In its latest move against organised labour, the government brazenly lies that its “Ensuring Integrity” bill to amend the Registered Organisations Act protects the interests of workers and complies with International Labour Organisation Conventions.

The Bill, introduced to Parliament on August 16, sets out to give the Employment Minister, Fair Work Commission, other individuals and even employer bodies, punitive powers to initiate proceedings for the disqualification of union officials from holding of office; for the deregistration of trade unions; to put a union into administration; and to prevent unions amalgamating.

This bill applies to all trade unions operating under the so-called Fair Work Act, although there are specific provisions designed to prevent the amalgamation of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and the Clothing, Footwear and Textile Union (CFTU).

It is based on the false premise that a “culture of lawlessness” pervades the trade union movement. This so-called “lawlessness” largely refers to breaches of industrial relations legislation or what is otherwise referred to as legitimate trade union business in the interests of workers – in fact the democratic right of workers to organise, agitate and educate their members in their own class interests.

The growing arsenal of anti-union laws can be turned on workers involved taking “unprotected” industrial action when an employer refuses to pay award rates of pay, or to address safety issues. Or it might relate to a union official seeking to enter a workplace to speak to members or for recruitment purposes.

The laws work in favour of the employers against workers’ interests, including health and safety.

The government’s Heydon Royal Commission, a politically motivated witch hunt against trade unions, made a number of recommendations to further undermine trade unions and criminalise legitimate trade union activity.

Employment Minister Michaelia Cash states that the legislation is in response to the recommendations of the Heydon Royal Commission. In fact it goes further than Heydon in his report.

**Disqualification from office**

The bill provides for the Federal Court to prohibit union officials from holding office if they contravene industrial and a range of other laws, are found in contempt of court, repeatedly fail to stop their organisation from breaking the law or are otherwise “not a fit and proper person to hold office in a registered organisation”.

The definition of “fit and proper person” includes “refusal, revocation or suspension of a right of entry or WHS [Workplace Health and Safety] permit”, certain criminal and civil offences and the catch-all “Any other matter the Court considers relevant.”

The onus of proof is on the union official to satisfy the Court that the order is not justified. These provisions only apply to events after the Act comes into force, but the Court can take previous conduct into consideration.

Continued on page 2
Hamid, a 31-year-old Iranian asylum seeker, was found hanged from a tree near the school close to the East Lorengau Transit Accommodation, on Manus Island.

Refugee advocates are deeply concerned at PNG police statements that they have ruled out “foul play” in regard to the death of Hamid. “It is impossible for the PNG police to rule out foul play. The hastiness of the declaration only makes it look more suspicious,” said Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

“A fair and just process knows that the cause of a death is suspicious. And anyone who is familiar with Hamid’s circumstances would know that Hamid had been arrested and beaten by the local police many times. The PNG police could not be relied on to carry out a thorough or impartial investigation. There are no facilities on Manus for an autopsy.”

Police are up against an independent autopsy and investigation to establish the cause of Hamid’s death on Monday August 7. An AFP officer was with Manus police at the scene where Hamid’s body was found near the school, making the Australian government directly implicated in Hamid’s death and the investigation.

Refugees and asylum seekers held a vigil for Hamid in Delta compound. Many said that on the day Hamid died, Hamid’s death brings the Manus detention death toll to five and seven overall on Manus and Nauru: lives cut short by the brutality of offshore detention. His murder and other problems were well-known for months. He had been held in prison at the Lorengau settlement, then was placed at the East Lorengau centre when he was released.

“There are no words to describe our pain,” said Dutton and Turnbull who are responsible for his death,” said Ian Rintoul.

The Lorengau settlement in Australia says Australia must accept liability “for the damage its cruel policies are causing refugees.” Following two protests earlier this month, the asylum seekers released the following statement:

“New Zealand wants us”

We have waited long enough! We have a right to be free and to know our future! We were tricked into being transferred to Nauru from Christmas Island, promised that we would be freed quickly and returned to New Zealand, who we believe are our country, are now in Australia. Some of us have children, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives and family in Australia. Our families are heartbroken and devasted from the separation.

We stopped protesting in November 2016, when the Prime Minister promised to free us and allow us to go to USA. We felt the life back come into our blood with just a bit of hope and thought of freedom. We are still not free nine months later! We are more tormented than ever because we were taintalised with a glimpse, and then slowly let down, yet again. We have been imprisonned for four years on Nauru. We are punished for our patience and still we are not free.

If Australia won’t take us, we accept that. Let us go to a country who wants us. New Zealand wants us. Let us go there, so we can be good loyal citizens and contribute to the community and build our future. We will get on with the day that we have been given. We want to work, to build our future, to live and die in peace. We want to return to our families, friends, to reunite and please have some compassion for us.

We try to talk with ABF and meet to discuss our future, your policy, our plans, our future. We cannot take this anymore, the lies and false promises are killing us and destroying our minds and souls.

We were promised safe accommodation in the community when we became refugees. Many refugees are still in the camp, denied phones with cameras, denied bringing in food and things you think is contraband. We are not free! We live under strict, high security detention control, robbed of our civil liberties because according to you “We fight for us to have a fair go.” If you say it is the Nauru government responsibility to provide housing. Nauru government says “We asked Australia for money to rent the houses. We are not in their responsibility.” Let us be free so we can be responsible for ourselves.

We try to talk with ABF and meet to discuss our future, your plans, our future. You have come to Nauru and met with everyone with an enthusiastic answer, promised us for New Zealand is in Australia to expel us and hold us prisoners in a place where we are simply a means for people to make money. Because their land was destroyed by your policies and good will.

People are still living like animals in the camps. The conditions have made everyone sick. The mould is toxic and dangerous. ABF, you know this conditions. We say your words because we want to return to Australia come to Nauru to test it. The experts stated that you are in breach of your duty of care if we remain living, or dying in the thought of this atrocity (see report).

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The Bill allows the Court to place trade unions or divisions or branches into administration or deregister them if they become dysfunctional or are no longer serving the interests of their members.

“Dysfunctional” includes multiple contraventions of the laws that result in deregistration of officials – i.e. breaches of bad laws restricting legitimate trade union activity and leadership from officials.

Dysfunctional might also be the engagement in financial misconduct by one or more officials – a crime better dealt with by police dealing with the offender.

Amalgamations

Finally, the Bill introduces a so-called “public interest test” for union amalgamations which has nothing to do with the public interest. Like all the other provisions in the Bill it is all about sickening employer interests at the expense of trade unions and workers.

If the Fair Work Commission considers that a union has “a record of not complying with the law” then it must decide that amalgamation is not in the public interest.

The notion of what compliance with the law means is along the same lines as the provisions for disqualifi-

ation from office and deregistration – disobeying bad laws and fighting for interests of workers.

As with the other provisions this runs roughshod over Australia’s legal obligations under international law. It denies the right of trade union members to express their wishes in democratically held ballots.

When the Hastiness of the declaration only makes it look more suspicious,” said Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition.

A fair and just process knows that the cause of a death is suspicious. And anyone who is familiar with Hamid’s circumstances would know that Hamid had been arrested and beaten by the local police many times. The PNG police could not be relied on to carry out a thorough or impartial investigation. There are no facilities on Manus for an autopsy.”

ONE of the reasons they feel they’ve been able to get away with it is because of their size,” Cash added either ignorantly or dishonestly. The MUA is not a large union.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus, made the point in respect of the so called “public interest test”, that “the Bill does not even pretend to be about protecting union members’ interests or guaranteeing the demo-

cratic functioning of organisations, but instead it cites ill-defined eco-

nomical justifications for overriding members’ democratic rights.”

She summed the Bill up saying, “effectively it is about having corpora-

te Australia say a over what unions look like and how they operate. This is fundamentally undemocratic and will only result in achieving what all big business want for themselves, even lower wages growth.

This is not an ‘in the public interest’ test, it is an in ‘big business interest’ test’. The Bill is wholly opposed by the union movement. It is politically motivated.”

Just last week a father of four died and another young worker was critically injured on building sites.

So, while the government contin-

ues to turn a blind eye to the ongo-

ing scandals in the banking industry that cost workers their savings at the same time it is stepping up its attack on trade unions to make it even more difficult for them to ensure workers can return home to their loved ones or receive their legal entitlements.

The Bill has been referred to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee which is due to report on October 9, 2017.

Pauline Hanson created a sensation last week by wearing a burqa into the Senate chamber. But Attorney-General George Brandis also surprised everyone with an emotional speech attacking Hanson for her lack of respect and her cruelty in persecuting Muslim women over their choice of dress.

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Issues raised in this week’s total $110 Progressive total: $4,710

G Dittura $10, C Greer $50, MM $10, “Rough Red” $5, “Round Figure” $10, Digireb $25

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Incredibly, just about anyone can initiate proceedings – the Minister, or someone with “sufficient information” about the facts or the taking of obstructive action by the organisation or its members, non-union or union worker, non-member or union member or rival candidate for union office, to punish the organisation or its members.

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George Templeton Strong, 1861, on the American Civil War

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The bird of our country is a debilitated chicken, diced out in eagle feathers. We have never been a nation; we are only an aggregate of communities, ready to fall apart at the first serious shock.

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The cashless welfare card is not a remedy to complex social problems, according to the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA). The peak body for Aboriginal health in WA, AHCWA is challenging the outgoing Police Commissioner Karl O’Callaghan, who wrote in an opinion piece for The West Australian about sexual abuse of children in remote Indigenous communities.

O’Callaghan said that extending the Coalition government’s cashless welfare scheme to Roebourne would mean the “amount of money available in the town to facilitate criminal activity would significantly decrease”.

AHCWA chairperson Michelle Nelson-Cox said there has been no conclusive evidence to date that cashless welfare cards – introduced on the recommendation of billionaire miner Andrew Forrest – play any role in reducing the impact of issues such as illicit drug use or child sexual abuse.

“One thing that is clear is that the cashless welfare card is not the solution,” Nelson-Cox said.

The reality is there are a large number of people very unhappy with the way they have been affected by the cashless welfare system imposed by the federal government.

“AHCWA supports the government’s commitment to improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal people and prevent child sexual abuse, but we do not support the ill-conceived idea that cashless welfare cards can turn the tide on the abhorrent abuse of children,” she said.

“Instead, greater investment is needed in programs that address social determinants and build strong families and communities.

“Ultimately, we need to see an increase in community programs and comprehensive support services to help address these complex social issues in Aboriginal communities.”

“Lack of commitment”

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“Ultimately, we need to see an increase in community programs and comprehensive support services to help address these complex social issues in Aboriginal communities.”

Nelson-Cox said O’Callaghan’s admissions that his officers could not protect children in remote communities was gravelly concerning.

“At what point does the buck stop with police and governments to keep communities safe? Why have the high instances of sexual abuse not been addressed earlier?” she asked.

From the archives

I Do Not Write Poetry for Eternity

I do not write poetry for eternity
I write for here and now,
For you and me,
For two singing larks by the window,
For a homeless mother and her child whose screams
Woke me up last night,
For my son Azad who is not Azad anymore*
Having no time to read my new poem,
For my lover Wendy who is the first reader of my poetry
And helps me with its translation,
For my readers in exile and prison,
For an Iranian tattooer on a Venice boardwalk
Who saw the inscription of my poetry on the wall
And was the first one to let me know,
For an American veteran at the bus stop
When on my return from Wednesdays’ farmers’ market
Recited a Khayyam’s quatrain
And I rewarded him with four tangerines.

I do not write poetry for eternity
I write for here and now
And always put the date of composition
Under my poems.

Majid Naficy
July 18, 2017

* Azad in Persian means “free”.

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Call for action on abuse of youth

The Change the Record Coalition has called for a national response to end the abuse of children in detention, following allegations of violence and mistreatment in ACT youth detention facilities. The most recent report is part of a growing list of revelations of abuse of children in detention around Australia, including Queensland’s Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, the Northern Territory’s Don Dale Detention Centre and Victoria’s Barwon Prison.

“Change the Record co-chair Cheryl Axleby said the whistleblower reports from the ACT are extremely concerning, alleging over six years of violence inside the Bimberi Youth Detention Centre.”

These appalling accounts highlight an extremely concerning state of affairs for Australia’s youth justice systems,” she said. We urgently need federal leadership to shine a light on abuses in all jurisdictions, and immediate action to ensure the protection of all children in the justice system.”

ALHR ACT convener Sangeeta Sharmin called on people with more information to come forward by contacting the ACT Human Rights Commission.

Exploitation Updates

Wage rises fell to a near-record low of 2.7% a year in private sector agreements approved in the March quarter and a record low of 2.4% in public sector deals, according to the Department of Employment. The private sector increase is the lowest since the early days of formal enterprise bargaining in the December quarter of 1991, when only three agreements were recorded.

The research, released last week, found that

- Almost eight in ten young workers have experienced wage-theft. Fifty-six percent had been required to work an unlawful unpaid trial shift.
- Half of young people aged 15 to 25 had been placed in working conditions that were unsafe.
- Seventy percent of young workers had experienced bullying or harassment while at work.

Awareness of workplace rights and safety rights was low. Experiences were generally worse for young women at work, and young LGBTI workers.

Failures by regulators at a federal and ACT level had contributed to a culture where adult employers could exploit and steal from young workers without consequence. Working in unsafe workplaces was also common for young workers aged under 18 (children), despite additional ACT laws designed to protect child employees.

“From their very first job, thousands of young workers are being exploited by adult employers,” said Alex White.

UnionsACT research into the experiences of workers aged between 15 to 25 shows that 76 percent of young workers have experienced wage theft, and 56 percent have been forced to work an illegal unpaid trial shift.

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Multinational mining giant Glencore has posted a massive half yearly profit as it locked out 180 miners in Oaky North, Queensland, for a further 11 days. “Glencore is the poster child for corporate greed and trickle-down economics in Australia today,” Tony Maher, CFMEU Mining Division national president said. “They have just reported a 53 percent increase in their revenue from coal. At the same time, they are trying to strip away rights and conditions from the very workers whose labour has delivered surging earnings to them.” The latest Oaky North lockout brings the total number of days locked out in the last three months to 36. The company also attempted to stop the workers from a peaceful and legal picket at the front gates of the mine, forcing them to the Magistrates Court to have the picket line reinstated. Glencore has stripped away 50 percent of working conditions from a version of an agreement that 99 percent of the Oaky North mine’s workforce previously voted down in a ballot called by the company.

Rip-off in nation’s capital

Perth Public meeting

The Venezuelan revolution is facing its biggest crisis since the US-backed attempted coup of 2002. The mainstream media narrative is of protests against a dictatorial government. Where in fact it is the violent and extreme right-wing nature of the opposition, the economic sabotage by Venezuelan elites and Western powers and attempts to undermine the progressive achievements of the revolution. Hear first-hand accounts of what is really going on.

6:30 pm Thursday August 24
Perth Activist Centre
5/5 Aberdeen St East Perth
Citizen Turnbull on thin ice

Peter Mac

The Turnbull government is skating on very thin ice indeed. This week the High Court of Australia will begin hearing the cases of several parliamentarians, including the Prime Minister of the government, who may be guilty of having violated Section 44 of the Australian constitution, which prohibits certain persons from taking parliamentary office, in particular Subsection (i), which bans them from being MPs if they hold dual citizenship.

The current cases were sparked on July 14 when former Greens Senator Scott Ludlam announced he had discovered he had New Zealand as well as Australian citizenship. Four days later Greens Senator Larissa Waters disclosed she had Canadian citizenship. Both senators resigned immediately from the Senate and apologised publicly for their oversight.

A recent opinion poll found that only 16 percent of respondents considered most MPs to be honest and ethical. The two Greens Senators acted with impeccable ethics, but Prime Minister Turnbull sneered at their “carelessness” and Deputy leader Barnaby Joyce declared triumphantly that resignation was the only option because in the Constitution “it’s black and white.”

A week later federal resources Minister Matt Canavan discovered he had Italian citizenship. He resigned from cabinet but not from parliament as the Greens had done. The legal issues had suddenly become not nearly so black and white as Joyce had claimed.

On August 9, One Nation Senator Malcolm Roberts denied he has ever been a British citizen, even though documents indicated he had. Five days later Barnaby Joyce himself admitted that he had New Zealand citizenship because his father was born in Cyprus in 1957.

This was a potential catastrophe for the government. If Canavan had resigned from parliament he could at least have been replaced as a Senator by another coalition nominee. But if the High Court finds that Joyce is not entitled to be a member of the Lower House, the government would be immediately stripped of its one-seat majority in that chamber and a by-election would be required for Joyce’s vacant seat.

If the government lost the by-election, it would be forced to hold a general election, which it would almost certainly lose. The government is now insisting that Joyce doesn’t have to resign from the cabinet because it has received an optimistic prediction from the Solicitor-General about the High Court’s decision.

The government had absolutely supported the legitimacy of the decision by Ludlam and Waters to resign, but last week Attorney-General George Brandis contradicted this, sneering that they appear to have made “a serious error of judgment.”

On August 17, Fiona Nash, National Party deputy leader, admitted she had British citizenship because her father was Scottish.

By this time the government was panicking. Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop declared in near hysteria that the Labor Party had betrayed the nation by conspiring with its New Zealand counterpart to determine who was born with dual citizenship, with a view to bringing down the Turnbull government.

This was incorrect in point of fact, but also irrelevant because Joyce’s was a matter of public interest and because it’s the opposition’s job to bring down the government.

Senator Nick Xenophon was the next Constitutional victim. His father was born in Cyprus in 1957 prior to its achieving independence from Britain. Because he then moved to Australia he and his family were granted British “overseas citizenship”.

Ironically, Xenophon’s father left Cyprus because he opposed British colonial rule. And “overseas citizenship” is a really dubious honour.

A dangerous anachronism

Subsection (i) assumes that the loyalty of Australian citizens with dual nationalities is inherently suspect. It’s a xenophobic anachronism because all Australian parliamentarians have to take an oath of loyalty before assuming office. New Zealand and Canada manage very well with no constitutional equivalent to Subsection (i).

As columnist Mungo MacCallum observed, the authors of the Constitution were primarily concerned with “loyalty to the mother country and keeping potential intruders – French, Russians, Americans, and of course all the lesser breeds – as far from harm as way possible.”

However, the xenophobia reflect ed in the Constitution also arose from the fact that when it was written Australia comprised a huge, sparsely-inhabited resource-rich but largely indefensible land mass on the edge of Asia, which Britain had taken by force from its original inhabitants.

Indeed, the Constitution denied Aboriginal people the rights of citizenship (until the 1967 referendum), including the right to vote, and the earliest legislation of the newly-installed Australian federal government enshrined the white Australia policy.

In 1901, 97 percent of Australians were born within the British empire, the right to live in Britain 30 percent were born outside Australia or have one foreign-born parent. According to one estimate, approximately 4 million Australians have dual citizenship and are not entitled to be a member of the federal MP unless they renounced their other nationality.

The Court may deal leniently with MPs who can provide evidence they took reasonable steps to revoke their other citizenship. However, ignorance is no excuse for breaking the law, and as Ramesh Takur, ANU professor in public policy has pointed out, if the law is fully applied, breaches of Subsection (i) could result in financial penalties, including repayment of salaries and the imposition of fines.

The Court may apply penalties in the extreme seven cases. Moreover, under current law, any citizen may seek enforcement of a penalty against someone who is in parliament in breach of the Constitution.

But Subsection (i) is not the only Constitutional anachronism. The biggest of all is the fact that as a remnant of Britain’s imperial past the Queen can claim citizenship of 16 countries of which she is now head of state, while Australians who hold British nationality cannot act as a member of their own parliament!

What is to be done?

Some MPs have called for the government to be prorogued while a total audit of the nationality of MPs is carried out. But that could take months.

The High Court may interpret the Constitution so as to eliminate the problem, but that’s unlikely because some MPs have already been barred from taking office because of Subsection (i).

The Constitution should be amended so that parliamentary membership is not prohibited for those holding dual citizenship. In 2003 former Greens leader Bob Brown almost got the required absolute majority support for a referendum bill to change Section 44, but was defeated by the absence of some Labor members and the opposition of conservative members including National Party senator Bill O’Chre.

Ultra-conservative forces would probably oppose a new attempt to alter the Constitution regarding Subsection (i). In the past Turnbull himself might have supported a referendum on the issue, but on recent form he’s most unlikely to do so now, because he depends heavily on the very unreliable support of the Tony Abbott clique and other parliamentarians.

Former Prime Minister Bob Hawke has pointed out that the whole Constitution needs a thorough review, but the present government would never assume that responsibility.

The government has used nationality as a political weapon, having threatened to strip Australian citizenship from any citizen with dual nationality who participates in military conflict or terrorism. It also maintains that Australians born in New Zealand must renounce citizenship. If asylum seekers now sought offshore will not have Australian citizenship.

As Eureka Street editor Fatima Meaham commented recently: “…the notion that citizenship is conditional for a specific subset of the citizenry surely undermines citizenship itself.”

But now the government is faced with the strong possibility that it will lose power because of the Constitution’s dual nationality anachronism, which it has refused to tackle.

The validity of legislation that the Turnbull government has passed with its tiny majority might also be called into question, if the court finds that the presence of members of the government or its crossbench supporters was invalid because of Subsection (i).

The government has lost the support of its last loyal crossbencher, Cathy McGowan regarding confidence and supply, and she has joined Labor and others in demanding the resignation of ministers Joyce and Nash.

And the government faces a parliamentary privileges inquiry into former Minister Bruce Billson, who it appears was involved with the Franchising Council while still a Member of Parliament. Backbench Senator Barry O’Sullivan and assistant Health Minister David Gillespie are dealing with similar charges under Subsection (iv), which prohibits anyone who is benefiting by payments from the public purse from taking a parliamentary position.

This has stalled initiatives to deal with climate change, sought to bring tax relief to the nation’s richest citizens, left asylum seekers imprisoned offshore with no hope of release, attempted to slowly cripple Medicare and has supported reductions in pay for the nation’s poorest workers.

The constitutional crisis may bring about the government’s downfall and many would say the sooner the better.
Book Review by John Green

**Invaluable History Of Post-War Squatting**

**Squatting in Britain 1945-1955: Housing, Politics and Direct Action**

By the end of the second world war, many British cities had been badly damaged. Aerial bombardment had destroyed over 200,000 houses and soldiers returned home to be confronted with this acute shortage.

The election of a Labour government in 1945 was a clear sign that working people were not prepared to return to the old pre-war system. Sick of slum-landlordism, sublet racketeer – sounds familiar – exorbitant rents and overcrowding, they wanted change.

Don Watson’s book describes how many young couples wishing to start a family, and those already with children, were not prepared to wait for the slowly grinding wheels of government to build the houses they needed.

They took matters into their own hands and in many parts of the country groups of people, often led by local communists, took over old army buildings, derelict houses and even unoccupied luxury flats to set up home.

The last thing those in power want is to see working people taking the initiative to ameliorate their own living conditions. The rash of squatting movements rattled central and local governments whose desire was owned by local authorities.

Although the squatting movement represented a vital aspect of post-war people’s history it has rarely been taken seriously or dealt with in a comprehensive way by mainstream historians. No doubt the key role played by communists was not exactly conducive to giving it due attention.

But that’s why Don Watson’s excellent book, probably the first comprehensive examination of the squatting phenomenon to be written and based on meticulous and extensive research, is so valuable.

For the first time, we have a proper history of this unique movement. *Squatting in Britain 1945-1955: Housing, Politics and Direct Action* by Don Watson (Merlin Press)

Morning Star

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**Pride: The Unlikely Story of the True Heroes of the Miners’ Strike**

Writers often struggle with the personal accounts offered up by those whose stories they are trying to capture. Memory has been called the greatest myth maker. As diligent as we strive to do – even keeping notes and journals – the archivist in us can be elbowed out by the storyteller.

Anecdotes and tales acquire flourish, with motivations “clarified” and personalities simplified. A tough task, then, for author Tim Tate in writing “the inspiring true story” behind the hit film *Pride*.

Not only was he faced with reconciling accounts from some 20 players in this key piece of working-class history but another writer had got there first and splashed the whole damn lot all over the big screen.

In writing the screenplay for the film *Pride*, Stephen Beresford employed some creative techniques – creating composite figures, portraying some in the mining village of Owellen as homophobic and erasing any mention that activist Mark Ashton was a communist.

But his skilful work brought the story of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) to a worldwide audience. More than that, it’s inspired more activists in the same mould, especially in support of migrants.

Tate is an investigative journalist by trade. Good choice. He told LGSM and their Welsh comrades from the start that he would not be telling their story. They would.

The book’s format, recollections in the participants’ own words, may seem unsophisticated. Yet it works, because those words come from people who have never forgotten the events of 1984-85.

There were cultural clashes when the two groups met but LGSM “originals” are delighted that the book can deliver munches the film didn’t.

As LGSM’s Clive Bradley says: “It’s important to realise that the transformative power of LGSM wasn’t just in one direction. “It wasn’t just a case of these worthy cosmopolitan Londoners bringing pasta and opera to the remote valleys. These were communities that had generations of miners who had a radical tradition and they didn’t need lefties from London to tell them about all this stuff.”

What resonates in the voices the book captures is the realisation that any differences were never going to stop these groups from fighting a common enemy. It was political synergy that bonded them.

Dave Lewis, another LGSM “original”, says in the concluding pages: “If anyone reading this still believes that the British state is liberal, plural, benevolent or paternal, please look and see just how that state machine was treating the striking miners in 1984.

And then take our story with you into future battles – because you need to know what you’re up against in order to stand a chance at victory.”

And so say all of us.

Pride: *The Unlikely Story of the True Heroes of the Miners’ Strike* by Tim Tate (John Blake Books)

Morning Star
The threats from US President Donald Trump and the Pentagon to “destroy the North Korean people” – said with such casual cold-heartedness – shows that the American ruling class has no compunction about committing the supreme crime of genocide against innocent civilians.

Those threats to North Korea, coming in the same week that the world marked the 72nd anniversary of the Americans dropping two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 killing over 200,000 people, are deeply connected. An understanding of the connection is essential to achieving a peaceful resolution of the current crisis and the avoidance of a catastrophic war.

Speaking from his New Jersey private golf club, Trump gibbly said the power that the US would unleash against North Korea would be “like something the world has never seen before”. This bravado utterance of carrying out such devastation demonstrates the genocidal mentality that underpins the American rulers. Trump’s words were repeated by his Pentagon chief James Mattis who warned the North Korean people of imminent “destruction”.

To make any kind of equivalence between the Communist North Korean state and the Korean people of imminent “destruction” demonstrates the genocidal mentality that underpins the American rulers. Trump’s words were repeated by his Pentagon chief James Mattis who warned the North Korean people of imminent “destruction”.

Also the rhetoric: Kim Jong-un may use terror to overthrow Japanese colonial occupation. From the nuclear genocide in Japan, arose the inevitable division of Korea into a Communist North and its Chinese ally. Reconstituted from Korean quislings who had been subjected to it within living memory, of terror. The people were compelled to live in caves because the Americans had destroyed every city with conventional weapons killing of two million civilians in the process.

As Martin Hart-Landsberg recounts in his superb book on Korean history, the purpose of the American first strike with nuclear weapons on Japan was to cast a shadow of terror on the region and thereby to halt the advance of Soviet forces in the Pacific, in particular from the total liberation of all of Korea in alliance with the Korean Communist resistance guerrillas who had been fighting to overthrow Japanese colonial occupation.

From the nuclear genocide in Japan, arose the inevitable division of Korea into a Communist North and its Chinese ally. Reconstituted from Korean quislings who had been subjected to it within living memory, of terror. The people were compelled to live in caves because the Americans had destroyed every city with conventional weapons killing of two million civilians in the process.

The American military backing the South con- templated the use of nuclear weapons against the Communist North and its Chinese ally. Nuclear-capable American bombers would fly over the northern territory in a deliberate act of terror. The people were compelled to live in caves because the Americans had destroyed every city with conventional weapons killing of two million civilians in the process.

When American forces today fly nuclear-capable B-1 bombers over the Korean Peninsula – as they did again last week just as Trump was issuing his “fire and fury” threat – the people of North Korea have every reason to fear Armageddon from the skies. They have been subjected to it within living memory, and ever since the end of the Korean War they have had to live under the American shadow of genocide. The Americans refused to sign a peace treaty at the end of the Korean War in 1953. Technically, therefore, the US is still at war in the peninsula. The perennial presence of American military forces in South Korea and the multiple war manoeuvres conducted every year is a stark reminder to the North that hostilities could resume at any time.

Let’s put this into proper perspective, as opposed to being hoodwinked by Western media bias and distortion. North Korea is a reclusive state largely because it has been living under an unlawful siege from American forces for 64 years. A lot of what the Western public know about North Korea is from caricatures levelled by American propaganda aimed at demonising the enemy. But from what we can tell from fragments of information, the people are largely content with their political system. So why don’t we just let them live in peace?

After all, North Korea has not attacked any of its neighbours, nor does it interfere in the region. All it wants is to have the right to exist peacefully, and not under the continual threat of nuclear annihilation by the United States. Hence, it devotes much of its national resources to its nuclear arms program.

Lawrence Wilkerson, who served in the US State Department during the GW Bush presidency, candidly admits that negotiations with North Korea were never honoured by Washington. Wilkerson worked with the North Koreans on an earlier nuclear accord during the 2000s, in which Pyongyang committed to scrapping its nuclear weapons program in exchange for Western aid to develop civilian atomic energy. But, he says, the Bush administration reneged on its side of the bargain, referring to North Korea as “an axis of evil”. Reasonably, Pyongyang then resorted to building up its defences with nuclear weapons.

When President Trump disparaged the “failures” of previous Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations in dealing with North Korea, he was either mendacious or ignorant – probably the latter. The “failure” of US policy in Korea is that it has deliberately never allowed diplomacy to succeed.

That’s because American geopolitics is fundamentally all about maintaining hegemonic ambitions of dominance, not just in the Asia-Pacific but in every other region of the world. It is an essential part of how US capital- ism functions. That dominance is underpinned by American military aggression – and in particular the self-ordained right to wage war on anyone who dares to defy the American global order, including the preemptive use of nuclear weapons on civilians.

Former British foreign minister Malcolm Rifkind in an article for Russia’s Valdai discussion forum, asserted that: “There is no simple solution available to resolve this [Korean] crisis”. Why intelligent Russians would feel obliged to listen to the likes of Rifkind is a curious question.

In any case, Rifkind is plain wrong. There may appear to be no simple solution in the mindset of people like Rifkind who are imbued with pro-US imperialist propaganda and who unquestioningly view North Korea as “the problem” (just as these same kind of people regard Iran, Russia, Venezuela, Syria, Cuba and so on as problems).

But in actual fact there is a straightforward and accurate solution to the never-ending conflict in Korea.

That is, for the US to withdraw its military and its relentless threats of aggression towards North Korea. The US needs to sit down with North Korea and the other nations of the region, including China and Russia, and discuss as equals the requirements for peaceful coexistence. For a start, the US should be compelled to sign a decades-overdue peace treaty with North Korea and to openly state that it repudiates the use of violence for its political objectives.

A solution is at hand. It simply requires the US to start abiding by international law and to renounce its genocidal pretense to destroy other people.

The stronger powers in the region, Russia and China, must insist on this basic requirement. They must state clearly that all-party talks should be convened immediately and that all sides must commit to peaceful settlement. No exceptions, no excuses.

What is ultimately problematic – and the world will see this – is that the United States as we know it under its ruling system will not and cannot abide by this simple solution. Because it is inherently a warmongering rogue regime which “exceptionally” arrogates the “right” to cast the shadow of annihilation on the rest of the world.

Information Clearing House
Fulfilling the President’s agenda

John Wojcik

NEW YORK: In a statement that rang out like a shot heard ‘round the world, President Donald Trump last week deftly blamed anti-Nazi protesters for much of the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia and declared that the KKK and neo-Nazis had been treated “unfairly” by the media.

Trump triggered worldwide outrage when he said of the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, during which a Nazi sympathiser murdered a counter-protester and two policemen were killed, that there was “blame on both sides.”

Trump insisted that what he called the “alt-left” bore blame for the violence too. Late on the Saturday, a 20-year-old Nazi sympathiser, James Fields, ploughed his car into a crowd of anti-Nazi protesters, killing one woman and leaving 19 others hospitalised.

Trump shocked the world in a contentious exchange with reporters at New York’s Trump Tower.

“I think there is blame on both sides,” he said, as John Kelly, his chief of staff, looked down in embarrassment.

“You had a group on one side that was bad and you had a group on the other side that was also very violent. And nobody wants to say that but I’ll say it right now. What about the alt-left (sic) that came charging through a crowd of peaceful protesters. Martin was hit and upended as the car ploughed through the crowd. Flat on his back and with a broken leg, he said he experienced several minutes of terror.

“The only thing running through my mind was please don’t let her be dead,” Martin, 26, told the Associated Press in an interview, “Please don’t let her be dead.” Marissa Blair, it turned out, was alright even though Martin himself had tumbled over the crashing car that then hit and killed Heather Heyer.

Protestors hold signs in front of the White House in Washington to protest the weekend’s violence in Charlottesville.

Equating the KKK and the Nazis with the “left” and Black Lives Matter is a major goal of the right-wing extremists at this time. Trump has shown that he is in lockstep with reaching that goal. Those who try to push that outrageous false equivalency have their backers overseas too. Early this afternoon, Yair Netanyahu, the son of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a right-winger in his own light, came out and tried to make the same point, according to a story in Times of Israel.

“To put things in perspective,” Netanyahu Jr wrote on Facebook: “I’m a Jew, I’m an Israeli, the neo-Nazi scums in Virginia hate me and my country. But they belong to the past. Their breed is dying out. However the thugs of Antifa and Black Lives Matter who hate my country and America too in my view are getting stronger and stronger and becoming super dominant in American universities and public life."

A key point Netanyahu misses is that the President of the United States is using the White House and top agencies of government, including the Justice Department, to breathe new life into the neo-Nazis and the KKK and make pieces of their agenda a reality.

In addition, neither Netanyahu nor anyone else, of course, can point to anyone ever killed by Black Lives Matter or Antifa. White supremacists, the KKK, and the Nazis have killed far too many people here and around the world to ever begin to count.

The KKK and the neo-Nazis see Trump’s remarks as a turning point for them. They see his remarks as a signal that the President of the United States is behind them. He gives them hope that they may have a shot at regaining the status and political sway they had in the 1920s when 50,000 robed and hooded Klansmen marched down Washington’s Pennsylvania Avenue.

They see Trump as willing to rescue them from the political fringes and bring them into the front and centre of the political arena. It emboldens them and, unfortunately, we can probably expect more of the kind of marches we saw in Charlottesville.

The anti-Klan and anti-Nazi movements, however, are coming out against this plan and linking their opposition to the white supremacists, to the need to fight the entire right-wing political agenda — including mass deportation of immigrants, the so-called war on drugs, voter suppression, and all the other reactionary policies of the last few decades. That policy, by the way, has been put forward consistently by the so-called “respectable” Republicans.

Another very important point was made by the Reverend William Barber. He spoke to the fact that many of those who voted for Trump actually want no part of these extremist right-wing groups.

“White nationalists don’t care about white America ... they don’t support living wages for the working poor, they don’t support health care for the working poor. They support the kind of policies that would take these things away from people.”

People’s World
Stop drift to war

Donald Trump’s “fire and fury” statement, directed at the Democratic People’s Republic of (North) Korea, and reinforced by even more intemperate language last Thursday, is the height of irresponsibility and increases the danger that something that neither side intends will lead to a major war on and around the Korean Peninsula.

Trump’s erratic and unstable behaviour, the all-right-gang with fascistic ties who surround him, the presence of so many hard-line military figures, the calls for military action by far-right extremists in and out of government, and the many lies, distortions and hysteria promoted by media sources, increase the danger exponentially.

Trump’s bellicose statements and policies are being repudiated around the world. A recent poll of American people wants to exhaust all diplomatic options and nearly 60 percent oppose a pre-emptive military strike. Only a global outcry for peace will stop the drift to war.

The Communist Party of the USA stands in solidarity with the people of both Koreas and of the world. In addition to direct casualties caused by US militarism and the devastations of the belligerents, there would be mass starvation and a huge refugee crisis, in a world already awash in refugees. The economic damage would be incalculable. The lesson of the “regime change” war in Iraq should not be forgotten.

Many people are not familiar with the context of the present conflict. From 1910 to 1945, the Japanese Empire occupied Korea, imposing an especially cruel and exploitative regime. This regime was brutally repulsed by the people of the Korean Peninsula in World War II, when the Japanese were defeated, the peninsula was divided and the United States and the USSR supported different factions in the South and North of the country, respectively.

In the South, the United States supported a right-wing regime, headed by Syngman Rhee, in which officials who had collaborated with the Japanese occupation continued serving. Rhee’s regime carried out violent repression of all dissent. In the North, the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China supported the government led by Kim Il-Sung, which embarked on a social-imperialist orientation.

People sought reunification of their country, but this was blocked, principally, by the United States. This was the root of the Korean War of 1950 to 1952. The Korean War devastated both North and South Korea, but its impact on the North was far worse. Saturation bombing raids by the US and its allies, acting in the name of the United Nations at that time, levied the North’s infrastructure, stopping its economy and killing hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of innocent civilians, in addition to loss of life of military personnel of both Koreas, of the US and its allies, and of civilians. The United States dropped more bombs on North Korea than it did in all of the Pacific theatre of the Second World War.

Over two million Koreans and 50,000 US military personnel died in the conflict.

The Korean War never ended. In 1953, actual fighting was stopped by the total collapse of a provisional armistice treaty formally ending the war has ever been signed. Many of the regimes in the South that the United States subsequently supported used the fear of the North to perpetuate themselves in power and to suppress all dissent against their despotism and corrupt policies.

The DPRK is pursuing a nuclear weapons program because they think it the only way to preserve their national sovereignty and prevent an overthrow of their government by the United States, a concern heightened by “regime change” in Iraq and Libya. In fact the DPRK has vowed to put their nuclear weapons systems on the negotiating table if the US threat to their country ends.

However, the testing of nuclear weapons and delivery systems by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and threats to use them won’t guarantee a peaceful resolution of the present tension, especially given the current occupant of the White House.

The 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was a major step forward for humanitv. However, the United States and its allies have resisted all attempts to take the next logical step of achieving worldwide disarmament, and have confined themselves to stop- ping any other countries from join- ing the “nuclear club.” This will not make the Japanese safer. After the con- tradictory real safety lies in abolishing nuclear weapons altogether. It is incumbent on all nations, including the United States and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, to do the utmost to achieve this goal. But the United States and its allies have not supported such efforts for many years.

On December 23, 2016, the United Nations General Assembly voted 113 to 35, with 13 abstentions, to begin the process of creating a treaty calling for nuclear disarmament. The United States voted “no”; all its NATO allies either voted “no” or abstained. Of the other nuclear powers, China, India and Pakistan abstained, while France, Israel, Russia and the United Kingdom voted “no.” The DPRK voted “yes” in commit- tee, but its vote in the plenum is not recorded. South Korea, then under a far right government, voted “no.” Then on July 7, 2017, the draft treaty was approved in the General Assembly by a margin of 122 voting “yes,” 1 voting “no” and one abstention. This time, the United States and most of its allies (and both Koreas) simply did not vote. No wonder so many people around the world see our government’s stance as hypocritical!

The Communist Party USA expresses its firm solidarity with the people of both Koreas and of the United States in this dangerous sit- uation. We call upon the people of this country to exert pressure on the Trump administration and the United States Congress to carry out a rad- ical change of course, by adopting the following measures:

• Put an end to all provocative acts, including fiery, sabre rattling speeches and military manoeuvres in and around the Korean Peninsula.
• Renounce first use of nuclear weapons; no pre-emptive military strikes.
• Renounce the policy of bringing about “regime change” in other countries; the nature and personnel of a government are exclusively the affair of the people of the country in question.
• Remove all US military bases in the area and in other countries worldwide.
• Return to the position that the disarmament and demilitarisation of the whole area, whether economic, political or military, should be solved by peaceful negotiations between the two Koreas, without self- interested outside interference.
• Oppose sanctions that end up hurting ordinary people while also contributing to tensions.
• Join the vast majority of humanity by ending US opposition to nuclear disarmament efforts, as stipulated in the new United Nations Treaty “On the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.”
• Actively support the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
• Support the movement to underwrite the principles of the Treaty.
• Support the movement to make the DPRK a signatory to the Treaty.

The DPRK is pursuing a nuclear weapons program because they think it is the only way to ensure national sovereignty and prevent an overthrow of their government by the United States.

Sri Lanka: In July, tens of thousands of workers at the state-owned Ceylon Petroleum Corporation went on an indefinite strike reacting to plans to privatise part of their sector. The government enacted the essential services law, banning industrial action in key sectors of the economy, and mobilised the army to prevent work stoppage and re-opening of factories. With the arrest of over 20 labour activists and the authorities demonstrating willingness to use force, the strike was broken. On August 1, union leaders met with President Sirisena and then declared that no further industrial action was needed. This was based on a promise that a clause would be inserted into the lease agreement with China Merchants Ports Holdings (CMPH) for Hambantota Port that could be amended at any time. The workers were opposed to selling the Sri Lankan facilities to other countries, as they saw this sale as being a further attack on their conditions.

Thailand: With an apparent forced abduction of Wuthipong “Ko Tee” Kochathamkun by a group of armed Thai-speaking individuals, the Thai military junta’s reign of oppression has now spread into neighbouring Laos. Ko Tee had been a fierce critic of the Thai monarchy and military for years, calling for a federal state. Facing charges of defaming the royal family he fled the country in the aftermath of the coup in 2014, Watana Muangsook, a politician from the Pheu Thai Party, and Pravit Rojanaphruk, a senior report- er at Khaosod English, who have consistently criticised Thailand’s Junta and the Lèse Majesté law, have been charged over separate Facebook posts under the draconian article 116 law against sedition.

Korea: On August 10, tens of thousands of plant construction workers at Gwangaman Square staged a massive rally in Seoul. The workers demanded improvements in pay and working condi- tions. In another sector, brewery workers employed by the global AB In Bev group held strike action against the company’s vio- lation of their collective bargaining agreement. In a separate development, Samsung Electronics have tried bribing the lawyer representing the workers who are suing the company over toxic workplaces. Semiconductor and LCD workers who became unwell were mostly in their 20s and 30s, 76 of them have died.

Malaysia: At the end of a 13-year struggle, hundreds of workers won back their collective agreement and restored collective bargaining rights from the Shangri-La hotel group. The struggle began in 2004 when the Shangri-La hotel’s “Rasa Sayang” closed its doors for two years, for the owner to renovate the resort. After the renovations were finished and the hotel was re-opened, the employer told the workers that the wages and benefits agreed to under the pre-existing collective agreement no longer applied, because the hotel was “new.” The National Union of Hotel, Bar and Restaurant Peninsular Malaysia (NUHBRW) which repre- sented the workers is also involved in another dispute with the Shangri-La Hotels group.
The bullying begins

Last week in Melbourne the High Court conducted a directions hearing focussed on the mechanics of the government's postal vote on marriage equality case.

It’s only been ten days since the federal government announced they are going ahead with the postal vote, yet already my partner and I have been called paedophiles because we are lesbian muses.

I’ve heard from rainbow families that their children are being bullied in primary school playgrounds, and every time I look at social media or listen to talk back radio our children’s social and emotional well-being is being questioned.

Lesbian mum of three children, Felicity Marlowe

As a parent of a gay male I am becoming extremely concerned about LGBTQI people who already suffer with anxiety. They are becoming more fearful of the outcome due to the very negative campaign that has already started by the “nay sayers”.

Additionally, many feel the government’s process for the vote is designed to fail, which again increases anxiety levels of many directly affected and their extended family and loved ones.

NEXT WEEK a look at US intervention in our region and a comment on the situation in North Korea.
Film Review by Chauncey K Robinson

Whose Streets?

Three years ago last week, a young African-American man named Michael Brown was gunned down in the streets of Ferguson, Missouri. His death, at the hands of a trigger-happy white police officer, and the protests that followed to seek justice for his murder helped ignite the movement that became known as Black Lives Matter.

This movement has forced the country to confront the problem of police brutality against everyday people, disproportionately Black Americans, as a central reality of politics and race relations. The narrative around the Black Lives Matter movement has often been a fragmented one, with supporters and detractors alike eager to add their viewpoints. The new documentary film *Whose Streets?*, which focuses on the killing of Michael Brown and the movement that arose in its wake, puts Black activists front and centre.

The film was directed by two African-American filmmakers, Sasha Fiyonj and Damon Davis. The young directors explained to *Filmmaker Magazine* that they wanted to do more than just make a film that stroked their egos or presented a montage of chants and rallies, but rather to create something that went beyond the regular media narrative.

Fiyonj explained, “What was being put on the news was only catching the surface of the issues. Sensationalist, inflammatory language was being used to get ratings, but as a society we needed to get to the truth and to positive dialogue.” Davis added, “How could we use this movie as a tool to change the world. We’re trying to make something that Black people watching the film can feel good about. Where they can see themselves as both heroes and complex human beings.

The documentary, which combines the use of fast-paced cinematography and mobile phone footage, gives faces and hearts to the struggle, by choosing to focus on a select group of individuals. Audiences take the journey through the aftermath of Brown’s death with Bryan Farrell, a nurse and young mother; David Whit, a recruiter for the civil rights organization *WeCopWatch.org*; and Tony Russell, a co-founder of Hands Up United.

The film opens with a quote of the now infamous Dred Scott case, in which the Supreme Court decided in 1857 that no Black person, freed or enslaved, could claim US citizenship and the rights that entitled. It was a fitting reference with which to begin, seeing as how the lack of justice for Michael Brown, and hundreds of other Black Americans assaulted and/or killed by police, continues to leave many questioning whether African Americans can receive equal justice under the law in the US.

From there the documentary flashes through visuals of the turmoil in the streets of Ferguson and the raw reactions of people in the aftermath of tragedy. Clips from various mainstream media outlets are used to highlight the lack of complexity that most reports gave to Ferguson and the activists there.

*Whose Streets?* is a showcase of the multi-layered nature of the Black community combined with a critique of the media’s handling of the narrative surrounding Ferguson. The film has no direct commentary nor experts weighing in between scenes, but rather throws the audience directly into the thick of the action to experience it for themselves.

Watching *Whose Streets?* transported me back to a not-so-long ago time when “Hands up, Don’t shoot!” became the rallying cry against police brutality. A time when racial tensions were heightened across the country and it seemed like any city could become the “next Ferguson.” Seeing the activists gave me some comfort, but I was reminded all over again how the police officer that murdered Brown, Darren Wilson, was not indicted, and that somehow all the legal inquiries concluded that Wilson killed Brown, who was not armed, in self-defence.

Perhaps provoking that sense of unease is the intent of the filmmakers – an effort to remind the audience that this is only one slice of the story against inequality and oppression, not the conclusion.

Through humanising the struggle for justice, Fiyonj and Davis have aimed to make the public understand that the fight for equality, and even more specifically, the Black Lives Matter movement, is not faceless and impersonal. The battle waged in order to be recognised as a human being, deserving of life and liberty, is a very personal story, but it’s also an American story. Ferguson is a specific city, but it can also be symbolic of other times and places in history where a community has risen up.

Black people watching the film will be able to see themselves as modern day heroes for justice, since there is no caped crusader who will come to their rescue to make things right. No liberal white saviour, as some films on race have tried to push, will do the trick either. The community finds strength in itself even in the midst of hardship.

After its opening in selected cities, *Whose Streets?* will be released nationwide. It’s a powerful documentary that uses one defining incident to connect viewers to the overarching fight for true justice and the people who sacrifice so much for it.

**People’s World □**
Journalism is not a crime

Steve Sweeney

Journalists in Turkey are some of the most courageous people I know.

They work in conditions where they face daily threats and intimidation from the Turkish state and the constant fear of arrest. Newsrooms are often raided, equipment seized or destroyed and staff arrested and physically attacked by the authorities.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is more afraid of a pen and a camera than he is of a bullet or a bomb.

In 2016 he advocated a change in the definition of a terrorist to include MPs, civil society campaigners and journalists. “It’s not only the person who pulls the trigger, but those who made that possible who should also be defined as terrorists,” he said.

The country is ranked 155 in the 2017 World Press Freedom Index and a third of the world’s total jailed journalists are in Turkish prisons.

Most of them are held on trumped-up charges of terrorism, including respected investigative journalist Ahmet Sik whose book charges of terrorism, including respected investigative journalist Ahmet Sik whose book exposed the extent of the Gulenist infiltration of key parts of the Turkish state.

Former editor of the Cumhuriyet newspaper Can Dundar was jailed in absentia over the publication of a story linking the government with a terrorist group and staff arrested and physically attacked by the state and the constant fear of arrest. Newsrooms daily threats and intimidation from the Turkish state frequently refer to as the Fethullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO).

My friend and comrade Fatih Polat faces state and the constant fear of arrest. Newsrooms daily threats and intimidation from the Turkish state frequently refer to as the Fethullah Terrorist Organisation (FETO).

My friend and comrade Fatih Polat faces the authorities.

Attacks on the Evrensel newspaper are intensifying. Last year I attended the trial of two of its reporters who faced lengthy prison sentences after they were arrested when they covered a pro-Kurdish demonstration in the southern Turkish city of Mersin.

Their trial was absurd and the only evidence against them was the sharing of a Facebook post, a press release about the demonstration and a fake one dollar note found in one of the reporter’s bedrooms.

The journalists’ defence lawyer Tugay Bek was arrested days before the trial and held in jail, where he was tortured and beaten.

Bek is currently representing another Evrensel journalist, Yusuf Karatas, who was arrested in the city of Diyarbakir in the largely Kurdish south-east of Turkey. His detention came after he had given evidence as part of government investigations into the Democratic Society Congress (DTK).

The DTK was a legitimate organisation made up of pro-Kurdish organisations and is seen as laying the foundations for the development of the opposition People’s Democratic Party (HDP).

Karatas was quizzed over his attendance at the Mesopotamia Seasonal Agricultural Workers Assembly, which was part of the DTK’s Commission for Labour, Migration and Poverty held in Urfa province four years ago.

The assembly, which brought together trade unions and other organisations discussed the issue of workers’ rights. It is now considered a terror activity.

He was also questioned over his attendance at a demonstration over the 2011 Rojava Massacre when the Turkish state bombed and killed 34 innocent Kurdish villagers.

Bek said Karatas’s arrest is politically motivated and the Turkish authorities had spied on him between 2009 and 2013 where they monitored his whereabouts and tapped his phone, listening to his conversations.

Bek also confirmed that the DTK was recognised as a legitimate organisation and had been visited by senior government ministers from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) during that time.

Karatas is also a member of the Labour Party of Turkey which released a statement demanding his release.

General secretary Selma Gurkan said: “We will not accept this illegal process against our party member Yusuf Karatas.

“We will continue to struggle against all illegalities, arbitrary arrests and attempts to criminalise innocent people.”

Karatas denies charges of terrorism and in a defiant message from his prison cell said: “It doesn’t matter whether we are inside or outside, we will continue to speak the truth.”

In a letter sent to the Evrensel newspaper Karatas wrote: “Dear friends, the glossy regime hanging over the country desires to take our future hostage. To this end, it is seeking to repress and silence all the people that line up with labour, peace, democracy and freedom.

“Yet, we will not keep quiet, no matter whether we are behind bars or outside. We will keep telling and writing the truth, and shouting out the justice demand. “Besides, we made a promise to [Evrensel photographer] Metin Goktepe [who was killed in police custody in 1996]. This heart will not keep silent! Greetings and love to all.”

His arrest has caused an international outcry and saw the launch of the Freedom for Yusuf Karatas campaign in Britain.

Initiated by Solidarity with the People of Turkey (SPOT) and backed by a growing number of trade unions, the campaign is demanding the immediate release of Karatas and all journalists jailed for simply doing their job.

You can sign Spot’s statement demanding Yusuf Karatas’s release at spotukay.org.uk. Further details and updates on the case can also be seen at evrensel.net/daily. Steve Sweeney is a Morning Star reporter.