home this month. Speakers paid tribute to the work and many initiatives of the Ambassador in developing and strengthening relations between Australia and Cuba. This work includes the successful *Yo! Si Puedo (Yes I Can)* adult Aboriginal literacy campaign in Bourke, Wilcannia and Enngonia in NSW. Others spoke about the development of arts, dancing, music, sports and cultural exchanges and his building of awareness and support for freeing the Cuban 5 and ending the inhumane US blockade of Cuba.

Corporate tax rip-off

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The "budget emergency" is a myth. But there is a tax emergency – which needs urgent addressing before the whole taxation base collapses.

Workers are not only carrying an increased tax burden, but the government is using the short-fall in taxation as an excuse for its austerity measures and continuing to cut the company tax rate.

"Any spending cuts to health, education and other services would have a disastrous impact on some of Australia's most vulnerable people and the broader economy. Rather than going ahead with unnecessary

cuts, the government should focus its efforts on reforming the corporate tax system," the report says.

Reform of the taxation system so that the corporate sector and rich pay a larger share would overnight result in a large budget surplus, and not shortage of funds for people's needs.

These reforms should include repeal of the fossil fuel rebate, phasing out of the PHI rebate, an increase in company tax rates and marginal rates on higher incomes. It is time mining companies funded their own infrastructure. The government should be taking measures to close

tax loopholes and the use of offshore tax havens.

On the spending side, the military budget which is headed towards \$40 billion should be slashed and Australia pull out of the Middle East. Both measures would strengthen our security.

United Voice is calling for a full Parliamentary inquiry into Australia's corporate tax system in order to get to the bottom of the problem and to investigate solutions for ensuring that our corporate tax system is working as it should. This is worth supporting. ✪

Government cuts threaten CSIRO's future

Peter Mac

When the Abbott government took office it merged the Department of Science with another department. The government is not interested in research in new, broad-ranging "blue sky" science, nor is it committed to assisting scientific development as a national responsibility unless it serves the interests of major corporations.

And that doesn't mean all corporations. The Abbott government has indicated that scientific research will now be primarily focused on mining, medicine, energy, agribusiness and (despite the devastation caused by government tariff policies) advanced manufacturing.

However, research in radio astronomy, geothermal energy and biodiversity will be cut or abandoned. Renewable energy and climate change, crucial for the nation's development and security, are virtually ignored.

A Murdoch publication editorial recently declared enthusiastically:

"Australia must improve business collaboration with university and public research agencies ... Where it exists, such collaboration has led to world first innovations, especially in mining technology.

"... the 'Agents of Change' PhD program at the University of Queensland, funded by the Australian Research Council and the Australian Food and Grocery Council ... funds doctoral students to research food security and will lead them to jobs in industry rather than academic careers. Their work will help boost exports to Asian markets."

Nevertheless, agricultural production is threatened by the government's iron-clad opposition to anything that adversely affects the mining industry, and by climate change, which has largely been caused by emission of carbon from human industry over two hundred years.

To reduce emissions, coal must be replaced with renewable energy for power generation, and petrol replaced with electricity as the vehicle energy source. Not surprisingly, the fossil fuel mining industries adamantly oppose any such move.

So does the Abbott government,

which has omitted any such action from its so-called "Direct Action" climate change program and has eliminated or constrained government agencies involved in researching climate change or funding its mitigation.

The nation's major scientific institution, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) has played a vital role in tracking climate change.

But because of staffing restrictions and funding cuts the CSIRO lost 513 positions last financial year. The federal budget imposed a further \$111 million four-year funding cut, as a result of which eight of the CSIRO's 56 sites will close.

Four hundred researchers and support staff will lose their jobs this financial year, including eight scientists at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, the nation's only establishment for researching live samples of deadly diseases like Ebola. A further 300 positions will be lost because of an internal restructure.

Between 1996 and next July the number of CSIRO employees will have fallen from 7,400 people to 5,034.

Phoney remedies

The government intends to establish the \$20 billion Medical Research Future Fund, a new organisation funded from the inequitable Medicare co-payments.

The government's descriptions of the Future Fund's operations are vague. However, it is highly likely that its role will be to fund medical research by private firms rather than carrying out research itself. If the research results in failure Medicare patients will carry the bill rather than the firm and if it succeeds the firm will walk away with the profits rather than being required to return any of them to the public.

Meanwhile, the CSIRO is being progressively stripped of funds. One CSIRO member has revealed that because of reductions in support staff numbers, scientists must now spend up to one day per week cleaning laboratory equipment, stacking chemicals, restocking photocopy machines and/or preparing promotional material.

Scientists are also underpaid,



given the importance of their work, and young students are not entering the profession. According to Australian IVF research pioneer Allan Trounson, the average age of leading scientists awarded research funding by the National Health and Medical Research Council has risen from 39 to 48 years over the past thirty years.

The Murdoch editorial quoted above concluded:

"Leading scientists must do better in explaining the fascinating opportunities ... their profession offers. Properly informed, many young people would prefer producing cervical cancer and malaria vaccines, and studying astrophysics and astronomy, to shuffling paper as merchant bankers, lawyers and accountants".

But as the editorial admits, salaries offered to scientists by research institutions have fallen far behind those of the other professions, and job security is low.

Moreover, public research funding is inadequate. According to

Trounson Australia's existing public funding bodies, which currently provide funding for young scientists' research projects, only have enough money for two grants in every five applications. As a result, young people are not being drawn to science, and many who join the profession subsequently leave it.

Real solutions

The CSIRO has hundreds of outstanding achievements, including the development of Wi-Fi technology, polymer banknotes, aircraft landing systems, Hendra virus vaccine, and atomic absorption spectrometry.

It is now being stripped of funds and its scope of work reduced so that it becomes an accessory to the narrow section of Australian industry whose interests the government is committed to serve.

Three CSIRO organic chemists, Graeme Moad, Sam Thang and Ezio Rizzardo, who developed polymers for solar cells and other applications, have qualified as candidates for the

Nobel Prize. However, they have warned that the sort of work they carried out, which requires long-term funding stability, may now become impossible because of the funding cuts.

The solution to the current difficulties for science does not lie in imposing what is, in effect, a new tax on Medicare patients in order to fund private research organisations.

Instead, the Medicare co-payment scheme should be abandoned, adequate research grants should be provided for the nation's scientists, and it should be compulsory for part of the profits derived from funded research to be returned to the public.

The work of the CSIRO should also be expanded and sufficient funding provided so that it again becomes a growing, thriving institution dedicated to assisting the development of the nation's current and emerging industries.

And the first step is to replace the current government with one dedicated to achieving that objective. ☘

Pete's Corner



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Australian Premiere of Catherine Murphy's *Maestra*

Elizabeth Hulm

The Australia-Cuba Friendship Society (ACFS Perth) came together with Cine Vivo to co-host the Cuban night at Perth's Latin American Film Festival and opened with the Australian premier of the documentary *Maestra* (Spanish for teacher). In 1961, over 250,000 Cubans joined their country's National Literacy Campaign and more than half were young women. They played a pivotal role in building a new society. The film explores the experiences of nine of the women who, as young girls, helped eradicate Cuban illiteracy within one year.

Director and producer Catherine Murphy captured this unique historical achievement with great sensitivity. She joined the evening by Skype from New York to answer questions from a very enthusiastic audience.

Catherine is a San Francisco-based filmmaker who has spent 10 years working in Latin America and field produced films like Saul Landau's *Will the real terrorists please stand up?* and Eugene Corr's *From ghost town to Havana*.

Catherine said her journey in making this film started when she travelled to the homeland of her grandmother to explore her families' cultural roots. Through that exploration of her heritage she became inspired by what the revolution had been able to achieve in education. Catherine explained that the literacy project that saw 707,000 Cubans achieve literacy within a year was just one facet of the success of Cuba's revolution in education and was solidly backed

up by a government program to build and resource schools.

Responding to a question on why only women were interviewed in the documentary Catherine said there had been two reasons – the first being that the first three people that introduced her to the history of the campaign were women and through those discussions she realised the magnitude of its impact on the young women. While many boys participated, their participation was seen by their families and the broader society as a right of passage; going off to become men. Many of the women in the documentary described the resistance they faced from their families and the negotiations they undertook to enable their participation. Just over half of the volunteers (called brigadistas) were young women.

The second reason was that literacy is a women's issue. Globally over 800 million adults cannot read or write a simple sentence and two thirds of those are women.

From these beginnings Cuba has taken the program that evolved called "Yo! Si Puedo" to many parts of the world including to Indigenous communities here in Australia at Wilcannia and Bourke. This has been possible through the initiative of project leader Jack Beetson and facilitated by the support of the Cuban Ambassador to Australia Pedro Monzon and Cuban educators, Chala Leblanch and Lucy Nunez.

The first graduation saw 16 Wilcannia Aboriginal adults complete the course – a proud day for the community. *Maestra* is a film that should be widely screened in Australia and around the world. ✪



Bourke Aboriginal Adult graduation.

Water protest in Alice

Arrernte residents of the Alice Springs town camp Whitegate (Irrkerlantye) have been living without a regular water supply for more than a month since the Northern Territory government turned off the taps.

Traditional owner Felicity Hayes said that in early August residents went to town and when they came back, the water supply had been cut off. "It is very difficult," she said. "To cut off our water is un-Australian and we should be treated like human beings."

Residents and supporters have rallied in Alice Springs, calling for the water to be reconnected. But Community Services Minister Bess Price has said it is not the NT government's responsibility.

"Whitegate camp is on vacant Crown land and is not recognised or funded by the government as a town camp," she said in a statement. "At a meeting on January 20 I made the offer of alternate housing, which was declined by the occupants. That is their prerogative."

"I then informed the residents they would now have to deal with the local native title organisation, Lhere Artepe, as Whitegate is not funded by government. I have sent letters, attended meetings with the residents and had staff travel to Whitegate to ensure residents were informed of changes to the water situation and explain they now need to approach Lhere Artepe for any future issues."

"The water connection was not

constructed, authorised by or the responsibility of government. The provision of services to Whitegate has always been the responsibility of Lhere Artepe.

"The connection was simply a piece of plastic pipe that someone had connected to a tap in the Ilpeye Ilpeye town camp water supply."

"Arrangements"

Lhere Artepe, the representative native title body, was advised on July 8 they would need to make arrangements to supply water in preparation for the disconnection on August 11 as part of the upgrade to Ilpeye Ilpeye town camp.

"The arrangement for the supply of water to Whitegate would not have been to subdivision standard

and has no back-flow prevention which can pose a serious health risk."

Tangentyere Council chief executive Waiter Shaw said the water supply to Whitegate residents should be immediately turned back on as a gesture of humanity and goodwill while a solution to the complex issues around Whitegate are resolved. Whitegate is becoming another town camp albatross around the neck of the Northern Territory government," he said.

"These people are not squatters. They are native title holders and as such deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. They should not continue to be sentenced to an uncertain future because of a lack of government will."

"Since the NT government turned off the water to residents, Tangentyere has twice refilled that community's water supply."

"Unfortunately we can no longer afford to do this. The bottom line is that Whitegate residents deserve to receive essential services."

"The NT government's refusal to do so because senior native title holders do not have tenure over their traditional lands is an impasse that must be fixed."

"It is a disgrace that a gun club can get water while the health and welfare of native title holders are put in jeopardy."

Koori Mail ✪

Climate Action Rally in Perth draws 1,000

Richard Titelius

On a wet Sunday afternoon in Perth late last month, 1,000 protesters rallied in Perth as part of the Global Day of Climate Action. They came to hear speakers on climate change and send their message to the decision makers' meeting at the UN Climate Summit in New York.

The rally in Perth was organised by 350.Org and GetUp! as were rallies held in other major cities including Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, Brisbane, Newcastle, Darwin and Melbourne, the latter where close to 20,000 people rallied and marched.

The principle speaker at the Perth

rally was paediatrician and health and wellbeing advocate Professor Fiona Stanley who emphasised that while she was not a climate scientist but a health professional, she knew of the effects which burning excessive fossil fuel had on the environment. The pollution from excessive levels of carbon in the atmosphere causes damage to the environment which causes serious health effects especially on the most vulnerable in our society who are the elderly and the very young.

Grass roots environmental campaigner from Mauritius, Zaheer Allam, spoke of the effects which rising sea levels are having on his country and other low lying areas of the world through the encroachment

of sea water on agricultural land.

Countries with high levels of carbon emissions said Allam, had a moral imperative to reduce carbon emissions. Australia has the highest per capita rate of carbon use in the world and Western Australia the highest per capita usage of carbon of all Australian states.

Zaheer also added we should be leaving the coal, gas and uranium in the ground and pursuing renewable energy.

Cameron Power, chairman of Sustainable Energy Now addressed the rally calling for a clean energy future which can create more jobs. "We can do it cheaper than the fossil centric grid we have now." It was

possible, added Power, "to have an energy system that protects the environment and the economy."

The final speaker was Anglican Bishop Tom Wilmot who said that climate change was a moral issue and: "It is a moral imperative to look after creation, or life itself."

There was also a call to protesters to let their elected representatives know that climate change needs to be on the agenda for the G-20 Summit to be held in Brisbane on November 15-16.

Despite the scorn and ridicule by the clarions of capital about climate change, the day of climate action around the world was a success as they brought more people along

and pushed the issue further into the mainstream of social and political discourse.

The Communist Party of Australia recognises the challenge facing the planet on climate change in addition to the global insecurity caused by a runaway capitalist economic crisis threatening to plunge the world into economic and political darkness as well as an environmental crisis.

The CPA calls on people to be active in their communities and workplaces, to call for greater development and use of renewable energy, changes to the way we produce and consume the earth's finite resources and increase conservation of energy. ✪

Grim theatre for war, attack on democratic rights

Bob Briton

The stage has been set. Reports of beheadings and other outrages committed by Islamic State (IS) forces have featured prominently on the front pages of the dailies and led on the TV and radio news broadcasts. Haunting, suggestive photos of the executions of western journalists and aid workers have driven home the message. We are at war with "evil" and the evil ones are forcing us to do things at odds with our better nature, or so the narrative goes. Australia will join the US in a long, perhaps endless, war in the Middle East. In order to be safe on the streets and in our beds at night, we are told will have to be stripped of long-standing, hard-won freedoms and the last vestiges of our right to privacy.

The climate of mistrust and tension created by the federal government and the corporate media was bound to lead to conflict. The first casualty wasn't a politician, a soldier, a police officer or a random person plucked off the street for a beheading via YouTube at the behest of IS. It was an 18 year-old Muslim man, Numan Haider, who was shot dead by Police during an interview near the Endeavour Hills Police Station after the youth allegedly inflicted stab wounds on the two officers involved.

Gaith Krayem of the Islamic Council of Victoria joined many other community voices in calling for calm. He questioned the approach of authorities in dealing with young, vocal, radical men in the Muslim community. "While I don't know the young man personally, I do know many young men at that age and they can be brash, they can be angry, they can be immature. None of those things make him a terrorist," the Council secretary said.

The government is persisting with the line that authorities are not targeting the Muslim community as a whole, just the extremists. Spokespersons, including the Prime Minister, claim to respect Islam as

a religion of peace but they would be aware the effect current media coverage would have on bigoted elements in the broader Australian community. The recent raids on the homes and business premises of 30 members of the Muslim community have raised the political temperature to boiling point.

Premises in Brisbane and Sydney were searched during that pre-dawn operation. Over 800 police were involved and the raids were given maximum media exposure. Ultimately, only one arrest was made. Three people were detained but later released. Nevertheless, the public was treated to headlines like "Evil within" and "Beheading plot smashed". Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi and Palmer United Senator Jacqui Lambie chose this moment to stir the debate over the wearing of the burqa – the traditional face covering worn by some Muslim women.

Reports of attacks on members of the Muslim community spiked dramatically. Prams were kicked and mothers spat on. Pigs heads were left outside Islamic venues and impaled on crosses. An audience member on ABC TV's Q&A program told Justice Minister Michael Keenan that the neo-Nazi Australian Defence League had threatened to cut her children's throats and rape her. Clearly, this sort of anti-Muslim terrorism is not being targeted by the government despite its frequency and the distress it causes.

Abbott shows his hand

Abbott addressed the Parliament in an effort to make the agenda that has been unfolding for a long time appear legitimate. Even though the raids had taken place and supposed "extremist plots" had been foiled using existing legislation, another tranche of ASIO and other police powers were being whisked through the parliament with "bi-partisan" support.

"I can't promise that hideous events will never take place on Australia soil, but I can promise that we will never stoop to the level of

those who hate us and fight evil with evil," the PM said.

"Regrettably, for some time to come, Australians will have to endure more security than we're used to and more inconvenience than we'd like. Regrettably, for some time to come, the delicate balance between freedom and security may have to shift," he warned.

And shift it certainly has. Howard era legislation granting ASIO the capacity to detain people of "interest" without charge has been extended by a decade. Other "temporary" provisions will be kept indefinitely. ASIO can use "force" while dealing with suspects. Perhaps most disturbing are ASIO's new powers over the Internet. A single warrant from the likes of Attorney General George Brandis is now all that is required for the spy agency to monitor whole networks right up to the entire Australian web.

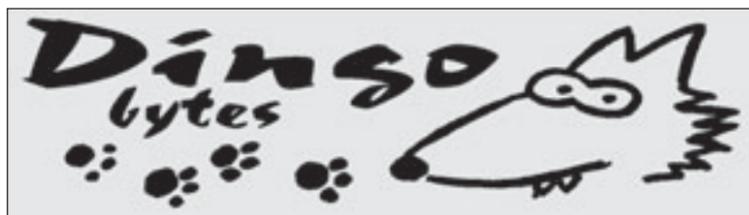
Whistle-blowers and journalists can be jailed for "recklessly" disclosing information related to "special intelligence operations" – such as spying on the governments of our near neighbours. The computers of innocent parties can be hijacked to break into those of terror suspects. Funding for security agencies to carry out this work has been boosted by \$630 million.

Islamic State and domestic Muslim fundamentalism have been exploited by the government to obtain what are essentially police state powers. It would be naïve to think they won't be used to further attack the trade union movement or some other "enemy" of the day. Left political groups opposed to Abbott's "Team Australia" vision won't be left untouched.

The tensions raised by the actions of the government have also eased Australia's entry into another US-led military adventure in the Middle East, which side-steps the UN and has the sovereignty of Syria clearly in its sights. The Australian people have effectively been excluded from these truly momentous decisions in the Parliament. They will have to make their voice heard on the streets. ☹



Photo: Anna Pha



Increased costs for students could inevitably lower demand for tertiary education. The present government cuts the education budget and insists that "in actual dollar value, the individual ... benefit is greater than the economic benefit to the public", according to a spokesman for Education Minister Christopher Pine. Not quite so. The Australian public, not individuals, profits most from higher education, but students shoulder most of the cost. The figures from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) show that the public rate of return from tertiary education in Australia is twice the rate of return to the individual. The data measures the return on investment based on taxes and other financial benefits. For every public dollar invested in higher education, \$6 is repaid through higher taxes and reduced unemployment benefits. Compare it to what a man gets back – \$3.20 for every dollar he pays for the cost of education. For a woman in Australia, the public return is \$4.40 for every public dollar spent on her education, while the private return is \$2.50 per dollar. So much for the constant lying about people who do not contribute to society and should have no government funding.

After 19 months of investigations, NSW Chief Scientist Mary O'Kane published a review on the technical challenges and risks posed by coal seam gas extraction. There is a lot of opposition to fracking which can cause gas leaks, damage aquifers and pollute water. Ms O'Kane recognises the risk to human health and the environment posed by coal seam gas extraction can be managed but "unintended consequences" due to accidents, human errors and natural disasters are inevitable. The Chief Scientist points out the risks could be addressed by limiting extraction to where the geology and land use are appropriate. Unfortunately we all know that when it comes to profit and greed commonsense and good intentions go out of the window. It is nice to recommend that communities should have stronger protections and benefits for those affected. Sounds good in theory but in practice ... It's only because of the joint and persistent actions of farmers, environmentalists and local communities that the review was commissioned in the first place. As long as fracking is on the agenda, the opposition to it will continue.

Out-of-pocket costs for women with breast cancer create additional stress at a time when they are most vulnerable. Almost two-thirds of women with advanced breast cancer experience financial difficulty because it costs \$687 a month (on average) in out-of-pocket expenses. The greatest financial burden was caused by the cost of medicines not included on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Breast Cancer Network Australia chief executive Maxine Morand said that it was frustrating that delays for cancer drugs to be listed on the PBS were leaving patients having to fund their own treatment or go without. "These drugs can considerably improve quality of life. Families are burdened with paying for expensive new drugs on top of all other costs of treatment", she said.

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Hong Kong

“Occupy Central” is US-backed sedition

Tony Cartalucci

The goal of the US in Hong Kong is clear – to turn the island into an epicentre of foreign-funded subversion with which to infect China’s mainland more directly. Protesters of the “Occupy Central” movement in Hong Kong shout familiar slogans and adopt familiar tactics seen across the globe as part of the United States’ immense political destabilisation and regime change enterprise. Identifying the leaders, following the money, and examining Western coverage of these events reveal with certainty that yet again, Washington and Wall Street are busy at work to make China’s island of Hong Kong as difficult to govern for Beijing as possible.

Several names are repeatedly mentioned amid coverage of what is being called “Occupy Central,” the latest in a long line of US-engineered colour revolutions, and part of America’s vast, ambitious global geopolitical reordering which started in earnest in 2011 under the guise of the so-called “Arab Spring.”

Benny Tai, a lecturer of law at the University of Hong Kong, is cited by various sources across the Western media as the primary organiser – however there are many “co-organisers” mentioned alongside him. The *South China Morning Post* in an article titled, “Occupy Central is on: Benny Tai rides wave of student protest to launch movement”, mentions most of them (emphasis added):

“Political heavyweights including Civic Party chairwoman Audrey Eu Yuet-mee, former head of the Catholic diocese, Cardinal Joseph Zen Zi-kiun and Democratic Party founding chairman Martin Lee Chu-ming addressed the crowd.”

The *Post* also mentions (emphasis added): “Jimmy Lai Chi-Ying, the embattled boss of Next Media who is under investigation by the Independent Commission Against Corruption over donations to pan-democrat politicians, said he arrived immediately after a call from Martin Lee Chu-ming.”

Benny Tai regularly attends US State Department, National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and its subsidiary the National Democratic Institute (NDI) funded and/or organised forums. Just this month, he spoke at a Design Democracy Hong Kong (NDI-funded) conference on political reform. He is also active at the University of Hong Kong’s Centre for Comparative and Public Law (CCPL) – also funded by NDI. CCPL’s 2013-2014 annual report lists Benny Tai as attending at least three of the centre’s functions, as well as heading one of the centre’s projects.

Martin Lee, Jimmy Lai, and Joseph Zen are all confirmed as both leaders of the “Occupy Central” movement and collaborators with the US State Department. Martin Lee, founding chairman of the Democratic Party in Hong Kong, would even travel to the United States this year to conspire directly with NED as well as with politicians in Washington. Earlier this year, Lee would even take to the stage of NED’s event “Why Democracy in Hong Kong Matters.” Joining him at the NED-organised event was Anson Chan, another prominent figure currently supporting the ongoing unrest in Hong Kong’s streets.

Media mogul Jimmy Lai was reported to have met with Neo-Con and former president of the World Bank, Paul Wolfowitz in June 2014. *China Daily* would report in an article titled, “Office opposes foreign interference in HK,” that:

“A special edition of Eastweek showed Lai, owner of Next Media and Apple Daily, meeting Paul Wolfowitz, a former US deputy secretary of defence in George W Bush’s administration. The pair met on Lai’s private yacht for five hours in late May.

“Wolfowitz, who was also president of the World Bank between 2005 and 2007, is well-known in the US for his neo-conservative views and belief in a unilateral foreign policy. Wolfowitz also held the post of under secretary of defence between 1989 and 1993. He is currently a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.”

Lai would also seek Wolfowitz’ help in securing various business deals in Myanmar. The *South China Morning Post* in their article, “Jimmy Lai paid Paul Wolfowitz US\$75,000 for help in Myanmar,” reported that:

“Leaked documents show Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai Chee-ying paid former US deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz US\$75,000 for his help with projects in Myanmar.

“According to a July 22, 2013, remittance notice by the Shanghai Commercial and Savings Bank, Wolfowitz received the money from Lai as “compensation for services in regards to Myanmar”.

Lai’s liaisons with notorious Neo-Con Wolfowitz should be no surprise – as NED, the principal director of Washington’s vast portfolio of political agitators worldwide is rife with Neo-Cons who intermingle both on NED’s board of directors, as well as in various other corporate-financier funded think tanks. NED itself is merely a front, couching geopolitical and corporate-financier interests behind the cover of “promoting freedom” and “democracy” around the world.

There is also “student leader” Joshua Wong, who was arrested amid the protests. Wong has had his career tracked by the NDI’s “NDItech” project since as early as 2012. In a post titled, “In Hong Kong, Does “Change Begin with a Single Step”?”, NDI reports:

“Scholarism founder Joshua Wong Chi-fung, 15, has become an icon of the movement, and his skilful interactions with media have been memorialised and disseminated on Youtube. Through this page, Hong Kong youth have coalesced around common messages and images – for example, equating MNE with “brainwashing” and echoing themes reminiscent of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement.”

Wong’s work serves to challenge attempts by Beijing to re-establish Chinese institutions on the island, preserving Western-style (and co-opted) institutions including the education system.

The aforementioned Civic Party chairwoman Audrey Eu Yuet-mee is also entwined with the US NED, regularly attending forums sponsored by NED and its subsidiary NDI. In 2009 she was a featured speaker at an NDI sponsored public policy forum hosted by “SynergyNet,” also funded by NDI. In 2012 she was a guest speaker at the NDI-funded Women’s Centre “International Women’s Day” event. The Hong Kong Council of Women (HKCW) itself is also annually funded by the NDI. Just this year, she would also find herself associated with CCPL, presenting at one of its functions beside “Occupy Central” leader Benny Tai himself.

In addition to SynergyNet, CCPL, and HKCW, there are several other US-funded NGOs supporting, legitimising, and justifying “Occupy Central,” or hosting those leading it. Among them is the US NED-funded “Hong Kong Transition Project” which claims it is “tracking the transition of Hong Kong people from subjects to citizens.” In name and mission statement alone, the goal of the US in Hong Kong is clear – to turn Hong Kong into an epicentre of foreign-funded subversion with which to infect China’s mainland with more directly.

The Transition Project was tasked with legitimising Occupy Central’s “pro-democracy referendum” conducted earlier this year – which then served as justification for increasing



unrest on Hong Kong’s streets. The British *Guardian* in a June 2014 article titled, “Hong Kong’s unofficial pro-democracy referendum irks Beijing,” would report:

“About 730,000 Hong Kong residents – equivalent to a fifth of the registered electorate – have voted in an unofficial “referendum” that has infuriated Beijing and prompting a flurry of vitriolic editorials, preparatory police exercises and cyber-attacks.

“Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP), the pro-democracy movement that organised the poll, hopes to pressure Beijing into allowing Hong Kong’s 7.2 million residents to choose their own leader by 2017. If Beijing refuses, OCLP says, the movement will mobilise at least 10,000 people next month to block the main roads in Central, a forest of skyscrapers housing businesses and government offices on Hong Kong island’s northern shore.”

The Transition Project links with other US-funded organisations, including the Hong Kong-based “think tank” Civic Exchange. Funded by Exxon, the US State Department’s NDI, the British Council, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Morgan Stanley, Citi Group, the British Consulate itself, and many others, its claim of being “Hong Kong’s independent public policy think tank” is scandalous.

What does “Occupy Central” really want? US NDI openly states on its own page dedicated to its political meddling in Hong Kong that:

“In 2005, NDI initiated a six-month young political leaders program focused on training a group of rising party and political group members in political communications skills. In 2006, NDI launched a District Council campaign school for candidates and campaign managers in the lead-up to the 2007 elections.

“NDI has also worked to bring political parties, government leaders and civil society actors together in public forums to discuss political party development, the role of parties in Hong Kong and political reform. In 2012, for example, a conference by Hong Kong think tank SynergyNet supported by NDI featured panellists from parties across the ideological spectrum and explored how adopting a system of coalition government might lead to a more responsive legislative process.”

Indeed, the very organisations, forums, and political parties the “Occupy Central” movement is associated with and led by are the creation of foreign interests – specifically the US State Department through NDI. Since “democracy” is “self-rule,” and every step of “Occupy Central” has seen involvement by foreign interests, “democracy” is surely not the protest’s true agenda.

Instead, it is “soft” recolonisation by Washington, Wall Street, and London. If “Occupy Central” is successful and Beijing ever foolishly agrees to allowing the leaders of this foreign-orchestrated charade to run for office, what will be running Hong Kong will not be the people, but rather foreign interests through a collection of overt proxies who shamelessly sustain themselves on US cash, political backing, and support across the West’s vast media resources.

West’s long war with China

“Occupy Central” is just one of many ongoing gambits the US is running against Beijing. A visit to the US NED site reveals not one, but four pages dedicated to meddling in China’s internal politics. NED’s activities are divided among China in general, Tibet, Xinjiang – referred to as “East Turkistan” as it is called by violent separatists the US backs – and Hong Kong. All of NED’s funding goes to politically subversive groups aligned to and dependent on the West, while being hostile toward Beijing. They range from “monitoring” and “media” organisations, to political parties as well as fronts for violent extremists. And as impressive as this network of political subversion is, it itself is still but a single part of a greater geopolitical agenda to encircle, contain, and eventually collapse the political order of Beijing and replace it with one favourable to Wall Street and Washington.

As early as the Vietnam War, with the so-called “Pentagon Papers” released in 1969, it was revealed that the conflict was simply one part of a greater strategy aimed at containing and controlling China. While the US would ultimately lose the Vietnam War and any chance of using the Vietnamese as a proxy force against Beijing, the long war against Beijing would continue elsewhere.

Nothing is free?

Depends who you are

Kaye Lee

[The budget] will do for people what they cannot do for themselves, but no more. Nothing is free. Someone always pays.

A common refrain from Tony Abbott and his band of miserly men is that the taxpayer is footing the bill for all those “leaners” and that people should take more personal responsibility for themselves. User pays seems to be the pervading Coalition strategy in most areas – education, health, fuel excise, road tolls, GST.

It is somewhat ironic that Tony Abbott is leading this spin considering how much he has been given.

Tony came from England to Australia for free when his parents took advantage of the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme. His father became a wealthy man who paid for Tony to attend private Jesuit schools.

Tony then benefited from a free university education thanks to Gough Whitlam.

In a 1979 interview printed in *Honi Soit*, the Sydney University student newspaper, Tony said:

“I think too much money is spent on education at the moment,” adding that “departments such as general philosophy and political economy should be the first to go”.

This contempt for philosophy and political economy seemed to disappear when it was suggested to Tony that he might be able to get a free ticket to Oxford via a Rhodes Scholarship. He applied to study philosophy, politics and economics.

University and college fees are paid by the Rhodes Trust. In addition, scholars receive a monthly maintenance stipend to cover accommodation and living expenses.

After returning from England, Tony decided to let the Catholic Church pay for his education and keep and entered St Patrick’s seminary at age 26, significantly older than most of his fellow seminarians.

While at the seminary, he wrote articles for *The Catholic Weekly* and *The Bulletin*.

In 1987, he quit the seminary and started looking at a future in politics, although he continued writing for *The Bulletin*.

After marrying Margie in 1988, Abbott decided that writing for *The Bulletin* was boring and he wrote to a number of “business leaders” asking them for a job.

His plea for a job was answered by Sir Tristram Antico, a “prominent member of the wider

Jesuit network” who offered Tony Abbott the position of plant manager at Sydney Concrete in Silverwater even though he had no experience or qualifications for the position.

Abbott soon quit the job as it wasn’t paying enough money and accepted a position with *The Australian* as a journalist. He continued writing at *The Australian* until John Howard recommended him for a position as the then federal Liberal leader John Hewson’s press secretary. Tony was responsible for the speech when Hewson said “you can tell the rental houses in a street”.

In 1992, he was appointed director of Australians for Constitutional Monarchy, a position he held until 1994, when he was successfully elected to parliament when gifted pre-selection for the Warringah by-election.

From the age of 36 Tony lucked into the highest paying job you can get with no qualifications, experience or specific skills, and then in 2009, he was gifted the leadership in return for becoming a climate change denier. Some may say that the Labor Party then gifted him the prime ministership.

He has had free air travel, chauffeur-driven cars, and tickets for him and his family to anything they want to attend.

We pay for his books, his volunteering, his charity work. We pay for his petrol and his phone and his food and his electricity.

We buy him new jets so he can fit in the hundreds of photographers and businessmen that now travel everywhere with him.

As Opposition leader, Tony claimed over \$1 million a year in “expenses”. I shudder to think what his time as prime minister will cost us, particularly considering his accommodation decisions. It should be remembered that Abbott is living in public housing.

The lavish Canberra home Tony Abbott refused to move into while the Lodge was being renovated has cost the government nearly \$120,000.

The full cost of the ill-fated lease – including termination fees and legal advice – was confirmed at a budget estimates committee hearing in May.

The budget for the prime minister’s official residences (the Lodge and Kirribilli House) will increase from \$1.61 million in 2013-14 to \$1.7 million next financial year, rising to \$1.77 million, \$1.81 million and \$1.86 million in subsequent years. This is “for items, staff and cooking within the residences and to maintain the gardens”, but does not include the building upkeep.

Howard, the only other prime minister to

refuse to move to where his job is, racked up over \$18 million in flights between Sydney and Canberra during his term.

Tony’s daughters have also been fortunate. His daughter Louise was appointed executive assistant to Australia’s Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva that is headed by former Coalition staffer Peter Woolcott.

There was internal disquiet at Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in Canberra about what some staff saw as a lack of transparency in the hiring and how Ms Abbott came to be doing high-level work, such as delivering a public statement on disarmament, when there were up to 14 policy specialists attached to the mission.

But a spokesman for DFAT said the job helping represent Australia to the United Nations was awarded “on the basis of merit”. Just like the unadvertised \$60,000 scholarship thrust upon Frances Abbott even though she hadn’t even applied to go to the college let alone for any scholarship.

Regardless of what happens in the future, Tony will continue to be supported by the public purse for life.

Each former PM is entitled to at least two staff, including a senior private secretary, and the annual wages bill of each is about \$300,000.

In 2010 it was reported that John Howard’s office was the most expensive, with expenses averaging \$850,000 a year. Howard’s expenses blew out well in excess of the other four former prime ministers no longer in Parliament thanks to a \$450,000 office refit in 2008/09 to his swanky digs in Sydney’s MLC building, which was already costing nearly \$14,000 a month to rent.

In the seven months after leaving office, Mr Howard spent \$109,892 on limousine services, evenly split between the government Comcar service and private hire cars.

The former PMs also have their home and mobile phone bills paid by taxpayers, as well as unlimited allowances for publications, a private self-drive car, and air fares for them and their spouse.

These are in addition to their pensions under the generous former parliamentary superannuation scheme, which gives them a pension indexed to current MPs’ salaries for life.

Assuming Tony Abbott remains prime minister for the next four years, he could walk away with an annual pension of more than \$380,500 and that’s not including the rest of the perks.

The Beacon ✪



This containment strategy would be updated and detailed in the 2006 Strategic Studies Institute report “String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenge of China’s Rising Power across the Asian Littoral” where it outlines China’s efforts to secure its oil lifeline from the Middle East to its shores in the South China Sea as well as means by which the US can maintain American hegemony throughout the Indian and Pacific Ocean. The premise is that, should Western foreign policy fail to entice China into participating in the “international system” as responsible stakeholders, an increasingly confrontational posture must be taken to contain the rising nation.

This includes funding, arming, and backing terrorists and proxy regimes from Africa, across the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and even within China’s territory itself. Documented support of these movements not only include Xinjiang separatists, but also militants and separatists in Baluchistan, Pakistan where the West seeks to disrupt a newly christened Chinese port and pipeline, as well as the machete wielding supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar’s Rakhine state – yet another site the Chinese hope to establish a logistical hub.

Meddling in Thailand and stoking confrontation between China and an adversarial front including Vietnam, the Philippines, and Japan are also components of this spanning containment policy.

Whatever grievances those among “Occupy Central’s” mobs may have, they have forfeited both their legitimacy and credibility, not to mention any chance of actually achieving progress. Indeed, as the US-engineered “Arab Spring” has illustrated, nothing good will come of serving insidious foreign interests under the guise of “promoting democracy.” The goal of “Occupy Central” is to make Hong Kong ungovernable at any cost, especially at the cost of the people living there – not because that is the goal of the witless though well-intentioned participants being misled by Washington’s troupe of seditious proxies, but because that is the goal of those funding and ultimately directing the movement from abroad.

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New Eastern Outlook ✪

Statement

Sanctions against Russia harm Czech economy

Last month once again, the EU took a step to make its own economy weaker, when suggesting more punitive sanctions against the Russian Federation. It continues to restrict its own export and import of the oil industry, goods, technologies of dual use, agriculture products as well as the provision of finance to the Russian state. This new proposal only deepens and extends these sanctions, throwing us, hand in hand with the warmongers, back to the cold war times.

The Communist Party of Bohemia & Moravia rejects this policy. Those who make the decisions obviously don’t take into consideration realistic analyses of their political and economical effects. Trade war is a very bad tool of foreign policy as it only increases tension. Moreover, within today’s globalised world, it is a tool with marginal effect. These

sanctions don’t bring the Russian economy to its knees; on the contrary, it can expose Czech exporters to losses amounting to billions of CZK, endangering thousands of jobs. Any possible retaliatory measures in the form of limiting oil or gas supplies would impact the energy industries in a number of European countries, the Czech Republic included. The EU damages its own by this policy.

The Communist Party of Bohemia & Moravia rejects the application of sanctions as well as any self-harming to its own economy. We stand for rejecting the sanctions, or, at least, for applying the reservations as formulated by the Czech government’s Prime Minister. It is necessary for the Czech Republic to protect its own economy, the engineering industry especially. By their decisions, the representatives of Czech Republic shouldn’t

force Czech producers and businesses to retreat from prospective Russian markets.

To come back there again, it would be more than difficult as we have already seen in the past. The representatives of both industry and agriculture remember the negative impacts of the sanctions.

It is impossible to give in to the pressure of foreign transnational corporations. The Communist Party of Bohemia & Moravia considers the escalation of these sanctions very dangerous not only for the economy, but also for further peaceful development in Europe. Diplomatic negotiations about peace initiatives as well as about ending the bloodshed in Ukraine we see as the key.

Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Bohemia & Moravia’s CC

Asking wrong questions about Ebola

Emile Schepers

There is a panic because a man in the heavily populated Dallas-Forth Worth area in Texas, who had recently travelled from Liberia to the United States, has come down with the Ebola virus. There are indications of a lack of vigilance by the hospital: He was sent home for two days before the institution realised what they might be dealing with, even though he had emphatically warned them about his Liberia trip. Then it was found that there were no emergency response protocols to sanitise his dwelling place, clothing and bedding, because of a lack of subcontractors immediately available to do the work. The sick man may have had contact with as many as 100 people in the interim. If any of them have been infected, each of them could have had contact with as many others.

Why should the Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital and state and local health authorities have been so unprepared? Why should anybody have been taken by surprise by this situation? Why should the situation in West Africa have been allowed to fester?

Do some people think that the three main African countries where the epidemic is raging are on the moon?

Three things characterise today's world:

- First it is highly integrated and there is more trade, travel and exchange of populations than at any time in human history. This is the result of globalisation driven by the corporate drive for greater and greater profits, which in turn leads to greater instability and massive population movements, of job seekers and of refugees.
- Secondly, increasingly

unsustainable levels of environmental degradation produce such things as global warming, storms and droughts, and contamination of the food and water supplies.

- Thirdly, there are ever-greater extremes of inequality both within and among countries. Countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, where the epidemic is raging, are so poor that their state institutional structures are unable to cope with crisis situations, including epidemics, wars and natural disasters.

In short: The potential of Ebola running wild is caused by capitalism run wild.

An immediate reaction on the part of many in the wealthy countries is to pull up the drawbridge, stop people from coming here, and blame the poor countries and their inhabitants for the mess.

Sometimes they even manage to pressure the poorer countries to help with this backward approach. The Liberian government has announced that it may prosecute the sick man in Texas because he did not tell airline authorities that he had helped a person sick with Ebola just before he left.

Another example is the US government's reaction to the "child migrant crisis" earlier this year, which was to demand that the governments of the impoverished countries from which the child refugees were coming not let people leave, and that the Mexican government not let them pass through its territory.

Right now there is a massive drought in Central America, which comes on top of a coffee blight. The drought may be related to global warming. The failure of crops is likely to have a far flung impact, as the people of the region have no other way to feed their families, and the countries lack strong

state institutions to help their poor. The result is likely to be more out-migration, more inroads by organised crime, more conflict, more insecurity and more violence. This is a natural disaster leading to population dislocations, but some in the United States will blame it on the "criminal" proclivities of the darker skinned people.

Rather than engaging in panicky reactions which in the end only worsen the situation, our governments should be reminded of the words of the 17th Century English poet John Donne: Since no man is an island, "therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

We must demand that our leaders prioritise the ending of inequality among and within nations, as well as protection of the natural environment, over the profits of rapacious transnational corporations, Big Oil in the first place. Countries like Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and the rest, need to be able to develop strong institutions to protect their own people against epidemics and other disasters. They cannot do this while mired in poverty. International trade arrangements have to be reworked to the infinitely greater benefit of the poor nations and of the working people of the rich countries.

Slamming the door against the main victims of imperialist exploitation is impossible; microbes know no borders. Ebola bears a strong resemblance to the "red death" in Edgar Allen Poe's short story of "The Masque of the Red Death": Prince Prospero had locked himself and his wealthy friends away from the horrible disease that was depopulating his domains, feasting and dancing while the world outside suffered and died.

But it was no use; the red death got in, and slew the wealthy as well as the poor.

People's World ✪



The potential of Ebola running wild is caused by capitalism run wild.

Syria warns Turkey

Syria warned Turkey last week that deploying troops inside its borders would be seen as "aggression" and urged the international community to "put limits to the adventures" of the Turkish leadership. The warning followed the Ankara parliament's provocative decision to authorise military incursions into Syria and Iraq.

The Foreign Ministry in Damascus called the decision "an aggression against a founding member of the United Nations." Turkey has collaborated with Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the jihadi groups they arm and finance in attempts to oust President Bashar al-Assad from power.

The Turkish decision dovetails with Washington's assembly of a

coalition to launch air strikes in Syria — ostensibly against Islamic State (ISIS). Combining air power and Turkish ground troops could be intended to impose a pro-imperialist regime in Syria, to the disadvantage of the Assad government and the country's Kurdish minority.

Kurdish YPG self-defence units battled ISIS fighters to the east and south-east of border town Kobane. The town and its surroundings have been under attack since mid-September, with militants capturing dozens of nearby Kurdish villages. The assault, which has forced over 160,000 Syrians to flee, has left Kurdish fighters scrambling to repel the militants' advance into the outskirts of Kobane.

Morning Star ✪

Cuban medical team heading for Sierra Leone

Cuba is known the world over for its ability to train excellent doctors and nurses who can then go out to help other countries in need. Currently there are more than 50 000 Cuban-trained health workers in 66 countries.

Dr Roberto Morales Ojeda, Minister of Public Health, has announced that Cuba will send a medical team of 165 people to Sierra Leone to help in the frontline in the Ebola response efforts.

"Human resources are clearly our most important need," Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General at the World Health Organisation (WHO) said. "This is the largest offer of a foreign medical team from a single country during this outbreak."

"Money and materials are important, but those two things alone cannot stop Ebola virus transmission.

"Human resources are clearly

our most important need. We need most especially compassionate doctors and nurses, who will know how to comfort patients despite the barriers of wearing PPE (personal protective equipment) and working under very demanding conditions".

Experienced team

The Cuban team consists of 100 nurses, 50 doctors, 3 epidemiologists, 3 intensive care specialists, 3 infection control specialist nurses and 5 social mobilisation officers, all overseen by epidemiologist Dr Jorge Juan Delgado Bustillo.

All of the Cuban health workers have more than 15 years' experience and have worked in other countries facing natural disasters and disease outbreaks. Some of the workers have already been working in Sierra Leone and Guinea for some years and are willing to continue their service there.

Once they have all followed WHO-standard infection control training in Cuba, the team will pack supplies of PPE and travel to Sierra Leone in this month. They will stay there for six months, working in shifts in smaller teams in Ebola treatment centres and community clinics.

Dr Bruce Aylward, Assistant Director at WHO, says: "Those of us who have been working on the response efforts at WHO know how truly valuable this offer is. Many countries have offered money but no other country has offered such a large number of workers to go in and help do the most difficult jobs in this crisis."

It is hoped that this offer of support will send a strong message of solidarity for Africa to the rest of the world and will catalyse additional offers of support from other countries. ✪

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The high stakes of palm oil

Blake Deppe

NEW YORK: Most notable about the September 21 People's Climate March in New York City was its emphasis on diversity – both in terms of participants and the issues they supported. With climate change itself being a multi-faceted problem, marchers made it clear that the issues that contribute to it are numerous. People's World spoke there with the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) to focus on one in particular: the excessive use and abuse of palm oil, and its many destructive implications.

Adrienne Fitch-Frankel, a national organiser with RAN and advocate for environmental and human rights, remarked, "Palm oil is one of the leading drivers of climate change. And all of a sudden, all of these big food companies," like PepsiCo, the Hershey Company, Hormel Foods Corporation, Kellogg Company, and Kraft Food Group, Inc, "are using it. So we're calling on them to be more responsible and protective of climates like the rainforest," which are torn apart and decimated to make way for large palm oil plantations. "Companies producing palm oil are just getting away with cutting away massive tracts of rainforest," she continued. "These companies need to reform their practices."

Fitch-Frankel said "all of a sudden" in reference to a disturbing fact: that palm oil imports to the US have seen a 485 percent increase in the last decade. Naturally, rainforest depletion has increased in tandem with this uptick in palm oil plantations. Ninety percent of these areas exist in Indonesia and Malaysia, where in total such plantations cover 16 million acres of land (an area roughly equal to the size of West Virginia, according to a palm oil fact sheet released by RAN). For Indonesia in particular, 98 percent of its forest may vanish by 2022, according to a statement by the UN's Environment Program (UNEP).

Setting off a carbon bomb

So how is this rainforest destruction connected to climate change? Well, Fitch-Frankel explained, it has environmental consequences that go beyond how land alone is affected. When rainforests are destroyed, she said, "Carbon is released from the trees, which grow on layers of peat

moss," or peatlands. "These peat moss swamps contain huge amounts of carbon themselves," – billions of tons, in fact – "which is then released into the atmosphere. So clearing a whole area of rainforest – it's like setting off a carbon bomb."

"Carbon bomb" is an apt way to describe it. According to Think Global Green, the world on average now loses a portion of rainforest the size of New York State each year, and the carbon thus released now accounts for about 17 percent of all global emissions that contribute to climate change. In particular, it releases more carbon in total than all cars, trucks, planes, trains, and ships – a sobering fact, given the damage that man-made vehicles have done just by themselves.

The ripple effect of this decimation reaches into the ecosystems that depend upon it, rendering once-prosperous communities of wildlife suddenly endangered. Indonesia's rainforests contain 10 percent of the world's known plant life, 12 percent of mammals, and 17 percent of all known bird species. The animal that is most at risk right now is the orangutan, which struggles against the risk of extinction (in our lifetime!) in the rainforests of Borneo and Sumatra. The Sumatran orangutan's population dropped by 14 percent between 2004 and 2008, largely due to loss of habitat for the development of palm oil plantations. Meanwhile, those that wander accidentally onto the plantations are often shot and killed by workers, along with tigers and elephants.

Those workers, by the way, are no safer than the animals. In fact, they're often exploited and underpaid, and palm oil plantations are notorious for forced child labour, according to information from Oxfam, a community-based international confederation that fights poverty and injustice. Female workers in particular are exposed, sometimes while pregnant, to harmful spraying, fertilizing, and weeding on these plantations.

The Snack Food 20

RAN recently released the "Snack Food 20" – a list of popular snack companies whose products contain palm oil – making their complicity public for the first time. These include the aforementioned Pepsi, Hershey, Hormel, Kellogg, and Kraft products, as well as the following groups: Campbell Soup Company; ConAgra Foods, Inc; Dunkin' Brands Group, Inc; General

Mills, Inc; Grupo Bimbo; Hillshire Brands Company; HJ Heinz Company; Krispy Kreme Doughnuts Corp.; Mars, Inc; Mondelez International, Inc; Nestlé SA; Nissin Foods Holdings Co., Ltd; the JM Smucker Company; Toyo Suisan Kaisha, Ltd; and Unilever.

Pepsi, easily being the most recognisable of these companies in the US, was the focal point of the Stroller Brigade – a protest led prior to the Climate March, formed by mothers and their families partnering with the Rainforest Action Network. The demonstration occurred on September 9, during which concerned mothers called for PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi to have the company remove palm oil from its products. The event took place in Nooyi's hometown of Greenwich, Connecticut, and consisted of many tri-state area moms. They followed up the event by delivering over a quarter million petition signatures to Pepsi's global headquarters in White Plains, NY.

Mothers and activists Harriet Shugarman, Debra Mahony, and Susan Rubin – members of the Stroller Brigade – also sent an open letter to Nooyi, calling for immediate action. They remarked, "We are three mothers who live in the tri-state area. We are witnesses, firsthand and in our own communities, to the impacts of climate change. We are reaching out to you in regards to the historic leadership opportunity you face right now on the issue of climate change and palm oil. We are writing as fellow mothers, daughters, and working women. We speak for thousands of mothers around the country – neighbours, friends, relatives, as well as Rainforest Action Network members, who share our concerns that climate change is a direct threat to our children's future."

Less than two weeks after these actions, the People's Climate March seemed to help continue RAN's campaign to expose the dangers of palm oil development, as well as the irresponsibility of corporations that continue to turn a blind eye to the threat. Certainly, there was no better forum for such a message than a crowd of 400,000 marching in solidarity through the Big Apple.

"We're calling on PepsiCo to make a change and create stronger policies," Fitch-Frankel concluded. After all, "if these companies can do that, it will have a massive impact on protecting the earth."
People's World ✪



Deforestation in Riau province, Sumatra, to make way for a palm oil plantation.



Region Briefs

On September 26, the Eighth Congress of the Vietnam Fatherland Front (VFF) was held in Hanoi, with 1,008 delegates from various occupations and different ethnic backgrounds participating. The Prime Minister and President of Vietnam and the Communist Party's General Secretary attended. The VFF Central Committee President Nguyen Thien Nhan said that the "Solidarity-Democracy-innovation" themed Congress would review the status of the national solidarity bloc and outcomes of implementing plans for 2009-2014. It would then set goals for future. Communist Party leader Nguyen Phu Trong addressed the Congress, suggesting that the VFF continue to build national unity, encourage people to safeguard national sovereignty and maintain political stability. He also called on the VFF to protect the interests of the working class and farmers.

On September 26, four days before China's National Day, the Communist Party of China's (CPC) General Secretary, Xi Jinping, met a delegation from the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) in Beijing, led by its leader Gennady Zyuganov. Xi briefed the Russian delegation on the CPC's governing ideas, socialist path with Chinese characteristics and ongoing reforms. He added that the two parties should have stronger ties and that China was ready to increase interaction with the CPRF with personnel exchanges, party development and communist theory. Zyuganov praised China's achievements under the CPC's ideology and governance, he called for increasing cooperation between the two parties and added that the two countries should make more effort to safeguard world peace and stability.

On October 1, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) urged South Korea to respond to its reunification proposal for a loose form of federation. The proposal was initiated 34 years ago by the then leader of the DPRK, Kim Il Sung, who suggested a new, reunified national state would allow the two sides to exercise regional autonomy and different ideologies. According to a statement from the DPRK's foreign ministry, "the proposal is the most realistic one to reunify Korea peacefully and in the interests of the whole nation".

On September 29, 5,000 US and Filipino soldiers held their joint annual naval exercises with live-fire ammunition in Puerto Princesa, the Philippines. The exercises will take 12 days and focus on amphibious landing exercises. The two countries claimed that "the exercise was aimed to improve response to regional issues, humanitarian disasters and marine security in the Asia-Pacific". The Philippines also upgraded its defence relationship with Singapore recently, and will start annual defence dialogue from 2015 with Singapore. The Philippines has been militarily active since its parliament passed a bill allowing US troops to be stationed on its soil, earlier this year.

According to a report released on September 29 by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) based on a survey of 3,890 workers in 10 Cambodian garment factories, 15.7 percent of Cambodian garment workers are underweight and 43.2 percent of them suffer from anaemia as they have less than AU\$1.50 per day to spend on food, and only one third of them are "food secured". The ILO Cambodia Program Manager Jill Tucker said that, "Anaemia and food insecurity can contribute to wide ranging health problems for workers". Garment and footwear are Cambodia's largest export industry that earned around AU\$3.7 billion in the first seven months this year, however, 620,000 garment workers in 960 factories only get an average monthly wage of AU\$120.

Sydney free film screening

The Lab

An investigative documentary into the Israeli arms industry.

5:00pm - 7:30pm Tuesday October 14
Macquarie Room NSW Parliament, Macquarie St Sydney

The Lab looks at the Israeli arms industry and the nexus between this industry and the ongoing military occupation of Palestine.

The film reveals that the Israeli military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank has been transformed from a burden to a marketable, highly profitable, national asset. Israeli sales of weapons and military systems hit a record high last year of \$7.5bn, up from \$5.8bn the previous year. A decade ago, Israeli exports were worth less than \$2bn. Israel is one of the world's largest arms exporters – a significant achievement for a country smaller than New York.

Presented by the Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine (CJPP) and hosted by the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Palestine.

Enquiries: Barbara Bloch – cjpp@coalitionforpalestine.org

www.coalitionforpalestine.org

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Bombed into "democracy"

"In the most horrific crimes imaginable, innocent human beings have been beheaded, with videos of the atrocity distributed to shock the conscience of the world ... There can be no reasoning – no negotiation – with this brand of evil. The only language understood by killers like this is the language of force. So the United States of America will work with a broad coalition to dismantle this network of death ... We will use our military might ..."

So, once again, Obama bypasses and undermines the UN. The term

"evil" which PM Tony Abbott also bandies around is a reminder of Bush's "axis of evil", the next in line to be bombed into "democracy" "peace and freedom".

This is the same Obama who prior to the presidential elections in 2008, said, "I'm running for president to change course, not to continue George Bush's course... That's why there will be a clear choice in November, fighting a war without end or ending this war and bringing our troops home." Obama's conduct reveals clearly that like Bush and those before him, US presidents are mouthpieces with little control over policy.

Jack Shafer, in an article titled, "War without end" makes the point: "The US may still be fighting in Syria in 2024, 2034, 2044 ... In bombing Syria, President Obama, who inherited this war, has made this war his war, the next president's war, and our war. Today, tomorrow, and for as far as the eye can see. Perpetual war for perpetual peace." (Reuters, 24-09-2014)

Lynne Fox
Sydney

Fighting for public housing

The Atherton Gardens Residents Association (AGRA) in Fitzroy protested their blacklisting by the Brotherhood of St Lawrence on October 3. Residents marched from the housing estate at 140 Brunswick Street Fitzroy, to the Brotherhood of St Lawrence headquarters at 67 Brunswick Street.

The Brotherhood of St Lawrence, which handles room bookings on the estate, has essentially banned the Atherton Gardens Residents Association from holding meetings.

This is in response to AGRA's opposition to the state government's plans to create a council of handpicked community representatives. AGRA has been a vocal opponent of budget cuts and attacks on public housing residents. They recently occupied an NGO office in protest at cuts to a vital food program.

The state government's proposed new council is designed to sideline more fighting, democratic groups like AGRA.

These residents, some of the poorest people in Victoria, are opposed to all cuts and are engaging in militant action. They're a good example for others about how to effectively fight and stop cuts and attacks on their right to organise.

The Brotherhood of St Lawrence is doing the government's dirty work here, trying to stifle voices opposed to cuts.

Stephen Jolly
Socialist Party Councillor
for Fitzroy

Carbon tax swindle

It seems the carbon tax has been used as a big fig leaf for large price hikes.

I, like many Australians, have been waiting to see how much my energy bills would decrease after July 1, (repeal of carbon tax). My provider is AGL for electricity and gas.

On July 1 AGL increased their rates by around 10% and on the same date decreased the rates for my gas by 4.8% and my electricity

by 7.8% because of the repeal of the carbon tax.

Wanting to be an informed consumer I asked them why there had been a 10% increase. The Consumer Advocacy person at AGL couldn't quite explain but made a stab at it by suggesting infrastructure and maybe gas pipelines were being built but he couldn't be sure. Interestingly, last year on July 1, 2013 AGL rates went up around 5%.

AGL, and I assume other energy providers, have for some time now been collecting a significant percentage on our bills to supposedly cover the increased cost to them resulting from the Carbon Tax. This is despite the fact that the Carbon Tax was described as a useless tax which did not raise revenue and by implication was not significant impost on business costs.

AGL and other energy companies appear to be making hay while the sun shines.

Has anyone else noticed a similar upward trend in their energy bills?

Dorothy Costa
Sydney

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Scotland, Ukraine and the unemployed

Britain's capitalists were seriously perturbed at the prospect of Scotland breaking away from the "United Kingdom" before the outcome of the recent referendum. They marshalled all their resources to campaign for a "No" vote: both the Tories and Labour argued for it, former Prime Ministers were trotted out, Rupert Murdoch and even Barack Obama weighed in, and of course a misleading scare campaign was indulged in to frighten voters with alarming depictions of what a "Yes" victory would mean for Scotland's future prosperity.

In the end, as we know, the Scots voted to stay in the UK. And that, in my opinion, was actually the right decision. Although a vote in favour of independence would have had some psychological benefits, an independent Scotland would simply have been a very small capitalist country that would have struggled to be economically viable.

It is true that the Labour Party is stronger in Scotland than it is in England, but it is still a party of social democracy and will never challenge imperialism. To assume that an independent Scotland would be somehow more progressive and more democratic is to be naïve. To argue that without Scotland the UK would be "diminished" and consequently have less sway in NATO, for example, is equally unrealistic. Capitalist governments support one another on the basis of class, not land mass.

Supporters of the "Yes" vote argued that there were benefits that would accrue to the UK as a whole if they won. These included a weakening of the authority of the ruling class

throughout Britain and a diminution of Britain's status as a world power with a corresponding lessening of its influence in not just NATO but the UN, the G8, etc (where it is presently a prominent voice for reaction). However, these are changes that the British working class will achieve through nationwide struggle to change their government, not by manipulating the country's borders.

While the Scots were debating the question of independence, the people of Ukraine were enmeshed in imperialist machinations to sever "once and for all" the country's traditional ties to Russia and to actually turn it into a base for hostile military actions against its larger neighbour. The predominantly Russian-speaking eastern part of the country had to take up arms to protect itself from the attacks of the Kiev regime's military.

The latter – a motley collection of reluctant conscripts, anti-Russian volunteers from Chechnya, the Middle East and Europe and a core of revived Ukrainian fascists (followers of the Hitlerite Stepan Bandera) – shelled villages in the east and carried out terror attacks by balaclava-wearing death squads on perceived enemies, usually pro-Russian activists or Communists. Over 800,000 Ukrainians fled to Russia to escape the attacks. The hundreds of thousands who remained were left without electricity or drinking water.

However, the anti-fascist militias, largely comprised of defectors from the Ukrainian army, gave Kiev's forces such a sound drubbing that on September 5 they were obliged to accept the terms of a cease-fire negotiated in

Minsk. Although this agreement recognised limited autonomy for the Donetsk and Lugansk "People's Republics", prominent supporters of the pro-fascist, pro-NATO Kiev regime have already rejected any hopes of a federal structure for Ukraine, dooming the country to a renewed war as soon as Kiev feels able to undertake it.

In anticipation, the "Parliament" in Kiev (from which the deputies of the Left have been barred) ratified an "Association Agreement" that makes their part of Ukraine a very minor player in the EU, subject to severe economic and other constraints that will see it worse off than Greece. The parliament's decisions were carried out before a chanting, yelling crowd of pro-fascists who cheered each reactionary decision, especially the one (shades of Nazi Germany) that sanctioned the vetting of a million government employees to purge the civil service of anyone suspected of pro-Russian or left-wing sympathies.

At the same time, the Russian-language newspaper *Vesti* in Kiev had its office raided by armed and masked members of the Ukrainian secret police and its computers seized. Simultaneously three left-wing cadres, one each from the Borotba (Struggle) Movement, the Ukrainian Communist Party and the Communist Youth, were arrested on trumped up charges of "terrorism". The Borotba cadre, Vladislav Wojciechowski, was accused of being a member of the "Ukrainian Red Army" and of planning to blow up a hospital! (In Germany, of course, the Nazis accused the Communists of trying to burn down the Reichstag.)

Back in Britain, the Tory Minister of

State for Employment, Esther McVey, has announced the introduction of "attitude tests" to ascertain whether unemployed people are "determined", "bewildered" or "despondent" about taking a job. The tests are based on the fallacious assumption that the unemployed are out of work by choice; that they "don't want to work" and are content to "live on the dole". This belief is popular in Australia with well-paid conservative politicians who don't actually know any young people who have been put through the hoops by Centrelink as it tries to harass them into giving up and dropping out altogether (into what though? Begging? A life of crime?).

These same views are behind the new British tests, which will be used to segregate the unemployed into those worth helping (assuming the job agency has any help it can give in the absence of actual jobs), and those who are just a drain on the government's resources. The latter, as in Australia, will be harassed until they too give up and drop off the unemployment rolls and hence off the statistics, allowing the government to report a "drop" in the number of unemployed.

The inspiration for the new British tests comes from an Australian company called Ingeus, which was owned by Thérèse Rein (the wife of former PM Kevin Rudd), before she sold it off earlier this year for around \$220 million.

And still there are people who continue to think the Labor Party is on the side of the workers! ☘



An independent Scotland would simply have been a very small capitalist country that would have struggled to be economically viable.



Sunday October 12 –
Saturday October 18

In this week's episode of *Talking Language With Ernie Dingo* (NITV Sunday October 12 at 8.30pm), Ernie travels to the Coorong in South Australia to meet Ngarrindjeri Elder, Tom Trevorrow. Ngarrindjeri is a revival language with more than 250 speakers today. Tom traces the impact that missionary and colonial history, along with environmental changes in the Coorong's ecosystem, has had on the survival of the Ngarrindjeri language and culture.

One of the most significant recent documentaries has to be Dan Krauss' bleak examination of how the US military dealt with the revelation of atrocity committed by its troops in Afghanistan, *The Kill Team* (ABC2 Sunday October 12 at 9.10pm).

In early 2010, a group of US soldiers in southern Afghanistan – bored, frightened, angry, and primed to explode and led by a cowboy psychopath named Sergeant Calvin Gibbs, who collected fingers as trophies – intentionally killed civilians, planting weapons on their victims to stage the incidents as “good shoots.” They called themselves “The Kill Team.”

One soldier, Adam Winfield, alerted the military to the killings through his father, but his warnings went unheeded. Soon, Adam's fellow soldiers threatened to silence him – permanently – unless he took part too. That, they reasoned, would

force him to keep quiet because he would then be vulnerable to prosecution himself.

Weeks later, having blown the whistle anyway, Adam was flown back to Fort Lewis in Washington State and charged with premeditated murder. The government condemned Adam as a soldier who chose to ignore his conscience. It also clearly punished him for whistle-blowing.

Weaving together two parallel storylines – past and present – Krauss' film dips in and out of Adam Winfield's unfolding legal story to reveal piece by piece the increasingly devastating narrative in Afghanistan.

Robert Greene, writing in *Criticwire*, comments that “Krauss' movie is such a work of dexterity and ambiguity that it transcends the oft-staid tropes of the war documentary subgenre. This is a film where faces and captured gestures – the stuff of cinema – are as important as any of the story's grisly, headline-grabbing details.

“The heart of *The Kill Team* is Adam Winfield, who attempted to blow the whistle on his comrades' exploits but was eventually arrested and charged with murder himself. The film's perspectives on Winfield subtly change throughout, and these molecular shifts emphasise the moral haze wrought by war. ... These movements of character occur not just on the narrative level but also in how the camera sees Winfield and how we understand his behavioural gestures, a formal evocation at once subtle and stunning.

“The interviewees, including Winfield, have the glints and grins of boys who've been caught having too much fun playing soldier, the camera always perceiving these disquieting performances. The disconnect of watching these young men, charged with murder but still talking about war and killing as if they're playing with action figures while blasting the *Top Gun* soundtrack in their heads, is deeply unsettling. Their acned faces and exuberant eyes betray a disturbing relationship between the military and adolescent delinquency.

“The film certainly uses an



Adam Winfield and family react to sentencing – *Sunday Best* – *The Kill Team* (ABC2 Sunday October 12 at 9.10pm). (Photo: Dan Krauss)

unadorned style, but the way Krauss allows the viewer to perceive gestural clues from the people onscreen yields a complex and extremely subtle viewing experience.”

Funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Krauss' film was described by David Edelstein in *New York Magazine* as “inconsolably moving” and an “essential film”. *RogerEbert.com*'s Godfrey Cheshire – a long-time critic who has, more recently, directed documentaries of his own – noted that Krauss “allows us to assay the truth of their accounts from the smallest details of their gestures, intonations and self-presentation.” And in his mixed review at *Slant*, Christopher Grey called the film “a work of acute psychological journalism”.

The film has been criticised for focusing on Winfield, but as Greene says, “It is obviously true that a film could be made focusing solely on the Afghan victims. This just happens to not be that film.” As one of the young soldiers says candidly, “We were trained to kill.” (And to hate

the Afghans who fought them with improvised explosive devices.) So they did what they were trained to do.

One sequence that has been criticized juxtaposes an image of a murdered Afghan with an image of Winfield's father describing his family's situation as a “nightmare” while sitting next to a pool, an edit which in Greene's opinion “powerfully creates the sense of moral ambiguity that permeates the film. ... I found the look at the Winfield family to be a subtly scathing portrait of a promilitary family who allowed their son to be in this situation in the first place. ... There is little doubt that Winfield, is treated as a confused kid, trying to do the right thing, but falling far short of easy-to-digest heroism.”

There's big money in mining, and while mining companies in the centre of our continent are ripping off huge amounts of dosh by digging up and selling Australia's ancient minerals, they can afford to pay the men and women who actually do the hard yakka (without which the

companies would make zilch) high wages – sometimes very high wages.

The observational documentary series *Flying Miners* (ABC1 Tuesdays from October 14 at 8.30pm) looks at the advantages and disadvantages of FIFOs: Fly In Fly Out miners. The advantages are financial (very high pay), the disadvantages social (Isolation, loneliness, and heartache). But over 100,000 people choose to work this way.

What the series does not look at, of course, is such things as workers' rights, trade unions, health and safety, or whether our nation should receive a greater share of the wealth buried under Australia's Red Heart.

Also worth a look is the new series of *Wildest Islands* (SBS ONE Wednesdays from October 15 at 7.30pm), which delves into some of the most untouched habitats on earth, from the watery world of the Amazon to the tropical paradise of the Philippines, Japan's 7,000 islands, the rivers and creeks of Vancouver Island and the breathtaking coastline of the Falkland Islands. ☘

Sydney

Against execution, against torture

Solidarity Committee with the Iranian Workers' Movement presents:

26th anniversary of the execution of the political prisoners in Iran!

In commemoration of the thousands of comrades who sacrificed their lives for freedom & social justice, for emancipation of humanity from the clutches of oppression, exploitation & modern slavery!
Ever since the summer of 1988, when thousands of political prisoners were executed in Iran, we remember our fallen comrades who said NO to the Islamic regime's demands & were executed brutally by hanging.

Program

Solidarity messages from Australian left organisations
Guest speaker Shadi Amin Europe, feminist & political activist
Film: *Tell me of the Sea*, the latest work of film maker Reza Alamehazadeh

Saturday October 11 at 7pm
Pennant Hills Community Centre

Corner of Yarrara & Ramsay Road (Opposite of Pennant Hills Railway station)

Entrance fee: \$15 For further information, please contact: 0413489420

Solidarity Committee with Iranian Workers Movement- Australia – proletarianunite@gmail.com

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Sydney

POLITICS IN THE PUB

October 9

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

October 16

**CHANGES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT
SERVICES IN NSW: WHO GIVES THE BEST SUPPORT
FOR WOMEN FLEEING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WHY?**
Cat Gander, NGO Consulting Group and former Executive Officer
NSW Women's Refuge Movement;
Rachel Sim, From “No Shelter”, a collective against gendered violence;

October 23

**TEENAGE MENTAL HEALTH IS WORSENING &
CONTINUES TO BE SERIOUSLY UNDER RESOURCED –
WHAT MUST BE DONE?**
Ian Hickie, Professor, Executive Director, Brain and Mind Research
Institute, Sydney Medical School;
Sebastian Rosenberg, Dr, Senior Lecturer, Brain and Mind Research
Institute;

October 30

**THE POLITICS OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY – WHY ARE OUR
POLITICIANS APPEASING THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT?**
Cat Rose, Convenor, Community Action Against Homophobia
(CAAH);

Every Thursday 6:30 pm 'til 8:15 pm

Harold Park Hotel

Cnr Wigram Rd & Ross St Glebe

Charles Bradley 02 9692 0005
odl_bradley@pacific.net.au

www.politicsinthepub.org.au

Working to reclaim University of Illinois

Students and faculty are determined to keep challenging University of Illinois administrators' decision to fire Steven Salaita. This is the testimony given by Professor Vincente M Diaz before the University of Illinois Faculty Senate on September 22, 2014. Diaz spoke about the matter of Steven Salaita, whose hiring by the American Indian Studies program was formally rejected by the university's board of trustees earlier this month after a sustained smear campaign by pro-Israel donors, organisations, faculty and students:

Vincente M Diaz

My name is Vicente M Diaz. I am an Associate Professor in American Indian Studies and Anthropology. I am also an affiliate faculty member in History and Asian American Studies. I represent American Indian Studies; in fact, I co-chaired the search committee that recommended the hire of Steven Salaita.

I'm here to express moral indignation and outrage at the University of Illinois Board of Trustees' denial of Professor Salaita's hiring.

Far from over, and even further from correct, our leadership's decision is a wrongheaded and misguided action that has tarnished our university's reputation among academics who know and understand how academia is supposed to work.

"Harm's way"

It has also put us in actual harm's way, some of us more than others. Above all, this administration has willingly placed political expediency and possibly money over academic matters. Indeed, academics is the biggest casualty of our leadership's dereliction of its duties.

This casualty is most clearly visible and palpably experienced when viewed from our vantage point in American Indian Studies, the originating unit, where the proverbial rubber meets the road.

I begin by addressing a particularly insidious rumour of the sort that can come only from the kind of toxic environment that Chancellor Phyllis Wise has created and maintained.

It is a rumour that I've already had to lay to rest twice in private emails, namely, that our unit director, Professor Robert Warrior used his influence and power to hire Salaita, who was a student of his years ago at another university. Warrior did not ask me to do this and is not even aware that I'm doing so.

In fact, Warrior maintained his distance from Salaita's candidacy, and shame on those of you who are spreading this rumour in order to delegitimise him and my unit.

The fact that I even have to state in public that we did our due diligence, that our process and findings were affirmed at the college, provostial level and even by the chancellor's own vice chancellors, is itself a shameful testimony into just what kind of environment our leadership has plunged us.

Simply put, this case was a routine academic hire, properly vetted all the way up to where substance matters, and because all concerned tenure, it received additional vetting at the national and international levels.

Contrary to the accolades about her courage and bravado, the only courage that Chancellor Wise needed was to simply tell those donors and lobbyists that the case had been properly vetted and that she stands by the academic process. Period.

For it was actually she and President Robert Easter and the board of trustees who opened the floodgates by, in effect, capitulating to external pressure to block Salaita's hire,

whether or not she based her decision on their interests.

The simple fact is that she involved herself on non-academic grounds and made a decision on the most unscholarly of approaches and in the most clandestine of ways, with the blessings of the board and the president – or was it at their behest? – to indeed block Salaita's hire on decidedly non-academic terms.

Of course, it is precisely the contention of the thousands of scholars and dozens of academic organisations, departments and disciplines, that the real casualty is academic excellence itself.

Chilling effects

The chilling effects are now upon us. And this is on the chancellor, not on Salaita.

Three weeks ago, I received an email from an individual, unknown to me, inviting me to "discuss" the Salaita case at some undisclosed venue in Danville (25 miles east of Urbana).

Even a cursory read of the letter reveals it to be something other than a genuine interest in civil dialogue, as for instance, when its author addresses me – addresses me – as "foaming in the mouth" in support of a "rabid" Salaita, who is further described as "anti-Jewish" in a sentence that also conflates Palestine with Hamas.

Contrary to a well-orchestrated and financed smear campaign aimed at stopping his hire, it is in fact reductive to equate Salaita's anti-Zionist stance with anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic ideology, or to equate Palestine with Hamas.

Apparently, he has also been charged with siding with ISIS [Islamic State in Iraq and Syria] even if he had condemned that group in the same period in which he decried Israel's military assault on Palestinians.

Had Salaita only tweeted about ISIS, I dare say that I would not be standing here today, that he would not have been mistreated so.

There was something especially disturbing in that letter's urging me to bring to the meeting (way over there in Danville), "some of the Palestinian students" from UIUC. The targeting of this particular group of students should not be trivialised given how the author equates Palestine with terrorism. Nobody can read this letter and conclude that it intends anything other than something sinister passing as an invitation to dialogue.

I received this letter for no other reason than my public defence of Salaita and my disagreement with the university on academic terms. Precisely because the university musters all of its authority and resources so, we have now arrived at the point wherein to publicly disagree with the university is to be virtually cast as a supporter of terrorism, if not a terrorist.

It is bewildering that I have to explain to some that neither I nor Professor Salaita are rabid dogs who hate Jewish people. As for his fitness in the classroom, the preponderance of the evidence show him to be not only a stellar, but also a beloved teacher, one fully capable of subordinating or bracketing his politics in favour of student learning and real critical



Steven Salaita.

thinking. Passion, of course, is a prerequisite for compassion, and when combined with the demands and rigors of dispassionate analyses, they become ingredients for cutting-edge scholarship.

My claims here are best grasped on academic grounds, and in view of the negative consequences when academic regulations and sensibilities aren't adhered to. Also, and quite tellingly, the chancellor has yet to look us in the eye and explain her actions to us in particular.

I seriously doubt that she would ever have taken such an action were this a case of a hire in one of the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), or even in one of the traditional disciplinary departments, rather than American Indian Studies. I do believe she'd have done it to a partner Ethnic Studies unit.

I also think she saw us as collateral damage, but underestimated just how damaging her actions would be for the Humanities and the Social Sciences, which probably accounts for her expressions of regret. But these expressions are way too little and way too late.

In closing, like the heads of the 16 departments [who voted no confidence in Chancellor Wise], I still don't have confidence in her words, much less on her abilities to safeguard academic integrity.

And sure as the saying goes, that "an attack on one is an attack on all," the other side of the coin rings even more true here: that what is good for American Indian Studies as an academic unit is also good for the entire institution.

This principle of unit autonomy is the

bedrock of shared governance, which is key to proper academic governance, whose ultimate objective is to safeguard academic integrity and excellence. All other concerns must serve this mission because that is what we do and who we are.

Reclaiming the university

And so, when the chancellor and her supporters on campus urge us to pick up the pieces and move on, their words ring as vacuous, as hypocritical, and therefore as outrageous as the administration's reasons for targeting and pre-empting Salaita's academic hire in the first place, and then doubling down by using civility or teaching unfitness as the excuse.

Thus I call upon the Senate to rise and express moral and, if I may coin a term here, academic outrage at the administration's decision to place political and other considerations above academics.

And if, under this new regime, civility be the condition for expressing academic freedom and excellence, then let the appropriate expression be that of civil disobedience.

Move on? No. Colleagues, the work of reclaiming this university from those who would sell it to the highest bidder under the suspect mantra of civility has only just begun.

Stand up, stand up like Trustee James D Montgomery, who had the audacity to look at the evidence, and admit he was wrong in initially supporting the chancellor. Stand up for academic integrity and the academic excellence that is staked on it.

The Electronic Intifada ✪



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