Ukraine

Confronting the rise of fascism

Anna Pha and Bob Briton

Ukraine has been subjected to what is becoming an all too familiar practice of ousting legitimate governments that refuse to submit themselves to the diktat of the US. In Libya and Syria and now Venezuela (see page 9) and Ukraine, a similar formula for regime change can be seen. Anti-government protests and demands by forces seeking reforms are used as fronts for Western (or Saudi) funded, armed and trained ultra-right and terrorist/fascist forces.

Western media flood news outlets with graphic images of the victims of terrorist assaults and massacres, falsely accusing government forces of perpetrating the atrocities. Ethnic or religious differences are fanned, and economic sanctions imposed to create economic hardship and increase pressure for a change of government. Attempts by elected governments to use state police and military to defeat the terrorists (including foreign mercenaries) and defend their people and sovereignty are portrayed as “crimes against humanity” while those carrying out the coup and atrocities are held up as being “pro-democracy”.

In Ukraine, the US has installed what it calls a transitional coalition government which is heavily penetrated by neo-Nazi and other extreme right forces. Members of the Svoboda (All Ukrainian Union) and Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) have control over the armed forces, police and national security. Svoboda was formerly called the Social National Party, a deliberate reference to Hitler’s Nazi party.

The US has hardly hidden its involvement in Ukraine’s internal affairs. Last December, US Senator John McCain was publicly seen dining with opposition leaders including Svoboda leader Oleh Tyahnybok. US Secretary of State John Kerry and Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia, Victoria Nuland took part in the Maidan (city square) demonstrations, openly calling on the people to rise up and bring down their elected government. The role of the US in deciding on the new government was revealed in a secretly taped phone call in which Robert Nuland (private) discussion between Nuland and the government was revealed in a secretly taped phone call in which Robert Nuland (All Ukrainian Union) and Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) have control over the armed forces, police and national security. Svoboda was formerly known as the Social National Party, which is heavily penetrated by neo-Nazi and other extreme right forces.

“Flowering of fascism”

“The United States and the European Union have embraced the revolution here as another flowering of democracy ...”, writes Steven Erlanger, in the New York Times (“After Initial Triumph, Ukraine’s Leaders Face Battle for Credibility”, 01-03-2014). “Flowering of fascism” would have been a more apt description. The two main parties that have been installed by the US, EU and NATO, the Fatherland and Svoboda both pay tribute to Stepan Bandera who led collaboration with the Nazis and who played an active part in the massacre of Ukraine’s Jewish population in the Second World War. The fascists are attacking synagogues and Eastern Orthodox Christian churches, xenophobia towards ethnic Russians, Tatars and other minority groups has surged, museums have been looted, Communists and members of Yanukovych’s Party of Regions have had their homes raided. The Communist Party of Ukraine’s offices have been attacked.

In the language of a schoolboy bully, Australia’s Prime Minister Tony Abbott fell into line behind the US, telling Russia to “back off”, that it is “simply unacceptable” for Russia to interfere militarily in the Ukraine. Apparently, the US’s and the EU’s interference is acceptable. “Let Ukraine get on with being run in a peaceful and democratic manner,” Abbott said. What hypocrisy!

The real source of external intervention in the sovereign affairs, the driving forces in the coup in Ukraine are the US, the European Union and NATO with the International Monetary Fund lurking in the background with an austerity program mapped out for the people. They have promoted and supported extreme right-wing neo-Nazi and xenophobic forces and fostered tensions, divisions and conflicts with the aim of installing a compliant government that would give them political, economic and military domination over Ukraine.

The agreement of association with the EU that President Yanukovych had refused to sign is not, as often portrayed by the media, just an agreement to join the EU. It contains a dangerous military component which would have opened the doors to a US/NATO military takeover. Yanukovych’s refusal to sign away Ukraine’s sovereignty and for it to become the staging point for US/NATO missiles and forces armed and trained by the US and the EU’s interference is accepted. The trigger that set in motion the regime change process.

Russia the target

The situation is complex with a number of agendas at play. Ukraine is a strategically important to the US in its attempts to surround Russia with military forces and weapons. It has never let up in its plans to break up the Russian Federation and take control of oil, gas and other resources. The ongoing vilification of Russian Prime Minister Putin and Russia in the Western media is part of the campaign to justify the West’s actions. The Crimea, a semi-autonomous region of the Ukraine, is of particular strategic importance.

Continued on page 4
The CPA welcomes the release of Fernando Gonzalez

On February 28 Fernando Gonzalez completed the final minutes of the unjust incarceration that kept him from his homeland, his people and his family for more than 15 years.

The solidarity movement around the world celebrates the release of the second of Five Cuban anti-terrorists arbitrarily sentenced to unjust sentences of 15 years to more than double life.

The Cuban Five were unfairly tried in Miami, a city hostile to Cuba, and more recently it has come to light that the US government paid journalists to mislead public opinion during the trial.

Against all the odds the solidarity campaign has expanded to all corners of the world including inside the United States where the media has long tried to hide their story. It is an imperative that the American people learn about the plight of the Cuban Five heroes punished for fighting against terrorism against Cuba, organised from US soil.

Cuba and its people have been under siege for more than 50 years. In fact from the very beginning of the Cuban revolution the US sponsored and organised the economic blockade on the island. The blockade on Cuba punishes the entire population and its right to self-determination.

The attacks on the Cuban revolution have ranged from a direct invasion during the Bay of Pigs to numerous clandestine operations aimed at damaging the economy and promoting terrorist attacks that have seen more than 3,000 Cuban lives lost.

The Cuban Five never hurt anyone and were no threat to the US national security. What they did was monitor the activities of the anti-Cuban groups based in Miami and reporting plans that would have resulted in the loss of Cuban and American lives.

We welcome the release of Fernando Gonzalez, who together with his other four brothers never gave up, even to the final moments of his unjust sentence.

We encourage all Guardian readers to continue the campaign for the unconditional release of Gerardo Hernandez, Antonio Guerrero and Ramon Labanino. President Obama can exercise his presidential powers and rectify this political and legal wrongdoing by pardoning them and sending them back to Cuba to reunite with their families who together had been suffering this collective punishment.

The Communist Party of Australia welcomes Fernando home and pledges to continue working for the release of the other three Cuban heroes.

Vinnicius Molina
CPA National President
For campaign info visit: www.freethefive.org and www.freethem.org

Invasion Day in Brisbane

Muurri Families locked out of the Australia Day celebration

Don Wilson

Sunday January 26, Brisbane: A Rally and march was held in Brisbane to commemorate Invasion Day and remember the elders who struggled to resist this invasion and conquest by British Imperialism.

The rally started at 10am at parliament House.

A number of militant speeches were made including issues of making the G20 event in Brisbane in November this year an event for Aboriginal issues to be strongly put forward.

Around 12 noon the march started towards Musgrave Park.

Steps were made at Premier Newman’s office on the way, calling on him to hand over wages stolen from Aboriginal workers over the years.

At the top of Queen Street mall a group of ultra-right thugs from the Australia First Party tried to interfere with the march.

The march proceeded to South Bank where the "official" Australia Day ceremony was being held.

We wished to proceed to Musgrave Park via South Bank. However gates and police prevented us from entering from the cultural centre. Dances, music and speeches were performed here with hundreds of onlookers from the bus terminal. After we had asked repeatedly to enter the Australia Day ceremony we marched again into Stanley Street. Another gate and fence and even more police stopped us entering the South Bank Parklands and the Australia Day celebration.

A speaker from the South Bank Corporation read a statement that the march of Aboriginal families was banned from the park.

We then proceeded to Musgrave where the sacred fire was relit and a smoking ceremony held. At 4pm the premier of the John Pilger film Utopia was held. Hundreds of people were crammed into the large hall and many could not get in. The film was very well received.

PRESS FUND

The wealth of the world’s $5 richest people now equals the wealth of the poorest half of the world’s population, 8.5 billion people. Patting another way, on average each of the $5 people is $100 million times richer than each member of the poorest half of the world’s population. If those statistics make you hopping mad, you should do something about it by contributing to the Press Fund. But here are some other statistics. On average this year we’ve received only four contributions per week. Last week we only had three, the same week. Come on everybody! We really need your support for the Fund, which helps cover our operating costs, so please send in a contribution for the next edition. Many thanks to this week’s supporters, as follows:

Max Callaghan $10, Mark Mannion $5, David Anthony $10, “Round Figure” $15

This week’s total: $40  Progressive total: $1,410
Trans-Pacific Partnership
Act now!

The latest target date for completion of negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is October. It remains to be seen whether agreement can be reached between all 12 governments by then. Even if agreement is reached and the government signs it, there is still a chance to stop the TPP until Parliament has passed the legislation by then. Even if agreement is reached and the government signs it, there is still a chance to stop the TPP until Parliament has passed the legislation by then.

The TPP can and must be defeated. Once in place, it cannot be undone. For more info: http://derricreagh.org, report titled “Unfair, Unsustainable, and Under the Radar.”

Governments must step up employment of people with disabilities

The National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN) has called on the federal government to set realistic and achievable targets for the employment of people with disabilities in the Australian Public Service. State governments and Territories should do the same.

“Over the last 20 years the employment of people with disabilities in the public service has almost halved, falling by 45 percent”, said the NWRN’s Maree O’Halloran.

“We note that the Greens have tabled a private member’s bill to require the public service to double its employment of people with disabilities over the next five years. Hopefully, this bill will spark a public debate.”

The numbers of people with disabilities in the federal public service is at a 20-year low, and the service is losing three times as many people as it is hiring. The public sector cannot force the private sector to employ people with disabilities; however, it can lead the way.

In 1994, there were 8,063 people with disabilities employed in the Australian public service. However, by 2013 just 4,450 people with disabilities were employed. This represents about 2.9 percent of the 167,000 people in the public service, down from 5 percent in July 1999. Last year, a strategy was launched by the Australian Public Service to increase the numbers of people with disability among its ranks. Unfortunately, the employment of people with disabilities is still at its lowest in two decades.

The Department of Health and Ageing provides workplace adjustments and training through the National Disability Workforce Program, with an aim to increase the employment of people with disabilities in the public service. It has also recently established the Disability Employment Services (DES) scheme with the goal of increasing disability employment in the public service.

As members of The Southern Cross Brigade from Australia, now in its 31st year of visiting Cuba, this great country, we would like to thank the Cuban people for the example of strength, valour and solidarity with the people of the world despite the inhuman blockade that they have suffered for the last 56 years.

We had the opportunity to take part in a very impressive and broad social program. We were able to travel through parts of Cuba; we visited polyclinics, local hospitals, cooperatives, organic farms, primary and secondary schools, medical universities where we had talks with the foreign students. Through watching documentaries and discussions with many people we discovered the impact and consequences of the blockade and how the Cuban people have to live with constant shortages, including medications.

Apart from taking the countries involved one step closer to the TPP until the necessary implementing legislation is reached and the government signs it, there is still a chance to stop the TPP until Parliament has passed the legislation by then. Even if agreement is reached and the government signs it, there is still a chance to stop the TPP until Parliament has passed the legislation by then.

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Govts must step up employment of people with disabilities

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The Department of Human Services has adopted a target of 5 percent for the employment of Indigenous Australians which is very welcome. Ms O’Halloran said that in the face of the current debate about work participation and income support for people with disabilities, it is astounding that it refuses to adopt a target for people with disabilities. People with mental health conditions and chronic illnesses, for example, may need a great deal of flexibility in the workplace and the public service has other big employers have the best chance of providing this flexibility.

The labour force participation rate for people with disability is only 53 percent, significantly lower when compared to people without a disability, which stands at 83 percent. We know that the rates of employment of people with disabilities are shockingly low.”

A report by the Australian Public Service Commissioner found that Australia’s performance in employing people with disabilities is “well behind other international jurisdictions”, with the proportion of civil service employees with a disability in the United Kingdom at percent in March 2011 and 5.6 percent in the Canadian Public Service. The success result in Canada is linked to the passage of the Employment Equity Act in 1995.

“NWRN urges all governments and employers to step up and provide employment opportunities for people with disabilities including mental health conditions,” said Ms O’Halloran.
Richard Titleius

On September 7, 2013, Australians went to the poll to elect a new government. The Liberal National Coalition was elected but the final result in the Senate is still undecided. This was due to a close vote in Western Australia for the last two Senate spots. The informal vote went to the Palmer United Party’s Dio Wang and the Labor Party’s Louise Pratt. However after a recount these two seats were won by the Sports Party’s Wayne Dupalich and the Greens Scott Ludlum.

Then came revelations during the recount that Senate ballot papers could not be found and the Australian Electoral Commission petitioned the High Court sitting as the Court of Disputed Returns to make a ruling on April 5.

On February 20, the Court of Disputed Returns ruled that the Senate vote in Western Australia was invalid and subsequently that all six WA Senate seats would need to face a fresh election on April 5.

Initial estimates of the cost of the re-run of the Senate election were put at $15 million but that has since been revised upwards and currently stand at $20 million. In the 76-seat Senate the government controlled 25 seats, the opposition 23 seats and currently stand at $20 million.

If the Liberals repeat their 2013 result they will have 33 seats on July 1 meaning they will need only six other votes to pass legislation.

Unemployment in WA in January 2014 rose from 4.6 percent to 5.1 percent with most of the jobs lost being full-time positions which were replaced by some casual and part-time jobs.

Other issues which will define the election campaign are cuts to education, public health, asylum seekers, transport (especially the cuts to Quarant), water availability and climate change.

The Greens candidate Scott Ludlum in ABC Online said 1,370 Senators said that West Australians have been handed a unique and extraordinary opportunity to make history.

“There’s never been a situation like this before, and the Greens believe it’s an opportunity for West Australians to send a very strong message to Tony Abbott and back to Canberra not to take this state for granted, and in the lead up to what is potentially a horror (federal) budget for West Australians, to say that we’ve had enough and that we want our country back,” he said.

“Whether it’s cuts to Medi- care, cuts to education funding, attacks to the clean energy sector and jobs in the renewable energy industry, attacks on public broadcast- ing or the extraordinarily degrading way we are treating people who have sought refuge in this country”, continued Ludlum.

This writer has worked over ten years as a paid polling official for the AEC and over a further 10 years as a voluntary campaign worker for the Greens outside polling booths on election day and it is disappointing to see every election how many people come to a polling booth on election day and do not know what the issues are, their own interests, who the candidates are and who or what they represent.

Initial observations by many West Australians since the election date was announced can be dis- tilled into one sentiment, “What a waste of time.”

That is why between now and April 5, we will see a massive election campaign by capital to promote and protect their interests by choosing to focus on the carbon and mining tax and not the creation of sustainable energy, industries and jobs and the main- tenance of an accessible, quality and affordable public service.

Out of the limelight will be: the Trans-Pacfic Partnership deal and how this will rob this nation of its sovereignty and the absence of employment opportunities for our youth, our identity and the effects of climate change.

The Communist Party of Australia calls on West Australian voters to vote 1 for the Greens and put the Liberal/National par- ties and other right-wing groups, including the Palmer United Party last to prevent Abbott and Co. gaining control of the Senate.

Continued from page 1

The Russian Black Sea Fleet has been stationed in Sevastopol (Crimea) since 1783. Crimea has a rich history of attachment and occupation over centuries. In more recent times it was part of the Russian Federation until Soviet Pres- ident Nikita Khrushchev transferred it to Ukraine. Following the demise of the Soviet Union, when Russia and Ukraine ratified arrangements relating to military (including nuclear weapons) forces and weapons, the fleet remained under a new agree- ment. Russia is now being accused by the West of interfering in Ukraine because of its military presence in Crimea. “We have an arrangement with Ukraine about the stationing of the Russian Black Sea fleet in Sev- astopol and we are acting within the framework of that agreement,” Rus- sian ambassador to the UN, Vitaly Churkin, told reporters. This agree- ment, which was extended in 2010 for a further 10 years in 2010, includes discounted prices for Ukrainian purchases of gas from Russia.

Crimea is critical to Russia’s defence and President Putin and Russia’s parliament are determined to retain their possession and maintain their security. They do not recog- nise the UN’s 1995 sovereignty statement that has been installed by the West. The Western propaganda machine has been hard at work with a flood of lies about Russian activity and interfer- ence in Crimea.

In Crimea, where more than half the population are ethnic Russian, there is strong support for President Yanukovich. There have been large protests against fascism and in sup- port of ties with Russia, misrepresented in Australia’s media as being simply anti-Russian people who have set up self- defence units against the fascists. There is strong opposition to the presence of US or NATO missile and military forces there. Russia’s pack- age of a $15 billion debt deal and gas discounts is far larger than the EU’s and is not tied up with the IMF austerity and other strings attached to the EU. But that is not the main ques- tion. Russia has responded quickly to defend its interests and ethnic Rus- sians in Crimea.

Changing the balance

Control of Ukraine would give the US and NATO control over the Black Sea. The other countries bor- dering the Black Sea – Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Georgia – are at present firmly in the imperialist camp. Russia has four naval fleets – Black Sea, Pacific, Northern and Baltic. The Black Sea Fleet is the most important because of the links to the Middle East. Sevastopol is a large and deep port. The ports along Russia’s coastline with the Black Sea and Caspian Sea is also Russia’s only warm water port. It is vital to Rus- sian security.

Ukraine is a strategic piece in the US’s attempts to encircle Russia, which are well advanced. The US already has Estonia, Latvia, Lithua- nia, Georgia, Romania, Poland and Afghanistan as its disposal for mili- tary operations. Crimea is only 30 metres from Turkey, which the US used as a launching pad for wars in the Middle East. In Afghanistan the US originally trained and armed the Taliban to bring about regime change and install a government hostile to the Soviet Union. US geo-political meddling hasn’t stopped since but it has not gone all way. Iran is lined up for regime change. The US’s drive to invade, based with bases in Eastern Europe, is targeted at Russia. America now, and are criti- cal to the US’s moves to encircle the People’s Republic of China.

The EU is waging war against the Russian Gazprom company which, with its partners, has been battling EU demands regarding a new South Stream pipeline, which would stretch 2,400 kilometres bypassing Ukraine, taking gas to Europe – Serbia, Bul- garia, Hungary, Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Croatia, Macedonia, Greece and Turkey. EU competition policy prevents the same company owning a pipeline and what flows along it, a policy which the Russian govern- ment and Gazprom have been fighting. One of the objectives of the US relates to control of natural gas pipe- lines and enforcement of “competi- tive” policy on Ukraine and Russia.

While constantly supporting NATO expansion, the US had a set- back recently when it lost its Manns base in Kyrgyzstan. NATO respond- ed provocatively with plans to hold military exercises in Georgia, which is strategically placed between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. The West failed in earlier attempts to break off Chechnya from the Russian Federa- tion but pressure will doubleless be maintained. The Black Sea is impor- tant to the US’s Middle East plans, including the strengthening of neo- fascist forces such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

Aid for fascism – threat of war

The open involvement of US, EU and NATO leaders in the build up to the coup exposes it as part of the drive to change the geo-political balance in Europe in ways that threat- en security and peace in Europe and the world. The support accorded to the interim government by the EU leaders will give encouragement to right-wing and fascist forces across Europe.

The headline of the New York Times article quoted above, “After Initial Triumph, Ukraine’s Leaders Face Battle for Credibility” raises an important point. The “revolution” in Ukraine lacks credibility amongst the people. The February 21 agreement reached with Yanukovich and opposi- tion leaders to hold early elections was swept aside with the support of the US and EU. Having trashed the agreement, a bunch of criminals and fascists has been installed. The situa- tion is unfolding quickly and the out- come is by no means certain.

The removal of the Russian fleet from Sevastopol and the installa- tion of Western forces and missiles would not seriously weaken Russia’s defence capabilities. The US would also like to see Russia loose its veto powers on the UN Security Council and, as a result, we can expect to see the “cold war” against Russia intensi- fy. Any escalation by the West on the Crimean peninsula riles the prospect of war, which could spread well beyond the borders of the situation on the Crimean peninsula.

*Transcript of hit: /www/guardian/ world-europe/2807957*
Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion has withdrawn $10 million in funding from the Aboriginals Benefit Accounts (ABA) to a charitable foundation that looks after Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory with a rare hereditary wasting disease and their families.

In July last year, the Machado Joseph Disease Foundation (MJDF) received written confirmation from Labor’s Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin that she had approved an extension of its original ABA grant in 2010 from $6 million to $16 million.

But following the election of the Coalition government, Senator Scullion overturned the decision, advising the MJDF that it was not in line with the policy of the ABA, but saying his department would work with the foundation to explore other funding sources.

“This grant was for $10 million to invest so it could use the earnings to cover operational and other ongoing costs,” Senator Scullion said.

“This is an unusual use of Aboriginal Benefit Account monies.

“The only other example of a grant being used to provide earnings to cover operational costs that has been brought to my attention was a previous $6 million grant to the same foundation which was invested to ‘cover operational cost for the MJDF foundation to enable it to operate for many, many years to come’. The Aboriginals Benefit Account advisory committee had concerns about the $10 million grant but it appears the Minister ignored that advice.

“Ms Macklin did not reply to a question asking what advice the advisory committee gave on which was investing the $10 million grant but it appears the Minister ignored that advice.

“In January 2014 my sister’s daughter died from MJD,” she wrote.

“She was only 44 years old, she is the first of her brothers and sisters to die so young but she has two brothers and a sister so far with MJD and we know that they will die very young too.

“There are many more in my family and in other families in communities across the NT who have MJD and who are living with dying bodies every day. My niece’s life was very hard, but it was a better one at the end because of the MJDF Foundation.

“You know that the services we have in our communities are not like the services in towns and cities. We wait a very long time and are especially for disabled people. We wanted to help ourselves and take responsibility and so we made this MJDF Foundation.

“Our communities supported it and so did our land council on Groote Eylandt, the ABA and a number of business and philanthropic sponsors. Our MJDF Foundation gives us hope that there is help for people with MJD.

“By reversing the previous approval of a $10 million grant variation, you have damaged some of this hope. It makes us feel like this new government no longer wants to help us. For so long we felt shame and we blamed ourselves for this disease, we tried to help ourselves with this MJDF Foundation, and did not need to feel ashamed any more”.

Ms Lalara said she attended a meeting of the Northern Land Council last year and was told it supported the ABA grant. The ABA is an account established under the NT Aboriginal Land Rights Act to receive and distribute royalty money generated from mining on Aboriginal land in the Territory. The ABA advisory committee consists of 14 members elected by the four NT land councils and an appointed chair, but the final decisions on how Aboriginal money is spent rest with the Indigenous Affairs Minister.

ABA advisory committee member Maurie Japarta Ryan told the Koori Mail “It is the federal minister, Nigel Scullion – I am appalled by his action – disgusted,” Ms Lee said the NT Parliament.

“I am related to the Groote Eylandt people. Pulling that funding out is the worst thing you can do. These people only have a 20-year life span and that is devastating. They will not live for long. It comes to a disability point where they start dribbling – they will not be able to hold their body fluids in. This is what MJD is.

“They cannot cut any more. Pulling the services out is the worst thing to do. You have to have a heart when you walk into this business. You have to stay true to yourself.”

MJDF Board and ABA advisory committee member Tony Wurramarra also expressed his disappointment that “the decision to overturn the grant variation was decided by a Minister who refused to meet or be briefed by the MJDF on the implications of overturning the previous approval. It is also disturbing that the Minister appears to have made his decision without recognising the overwhelming challenges involved in meeting the current and projected needs of people and families living with MJD, who, because of this terrible disease, are arguably amongst Australia’s most disadvantaged Aboriginal citizens,” he said.

MJDF research and community services director Libby Massey said that on the expectation of receiving the funds, the foundation had made commitments to families living with MJD. “We read Senator Scullion’s letter with disbelief, we were quite dumbfounded and confused, and in fact had to go hunting for information because we believed we had a solid agreement in place,” she said.

“These funds are needed so much that ‘desperately’ doesn’t even cover it. Apart from what the MJDF does there are no hands-on therapy services in any of the communities affected.

“We really like to respond directly to issues raised by families, find out more about ways things might be done to slow down progression of the disease.”

Ms Massey said that because MJD is genetic, families could end up with three generations – grandparents, parents and children – all suffering from it.

“That informal care that families often provide and that Aboriginal people are so good at providing isn’t possible, and that’s another reason people need extra support,” she said.

The MJDF has launched a campaign to ask Senator Scullion to visit Groote Eylandt and to change his mind.

To sign the petition go to www.urmjarra.org.au/mjd

For more information about the MJDF and MJD go to www.mjd.org.au

To get community run go to www.communityrun.org/p/mjd

The facts about MJD

Machado Joseph Disease (MJD) – also called spinocerebellar ataxia Type 3 (SCA3) – is one of about 30 recognised, dominantly inherited forms of ataxia. Ataxia is a general term meaning lack of muscle control or coordination.

• People with MJD exhibit clumsiness and weakness in the arms and legs, spasticity, a staggering lurching gait (sometimes mistaken for drunkenness), difficulty with speech and swallowing, involuntary eye movements, double vision, and frequent urination/incontinence. Sustained muscle contractions cause twisting of the body and limbs, repetitive movements, abnormal postures, and rigidity or symptoms similar to those of Parkinson’s disease.

• MJD is an inherited, autosomal disorder, meaning that each child of a person who carries the defective gene has a 50 percent chance of developing the disease.

• People with MJD retain their cognitive capacity and intellectual function.

• The mutation is typically worsened when it is passed to the next generation. This means that the symptoms of the disease can sometimes appear around 8-10 years earlier in each successive generation, and are more severe.

• There is no known cure.

• Progression to dependence occurs over five to 10 years after the onset of symptoms and most people are wheelchair-bound and fully dependent on the last 10 to 15 years of life. Fully dependent MJD sufferers are able to live at least another 10 years with well-conducted care.

• Previously known as “Groote Eylandt Syndrome”, the effects of MJD have been known to the Aboriginal people of this region for at least four generations.

• There are people living with the disease on Groote Eylandt (Angurugu and Umbakumba), Dickerton Island (Milyakburra), Yirrkala, Echido Island (Galiwun), in Darwin, at Ngukurr, Barray Barray, Numbulwar, Fapuny, Hermannsburg, Santa Teresa and Gunbalanya (Glenell).

• There are about 500 people thought to be at risk of developing the disease across the Top End (direct descendants of those with the disease).
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Coal seam gas: the new gold rush

A talk given at the Melbourne Unitarian Church by Burt Blackburne and Margaret Williamson

“Every environmental struggle on the job or in the community comes up against corporations that own the factory or the mine or the mineral deposits. This ownership and the vast wealth of these corporations give them the power to oppose changes to protect the environment.”

The power of corporations is defended by governments which support corporate interests. This is often done behind declarations that environmental protection measures will not be allowed to damage the economic interests of the country—meaning, of course, the economic interests of the corporate ruling class.

“It is sometimes suggested that the environment is a ‘common good’, and that we should all work together to protect it. This idea is based on the assumption that the environment is a resource that can be used by everyone. However, this is not true. The environment is a resource that is owned by corporations and individuals, and they have the power to control how it is used.”

Government support for market-based policies including CSG mining has stifled almost all voices that question this policy and effectively ruled out the planning, regulation and legislation which are essential to ensure a sustainable future.

Fracking, otherwise known as hydraulic fracturing, is a process to extract gas and oil from underground rock formations. It is considered too difficult to mine. Fracking is the process of pumping water, sand and a cocktail of chemicals underground at great pressure in order to break open the ground and allow the gas to flow out.

The wastewater often contains high levels of salt and other contaminants from the coal seam, including mercury, cadmium, arsenic, and other elements in harmful quantities. There is no safe way of disposing of this water. In a frack, 20-80 percent of the water pumped into the ground remains underground. This water often finds its way into ground and surface water endangering the health of local communities and ecosystems that rely on this water.

The technique can also create mini-earthquakes that cause the composition of naturally separated geological layers. This process can contaminate ground water with volatile organic compounds, methane, other gases, heavy metals, enormous quantities of salt, as well as naturally occurring radioactive material.

The regulations in Australia do not require mining companies to list the chemicals they use in fracking fluids. However, some experiences in Queensland and New South Wales show the use of carcinogens, as well as other chemicals including ethylene glycol that affects kidney function, the lungs and heart; the BTEX group of chemicals (benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene and xylene) that affects bone marrow, the blood system and can cause leukaemia; and there are other chemicals which affect hormone regulation and the reproductive system.

Water tested from the Condamine River that connects with the Darling River system, was found to contain ten times the safe level of boron and cadmium and more than 1,000 times the safe level of silver, chlorine and copper. In the Pilliga Forest in a creek in Narrabri in NSW, testing confirmed the presence of harmful substances including ammonia, lithium, cyanide, bromide and boron. These chemicals are dangerous by-products of CSG mining and were not found in sites tested upstream of the mining.

In Victoria, the exploration licences cover some of the most productive agricultural land. In Gippsland, the licences cover an area from Westra to Port Bay to Bairnsdale, from Warragul to Bass Strait. This area is renowned for dairy and beef cattle industries, vegetable and fruit growing and fishing.

Gippslanders listen to the experiences of other states in considering their view on this matter.

Elaine Armstrong is the NSW president of the Country Women’s Association. She has said, “Our members have heard anecdotally and have experienced personal examples of what has happened from uncontrolled exploitation of prime land by the granting of mining and coal seam gas exploration permits. Many have personal experience of irreversible damage done to their properties because of non-regulated activities.”

In October 2012 the New York Times ran an article entitled “After the Boom in Natural Gas”. It was not about pollution or ruined land values or jobs. Their concerns: “The gas rush is a money loser so far for many of the gas exploration companies and their tens of thousands of investors.”

Gas producers drilled too many wells too quickly and the price of gas fell below the cost of production.

Energy researcher Richard Heinberg states that the industry has massively overestimated its oil record. Since 2003, oil and gas jobs account for less than 1/200th of one percent of the US labour market. Numerous industry-funded studies count strippers and prostitutes as new jobs created by the spread of fracking.

Fighting back

Opposition to fracking is happening around the world, particularly in the US and Canada, but also throughout Europe. A recent huge demonstration in Romania attacked the giant northern California-based corporation Cheyron that plans to start fracking there.

On October 9 last year, the European Parliament approved rules forcing every company to carry out in-depth environmental audits before drilling. France has banned fracking. In Bulgaria they have outlawed fracking after major protests against Chevron’s plans to drill in Dobrudja – the most fertile farm region in the country.

The great thing is that farmers, greenies and community groups are fighting back as well. “Lock the Gate”, which started in Queensland and NSW to provide protection to rural communities from this industry, has ramped up in Victoria because of the lack of government action against the powerful mining interests.

Despite the legal implications, farmers across Gippsland have started locking their gates to the mining companies, refusing trucks and equipment access to their land. We have escalated to the extent where we are now locking roads from mining companies and protecting entire regions from devastation.

In April 2012 a coalition of over 50 different community, environmental and farming groups launched a call for a moratorium on all new coal and CSG projects in Victoria. This forced the Victorian government to address community concerns and institute a moratorium on all fracking in August 2012.

In more recent months, the Victorian government hired former federal industrial relations minister Peter Reith to investigate the implications of fracking and CSG extraction in Victoria. For this work, Reith was reportedly paid $2,000 a day.

When Reith attended a public meeting in the township of Mirboo North, he refused to engage with the community, but did an interview with the local media. There is no doubt in locals’ minds that Reith was a spokesperson for big business.

You will all recall his pedigree when he claimed refugees had thrown their children overboard to force a rescue by the Australian Navy. You will also recall that the defence department had to come out and explain that Mr Reith was incorrect and that no children were thrown overboard.

Reith has stated publicly that there are no problems with fracking and recommended that full-scale mining should go ahead. This position ignores the evidence to the contrary here and overseas. Notwithstanding, the Victorian Liberal government has decided to continue the moratorium on fracking until 2015. Coincidentally, this is just after the state election next year.

This is an important window of opportunity for the anti-CSG movement. We are under no illusions about the current government or a potential Labor government on this matter.

The fact that the moratorium has been extended is a result of the courageous stand taken by the Gippsland/Western Victoria community. But the war is not yet over. We can expect the mining companies and their extensive network of hastily paid lobbyists to ramp up their activities as well. The battle for hearts and minds continues.

If we look to the interstate experience, we see the CSG mining industry trying to present a human face in the Hunter region of NSW. A CSG company called Gippsland Outstanding Business Awards, but its sponsorship was rightly rejected by the local Chamber of Commerce. A CSG company tried to sponsor the humbly attended Broken Bay fair, but this was rejected by the community and their cheque returned. CSG companies are now offering local primary schools cash donations in their efforts to win community support.

In Victoria, CSG company Lakes Oil (part of the Gina Reinhardt stable), sponsored a local bike ride throughout Gippsland. To its credit, Bass Coast Council withdrew its name as a sponsor of the event once it learned of the mining company’s involvement. This council has refused to sponsor the event if Lakes Oil is involved next year.

While the government has extended the moratorium on fracking, communities across Victoria, in Gippsland and now in the South-western District must continue the campaign and build community strength against these powerful mining companies. The state Victorian government in mid last year produced a policy on mining. This 17-point policy states that the government will facilitate the operations of mining companies and intends to hold an international conference inviting miners to come to exploit Victoria further. So, our communities must continue to be vigilant and continue to keep up the fight. We must at all costs protect the food-growing capacity of our water supply from the incursions of the miners.

Locking up roads and towns is more than a symbolic action. When hundreds of landowners in a community refuse access then the mining company is faced with a rapidly diminishing return if they try to force access into that community. The political and economic costs of launching numerous individual actions against landowners will inevitably cause a tidal wave of political backlash.

In Queensland and NSW and now in Victoria an exciting movement is growing. Faced with the imminent threat of large-scale mining, all different kinds of communities are making their roads and towns CSG free. This is a major step towards its production and postage would be appreciated. Phone 02 9699 8844 or email info@cspg.org.au for copies.

The Beacon
The number of scientists and experts who have signed a joint statement saying that GM foods have not been proven safe and that existing research raises concerns has climbed to 297 since the statement was released last October.

Dr Angelika Hilbeck, chair of the European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility (ENSSER), which published the statement, said: "We're surprised and pleased by the strong support for the statement. It seems to have tapped into a deep concern in the global scientific community that the name of science is being misused to make misleading claims about the safety of GM technology."

The statement indirectly challenges claims by EU chief science adviser Anne Glover that there is no evidence that GM foods are any riskier than non-GM foods.

Dr Rosa Binimelis Adell, board member of ENSSER, said: "It seems that Anne Glover chooses to listen to only one side of the scientific community only – the circle of GMO producers and their allied scientists – and ignores the other. Thus she is giving biased advice to the EU Commission. For a science adviser, this is irresponsible and unethical.

Signatories to the statement include Dr Sheldon Krimsky, professor of urban and environmental policy and planning at Tufts University and adjunct professor in the department of public health and family medicine at the Tufts School of Medicine. Dr Krimsky said: "As a GMO crop sceptic, I have a more nuanced view of adverse consequences than uncritical proponents. Adverse effects of GMOs are not restricted to keeling over dead after eating genetically adulterated unlabelled food.

"My concerns include subtle changes in nutritional quality or mycotoxins, increasing food prices, mistakes, un授意 practices, dependency on chemical inputs, lack of transparency in evaluating food quality and safety, and the transformation of farming practices into a modern form of serfdom, where the seed is intellectual property leased by the farmer and as such, is a virtual entity that is capable of detecting harm. As with other technologies like aeronautics and nuclear power, those who manufacture the products must not be the definitive source of safety data. Because rigorous safety testing has not happened with GMO crops...

Another signatory, Dr Margarida Silva, biologist and professor at the Portuguese Catholic University, said: "Even if researchers did largely agree on GMO safety, that doesn’t make them correct. To paraphrase Albert Einstein, it only takes one study to prove a whole theory wrong – no matter how many scientists believed in it."

"In addition, research has been mostly financed by the very companies that depend on it. Furthermore, in contrast to mainstream GMO products, one must begin by assuming that they can be harmful, and carry out sensitive tests that are capable of detecting harm. As with other technologies like aeronautics and nuclear power, those who manufacture the products must not be the definitive source of safety data. Because rigorous safety testing has not happened with GMO crops...

A third signatory, Dr Raul Montenegro, biologist at the University of Cordoba, Argentina, said: "Usually, analysis of GMO safety fails to consider four main issues."

- One: GMO plants, seeds and byproducts contain not only residues of commercial chemical pesticides, but also insecticidal proteins produced by the plant, like the Bt toxin Cry1Ab.
- Two: each commercial pesticide contains a cocktail of chemicals that undergo chemical changes within pesticide containers, when mixed with other pesticides, and when released in the environment.
- Three: In GMO agriculture each crop cycle begins with a higher background level of commercial pesticides and insecticidal proteins accumulated in agricultural soil, people’s homes and gardens, and exposed people.
- Four: GMO agriculture adds unwanted biodiversity (GMO genes) in countries having less and less natural biodiversity as a consequence of deforestation, pesticidal cocktail and uncontrolled flux of engineered genomes.

Dr Montenegro said countries such as Argentina and Brazil are paradigms for GMO agriculture because their governments have not established monitoring systems for disease and deaths from all causes, along with monitoring of the accumulation of residues of pesticides and GMO insecticidal proteins in exposed people and the environment, and variation of natural biodiversity indexes."

If these monitoring systems were in place, it would be possible to measure the effects of GMO agriculture. As things stand, the governments of these countries deny that there is a problem even in the face of numerous reports from the people who are affected and the doctors who must treat them."

Claudia Fonseca Sosa

China continues to surprise. The government of the nation which, in the not so distant future, could displace the United States as the first economy in the world has announced a new reform package which seeks to reorient its growth model toward internal consumption and limit the country's dependence on external markets.

In 1979, a process of socioeconomic transformations designed to reduce the country’s productive forces began. The development model implemented was based on stimulating foreign investment and exports, with excellent results sustained over the years, which allowed it to accumulate a surplus of billions of dollars.

The Chinese economy was also able to manoeuvre in order to survive the projection of the international financial bubble in 2008. However, the Asian giant now has a dream: to double the gross domestic product and per capita income by 2020, comparing these indicators with those attained in 2010 when the country grew by 10.3 percent. For that, President Xi Jinping has stated that the country must make strategic readjustments to its economic structure and increase efficiency in state supervision mechanisms.

The government aspires to the entire population of 1.3 billion Chinese equitably enjoying the benefits of development and the measures announced by the 18th Communist Party Central Committee in its recent third plenum are directed toward this goal.

"The fundamental objective of the reforms approved is to improve and develop socialism with Chinese characteristics and to move forward with the modernisation of the system and the capacities of the country’s government," states a communiqué read in the event’s closing session.

The document places emphasis on the need “to establish an appropriate relationship between the government and the market” in order to grant the latter “more decisive participation in the assignment of resources.”

According to the official press, the Communist Party of China (CPC) is to create fair, open and transparent market regulations, as well as to improve the mechanism of market prices so that businesses can operate in an independent manner. At the same time, China is to undertake fiscal reforms, lower the threshold of foreign investment, intensify the development of free trade areas and increase the opening of interior, coastal and border areas, with a view to creating a new kind of relationship between industry and agriculture. Other measures approved will allow small farmers to enjoy more property over land and production means, establish a sustainable social security system, create new urban-rural relations in order to solve difficulties arising from large waves of internal migration, and increase the population’s standard of living in terms of access to health and education services. Also announced was a modification of the family planning policy, taking into account demographic changes in the country with the highest number of inhabitants in the world – and the oldest – to satisfy the desire of many families to have more than one child, which has been the established limit.

The communiqué also announced the decision to direct more resources to the army and to promote scientific and ecological development.

But what is the nature of these reforms? As Cuban analyst Eduardo Regalado, at the International Political Research Centre, explained to Granma, the given financial crisis in its principal markets (Europe and the United States), the Chinese leadership has been obliged to reduce its dependency on foreign capital and strengthen the internal market, one of the largest in the world. Chinese products which, prior to the crisis, sold very well given that they were cheaper, began to be prejudiced by the competition of European and US products (in other words, from the same countries to which they sold them). At the same time, Chinese acquiescent power has increased and this raises the question of why sell to others if the same goods can be purchased in China.

For Regalado, these adjustment measures seek to further raise the population’s standard of living and to close the gap in development between rural and urban areas. They would also provide a solution to the country’s internal difficulties, which have occurred as a consequence of development itself, such as environmental contamination, migration from rural areas to cities, among others.

Moreover, an important transformation within the projections of Chinese leaders is to transition from a rapid growth model – with the country growing as more factories open – to a model of intensive growth, in which science and technology play a significant role in production processes, a model which, at the same time, is to address ecological issues and depends less on external markets.
Margaret Kimberley

President Obama has placed whole nations on his Kill List. Syria and Venezuela are to join Libya and Iraq as states that have been made to fail, while Ukraine is consigned into the orbit. The word imperialism fell into disuse in recent decades. If it seems slightly retro, that is only because there aren’t enough Americans committed to telling the ugly truth about their government.

During the cold war era we were told that communism increased in influence via a domino effect, knocking down nations one by one and forcing them into Moscow’s or Beijing’s orbit. In the 21st century there is a new domino theory which puts every part of the world into America’s cross hairs.

Barack Obama has succeeded in expanding America’s influence in ways that George W Bush and Dick Cheney could only dream about. The neo-conservative project for a new American century has reached full fruition under a Democratic presi-
dent, who now has many notches on his gun. He and the rest of the NATO leadership are hell-bent on destruction with Libya, tearing that country asunder under the guise of saving it. Unwittingly the corporate media, they constructed a tale of a tyrant and a people yearning for protection. That evil success emboldened them and their golf mon-
archy allies further and they decided that Syria would be the next domino.

That plan didn’t work quite as well as Obama and the rest of the murder incorporated team thought it would. When the British parliament said no to new military adventures Obama was left slapping on nation-
al television. He was forced to back down from an adamant position he had taken just days earlier.

The semi-comedic setback was only temporary because the monster must be fed at all cost. The system can no longer manage itself and brute force is the only out there. There is noth-
ing old fashioned about imperialism. This malevolent force is still alive and well.

George W Bush made efforts to overthrow the democratically elected Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela when he plotted with the opposition against the late Hugo Chávez. Obama is clearly more committed to violence than his predecessor and has helped to stir up the gunned up protests and is now forced into talks with an opposition that won’t be satisfied until he is dead and gone too.

The Venezuelan people have voted for their revolution numerous times. The US, a country that never ceases to call itself a democracy, has thwarted their clearly expressed will time and time again. But that is the essence of the oligarchy.

While armed force against Syria was temporarily blocked, the West, the Persian Gulf monarchies, Israel, and jihadists have not given up their effort to topple the Bashar al-Assad government in Syria. The savage war has made thousands of Syrians homeless and starving refugees, all because the empire needs its next domino.

Not only does the United States meddle in its own backyard, but it also relentlessly interferes on the other side of the world in far away Ukraine.

Popular discontent against that coun-
try’s president became a successful effort to bring that country into the western sphere of economic influ-
ence but with the awful stings of austerity attached. Ukraine has the choice of going bankrupt or being bailed out and dying a slow death a la Greece.

While the machinations were afoot, president Obama warned Vladimir Putin away with threats of sanctions. The scenes of sometimes violent street protests in Ukraine made a fortuitous tableau for the United States which claimed the infamous “responsibility to protect” which never protects anyone who actually needs help and which has brought so much suffering to people around the world. Every invasion, occupation and disruption in recent years can be laid at the feet of the United States and its allies. Iraq has been destroyed quite literally, Iran has been destroyed economically. The yea was taken out and Syria is on the brink.

The United States quite openly makes it clear that it wants to have its way in the world. If Russia attempts to use its influence then it is vilified and caricatured as a cruel dictatorship controlled by a tyrant. No matter how many elections Chavez and now Maduro won, they are called dictators by American talking heads.

A superpower can foment con-
flict anywhere it wants to at anytime it chooses. Venezuelans must knuckle under or face the prospect of more turmoil and violence. Ukraine must sign onto economic policies which have already proven disastrous. The United States leaves its fingerprints in these and many other places and that is the essence of imperialism. It is all about control with the rawest brute force available.

A superpower could foment conflict anywhere it wants to at anytime it chooses. Venezuelans must knuckle under or face the prospect of more turmoil and violence. Ukraine must sign onto economic policies which have already proven disastrous. The United States leaves its fingerprints in these and many other places and that is the essence of imperialism. It is all about control with the rawest brute force available.

The United States hasn’t officially made Venezuela or any other country a colony but it doesn’t have to do that. It just has to show that it is boss and the dominos will fall whichever it chooses.

Margaret Kimberley is a retired journalist and editor and publisher of the American Empire Project.
Paul Dobson

Venezuela’s right wingers have been taking to the streets for weeks, blocking roads, starting violent confrontations with lethal results and causing as much mayhem as they can to try to overthrow the Nicolas Maduro government.

The ever-predictable media coverage in the West has become a key theme of the protests, which reiterate the usual confused discourse of the far right. Placards demand the right to free speech, for example, when weeks of protest show that the government has respected this right even at the cost of significant disruption.

Despite cries of repression the protests have not been touched by the organised revolutionary people or the armed forces. In some cases police and the army have been on the receiving end of Molotov cocktails, beatings and live bullets without responding with force. In no country in the world would you see the security forces put up with this abuse with such patience.

Some people have of course been arrested, but these are not political prisoners. They are citizens under arrest for breaking laws by, for example, shooting at the police.

And 90 percent of the Venezuelan press continue to be vehemently anti-government and spews racist, hate-filled headlines against the working population. The idea that there is no freedom of speech is laughable.

And media manipulation is intense. Facebook and Twitter are serving as tools to “prove” repression via uploading photos, which are often manipulated. The pro-government demonstrations have less access to such means as a few demonstrators own expensive smartphones.

One image of police beating a protester that went viral turned out to not be from Venezuela at all, but from Egypt.

The government of Maduro, who was himself elected less than a year ago, has opened the door to talks with opposition leaders not involved in “la salida” as a way of defusing the violence.

Some of the deaths so far, such as that of pro-government activist Juan Montoya, have been political assassinations. It has also been proven that the opposition has killed some of its own – forensic reports show that bullets used to kill opposition marchers came from within the march. This is then used to blame the government for the violence and further ratchet up the tension.

As I write 18 municipalities in the country are affected by the violence, which means incidentally that over 500 other municipalities have seen no disruption. And every single municipality that has seen violence is run by an opposition mayor or governor.

There are near-daily marches by both sides, with the revolution’s supporters calling for peace and the opposition calling for the “ousting.” And those taking part in the opposition marches are mostly from the wealthier sections of the population. Some say it’s a student uprising, but it isn’t. Most people protesting are business owners and white-collar workers, stirred up by the far right to act because of their economic problems.

There has been some support from student leaders at right-wing universities but many of these people don’t even study but enrol in order to lead political activity on campus.

Working-class support for the government has stayed firm.

This is not a popular uprising. It is a bid by a minority to cause chaos. And in this it is not unsuccessful. In areas where the protests are strongest, such as the cities of Merida and San Cristobal, some streets have been taken over, with barricades erected.

These menning these barricades have started to charge “vacuation,” or extortion payments, for safe passage through the streets. In residential sectors thousands have literally been trapped in their homes, afraid to go out and with no way of getting past the barricades, where the opposition burn tyres and trees and patrol the streets with armed gangs.

Theft and violence are rife in these areas. Anyone wearing anything red is sure to be beaten, robbed or worse. No exception is made for mothers, children or the elderly.

Other grisly tactics have included stretching taut wires across roads, which have killed at least five people riding past on motorbikes at night, and spreading oil to make motorbikes skid so bike and rider can be “captured.”

It is clear that support for these protests is coming from outside Venezuela. Opposition groups have been found with Israeli weapons and numerous Colombian paramilitaries have been caught in the border states.

To this end professional mercenaries, expert in firing up violence and street-fighting. Some are qualified snipers. Weapons found on those arrested for violent acts have included grenades, machine guns, pistols and rifles.

Armed gangs have attacked hospitals, power stations, schools, mini-stores, public institutions, telephone companies, the offices of revolutionaries, parties, public transport, police stations, universities, hotels and supermarkets.

Revolutionary activists are shot at when out and about – I myself have been fired on.

US President Barack Obama and others are calling for foreign intervention, a clear sign that outside interests are at work. This is dangerous. The Venezuelan people will not have their revolution sabotaged by a far-right minority whose constitutional rights have been fully respected.

All progressives worldwide need to see these protests for what they are and oppose any interference with Venezuela or its democratically elected government.

Morning Star

March 5, 2014

9

The truth behind the uproar in Venezuela

Cypriot MPs blocked a sell-off Bill last week that had been demanded by international lenders as part of the country’s bailout. But the vote threw into doubt whether Cyprus would receive the next batch of cash from the European Union.

They had given the government until Friday to sell off state companies, which was staunchly opposed by several parties including the communist AKEL and the centre-left Democratic Party. MPs voted 25 in favour, 25 against and five abstained. The tie meant that the legislation was turned down. Parliament will probably be asked to vote on an amended Bill next week, a government MP insisted.

“Privatisation is a necessity,” Averof Neophytou, who leads the ruling right-wing Democratic Rally Party, said on state broadcaster CyBC. “I hope that wisdom will prevail in the next few days.”

However, Akel leader Andros Kypriou told parliament before the vote that the party would never consent to the “sell-off” of the nation’s wealth and denounced the “social blackmail” of international lenders.

Mr Kypriou and Ekip MP Giorgos Varvavos said the government must renegotiate the Bill and consult opposition parties. The centre-right Democratic Party had suggested that it would support the Bill, but five of its MPs abstained because their party’s proposed amendments to its terms had been rejected.

Privatisations were a key component of the €10 billion bailout that Cyprus had received from eurozone countries and the International Monetary Fund last year. The troika of European regulators asked for a “capital firewall” to be imposed outside Parliament against the Bill, including state electric, telecommunications and port workers, whose companies were slated for privatisation.

Morning Star

Cypriot parliament blocks bailout sell-off bill

On Friday the 7th of March join us on the South Australian State Library Lawns to celebrate International Women’s Day! The march will begin with a speech for special guest Lucky Gire, the launch of the Gladys Elphick Award nominations and the announcement of the 2014 Barbara Polkinghorn Award for women supporting women. We will then march to Vaughan Place for live music and a free BBQ!

When: Friday 7th of March

Where: SA State Library Lawns, Nth Tce

Time: 5 pm

Wear: Feminist colours – green purple & white!

Bring: Noise makers!

Do: Enjoy yourself!

IWD march and speech

International March 5, 2014

Guardian

Numbers on the streets because of very real and recognised problems caused by a war being unleashed by the bourgeois class - shortages, inflation and problems of production.

Following numerous deaths as a result of opposition violence the courts ordered the arrest of Lopez as the inspiration for these crimes. Since then the defence of Lopez has itself become a key theme of the protests, which reiterate the usual confused discourse of the far right. Placards demand the right to free speech, for example, when weeks of protest show that the government has respected this right even at the cost of significant disruption.

This is not a popular uprising. It is a bid by a minority to cause chaos. And in this it is not unsuccessful. In areas where the protests are strongest, such as the cities of Merida and San Cristobal, some streets have been taken over, with barricades erected.

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These are professional mercenaries, expert in firing up violence and street-fighting. Some are qualified snipers. Weapons found on those arrested for violent acts have included grenades, machine guns, pistols and rifles.

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Morning Star
Sans compassion

I find it deeply distressing, heartbreakingly so, to see photographs of members of our parliament, Scott Morrison, Tony Abbott, Julie Bishop and Christopher Pyne, lunging at this cunning, sneering and enjoying themselves playing their political games in public, at the cost of a young man, Reza Berati, who has just been killed on Manus Island and many others injured.

This terrible incident demands serious treatment.

Do these people live on another planet; is this real life and a prologue to something that has just occurred. They seemingly have no sense of compassion or empathy. I find this attitude utterly appalling and a terrible disgrace to our country.

We must put an end to this world of offshore processing and rediscover our humanity.

Kevin Stevens

Environmentally destructive Head & Shoulders

A breach of Greenpeace involvement has linked a rainforest-wrecking scandal in Indonesia to a product used by millions worldwide every day. It could even be in your shower right now. We’ve uncovered evidence that the palm oil used in Head & Shoulders shampoo is being obtained at the expense of forest-dwelling communities. It’s making consumers everywhere complicit in forest destruction and driving animals like the mighty Sumatran tiger to extinction.

The makers of Head & Shoulders shampoo buy palm oil from the companies teeming down the trees. If we can build mass public pressure on Head & Shoulders right now, we can reduce the demand that’s driving the deforestation.

You might not know it, but palm oil is used in many of the products we love in supermarkets today. The oil is used in many of the products we love in supermarkets today. If we can lift standards around the world, we can build mass public pressure on Head & Shoulders right now, we can reduce the demand that’s driving the deforestation.

Mayo-Doug’s family (not him, you understand) also is part owner of the land on which the new project is to be built. So Mayo-Doug can do all right out of the deal even if it doesn’t create many real jobs. Jobs of all kinds is a sore point in Wyong Shire. Recently two major employers — the Kelloggs factory at Charmhaven and the Bletchingley Brewery at Warnervale — have closed.

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Mayor Doug seems to be cut from the same cloth as the “job providers” that plague our own unemployed. They have no jobs to provide, but they can — and do — order the unemployed to attend endless and repetitive “training” courses, for which the job providers get paid a fee by the government for every unemployed person on the course.

Culture

by Rob Gowland

Fascists running amok and bogus jobs

Has anyone else noticed the similarities between the EU putch in Ukraine and the near-successful US-backed putch in Hungary in 1956? Like the events in Kiev, those in Budapest in ’56 also depended on the near-successful US-backed putsch in Hungary in 1956? Like the events in Kiev, those in Budapest in ’56 also depended on


McJobs — jobs deliberately employing under-paid youth

The enterprising Mr Coward then received £1 for every CV successfully submitted to CV Library. But usually the jobs themselves simply did not exist. Typically, his ads were for jobs in different parts of the country, but the job descriptions were always identical.

Coward seems to be cut from the same cloth as the “job providers” that plague our own unemployed. They have no jobs to provide, but they can — and do — order the unemployed to attend endless and repetitive “training” courses, for which the job providers get paid a fee by the government for every unemployed person on the course.

No matter how much the government massages the unemployment figures, the number out of work will continue to grow until there is actual investment in job creating industries. However, the federal government has no job creation plan, other than Prime Minister Abbott’s promise that small businesses will somehow lead us out of the slump.

Small businesses are by definition small. They do not employ many people. And the majority of them go bust in their first year.

Pinning one’s hopes for economic recovery and a jobs boom on small businesses shows an alarming ignorance of economics on the part of Abbott and his government.

Clearly, before jobs can grow, Abbott’s got to go.
The proliferation of media courses at tertiary institutions plus the availability of high-quality digital video cameras has meant an upsurge in the number of films about people’s intimate or personal moments, from films about sex problems to films about people’s last moments. The help of professional filmmakers to edit these essentially home movies into a professional-looking finished film makes all the difference between them remaining at home or ending up on television.

Alex: A Life Fast Forward (ABC2 Sunday 9 March at 8.30pm) is one such effort. It is essentially a family movie about their son and brother – Alex Lewis – who was diagnosed with terminal bone cancer as a teenager. Determined to live what life he had to the fullest, Alex remained upbeat and positive, an inspiration to his relatives and friends. On the night after the first day of filming, Alex took a girl at a bar a floor in love. Over a period on nine months we follow his story, as his girlfriend, Allie became his fiancée and then his wife. Five days after they marry, Alex dies.

It could have been maudlin, it could have been morbid. It isn’t. It is a story about making the most of your life, when you know you don’t have long to live. A Windfall Films production for BBC3, this is a quietly moving film.

Fundamentalist “biblical scholars” spend a great deal of time and money fossicking around in the Near East seeking to prove the truth of various Bible stories. If they can positively identify a place or an object as mentioned in the Bible, they feel they have in some way “proven” the truth of the Bible as a whole. This is important to them, for Christian Fundamentalists maintain that everything in the Bible is literally true, whether it is people with 900-year-old life spans, impervious to fire, rising from the dead, talking to angels, or saving two of every animal on Earth from the great flood.

The Bible says Noah’s ark landed on Mount Ararat, so fundamentalist archaeologists have spent years searching for its remains there. But as British actress Joanna Lumley, a religious lady who was schooled by nuns, discovers in the two-part series Joanna Lumley: The Search For Noah’s Ark screening on Compass (ABC1 from Sunday March 9 at 6.30pm), the legend of Noah and the great flood is much older than Biblical times, going back via ancient Mesopotamia to the Indus valley in India.

The significance of the Flood story to fundamentalists is that they believe that if it could be proved to be true it would shoot down evolution in flames. Joanna Lumley seems to merely be intrigued to know if the story has any basis in fact at all. Was there a Flood and if so where? Could flooding of the Arabian Gulf thousands of years ago be the inspiration for Noah’s story?

She is not exactly rigorous in her sorting out of fact from legend or from opinion. But the program is nonetheless interesting, as far as it goes.

Dyf: Teens: Hearing World (ABC2 Wednesday, March 12 at 9.30pm) deals with the problem of being deaf in today’s world. A Century Films Production for BBC3, it follows five deaf teenagers as they take their first steps into the hearing world. The film highlights how not all deaf teens want to be able to hear and are often defiant against being part of the hearing world, but also that the length some deaf teens will go to improve their hearing.

Sara and Asher wouldn’t choose to hear even if they had that option, they are fully deaf and proud of their Deaf culture. Not only do they not hear, but they also don’t speak. This makes Sara’s first days at university a real challenge: she is supplied with two support workers, one to translate the lecturer’s words into sign language, and the other to take notes as Sara cannot watch the translator sign and take notes at the same time. She worries that this makes her look like she has “special needs”.

Others in the film are 19-year-old Meghan who has a cochlear implant fitted the week before she starts at university, a fully-hearing environment; Jake and Adam, identical twins, except that Adam is hearing but Jake is profoundly deaf; Adam and Jake have their own one-handed form of sign language. Christianah is entering her final year at her specialist Deaf School where she and her friends have a very saucy attitude to their deafness, being quick to deride anyone who won’t take them seriously. It is their last year of living in a safe, deaf environment and the nerves are beginning to set in...

In 2011 24-year-old Jesse Jones went missing. After five days his body was found at the bottom of a cliff. During the search for Jesse it emerged that unbeknownst to his family, he was suffering from acute depression and felt Roaccutane, a commonly prescribed acne drug, was largely to blame.

Dying For Clear Skin (ABC2 Wednesday March 12 at 8.30pm) is an attempt to raise concerns about the safety of Roaccutane. Acne affects 80 percent of teenagers in various forms of severity and can be a debilitating condition. Even mild outbreaks can make people insecure and miserable and they will do anything to get rid of it. Roaccutane is the most effective treatment now available and is commonly safe. But it can have serious side effects, producing mood swings and suicidal thoughts.

The dermatologists remain firm in their advocacy of Roaccutane, but the program certainly makes you wonder about the need for safeguards.

I have not yet been able to see any of the new series Simon Schama presents The Story of the Jews (SBSONE Saturdays from March 8, at 8.30pm) but will review it next week.
International Women’s Day

Women’s rights & class struggle

Clara Zetkin: Selected writings

Edited by Philip S Foner
Foreword by Angela Davis
Paperback 206 pages $25 including p&h

The communist activist Clara Zetkin is widely associated with International Women’s Day but she also deserves to be better known for her Marxist analysis of women’s oppression.

“Like her heroic contemporary, V.I. Lenin, she sought to understand the special oppression of women by placing it within the larger context of the socioeconomic evolution of humankind and consequently attempted to analyse most of the major events within the history of the class struggle of her era,” Angela Davis writes in the foreword to the book.

The interesting and important collection of writings are still as relevant and of interest as when they were written. A great gift for International Women’s Day!

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