Qantas – the high cost of privatisation

Bob Briton

The repealing of the Qantas Sale Act has sailed through the House of Reps but few are predicting the Senate to endorse the decision either before or after July 1. Many of the new Senators are expected to vote with Labor and the Greens to scuttle the move to let Qantas out of many of its obligations to the Australian travelling public. Qantas says it doesn’t matter what the federal parliament decides. It’s pressing ahead with plans to cut $2 billion off its expenditures over the next three years with a range of drastic measures including the axing of 5,000 full time jobs. One in six Qantas and one in 10 Jetstar staff are expected to be given their marching orders. Some have already received the letters.

Unions are furious that the details of the sackings and redundancies aren’t available leading many to conclude the figure of 5,000 was plucked from the air. Qantas pilot and president of the Australian and International Pilots Association, Nathan Safe, suspects the number was announced in order to impress the share market where Qantas’ fortunes have been flagging.

ACTU secretary Dave Oliver held talks with Qantas management last week but was frustrated on the issue of which of the 1,500 management, 300 maintenance and unspecified numbers of catering and fleet operations jobs are to go.

Mr Oliver said that there would be war if the company used the crisis caused by mismanagement to reopen enterprise bargaining negotiations and press for pay cuts. Tony Sheldon, national secretary of the Transport Workers Union, says Qantas chief Alan Joyce told him that wage concessions from workers would make “not one iota of difference” to the company’s intention to wield the axe. That won’t stop Qantas trying to raid workers’ pay packets if they get the chance, however.

Interestingly, Qantas is proposing to expand domestic capacity in the second half of this year and is still committed to effectively add two aircraft to its fleet for every one put on by Virgin. The airline has denied bogus claims from federal Treasurer Joe Hockey that the carbon tax added significantly to the company’s woes. Qantas insists high fuel costs, the decision to buy the giant A380s instead of the more fuel efficient Boeing 777 and stiff competition from Virgin and its backer, government-owned Etihad, has led to the current crisis. So while workers were not to blame for the difficulties, they will pay the price. That’s capitalism.

The business pages are full of encouragement to Qantas management to go in hard. Matt O’Sullivan of The Sydney Morning Herald authored a piece last week with the headline “Shifting work overseas biggest benefit to airline”. It appeared to celebrate the fact that “This month Qantas will complete the closure of an engineering base at Avalon Airport in Victoria, leaving its Brisbane base as its sole heavy maintenance base in Australia.”

Former Qantas executive and Rudd political advisor, David Epstein, has praised the Abbott government’s last minute decision not to provide a $3 billion unsecured loan to Qantas as requested. That would have led us “down the Argentine road” of failed government intervention, he said. And like virtually all the writers in the business pages, he wants the Qantas Sale Act to go so as to deliver the airline a “level playing field”.

That legislation and the determination of workers is all that stands in the way of much worse social consequences from Qantas’ difficulties. Pressure is building on Labor to flip-flop. Its “no” vote in the House of Reps drew the following, tormenting comment from the PM: “The once great Labor Party, which had the strength and the courage to sell Qantas back in the early 90s has gone backwards.”

Let’s hope he’s right and that they keep moving backwards. After all, “backwards” for Abbott means protecting the people’s assets and interests against the capitalist predators who give the PM his orders.
Cuts are cuts are cuts

The Abbott government is quietly cutting health, aged care, women’s, Indigenous and other programs. Since its election in September 2013, a number of community groups have suddenly found their funding cut or severely reduced. No warning, no consultation, just axe it! Legal services, women’s refuges, advocacy centres and other community organisations are in the firing line. The government claims the cuts are necessary, but no explanation as to how the cuts would stop the alleged rorting.

Nursing home residents are the latest to feel Treasurer Hockey’s razor blade. Annual medication reviews will be reduced to once every two years. These reviews save lives and reduce hospital admissions as well as improve the health outcomes of many residents. The majority of aged care residents take multiple medications, six or seven or more, and some have quite complex medical conditions. These medications may interact, cause adverse reactions, or require ongoing supervision such as in the case of anti-psychotic drugs. The announcement that reviews are presently government-funded and undertaken by qualified pharmacists who are able to give valuable advice to medical practitioners and patients is nothing but a convenient cheaper way to cut costs. But no explanation as to how the cuts would stop the alleged rorting.

The government claims that there is no more money for medication management programs; that it must work within the existing budget. So, using the excuse of an ageing population and rising costs, it is halving the service to make a saving. It steadfastly refuses to increase spending on the service, not even in line with inflation or its own income growth. To soften up the public there are the all too familiar accusations of rorting by service providers. Anything that the private sector can turn a profit on is cut off, or severely reduced. No warning, no consultation. Of course, there is never a shred of evidence to substantiate these wild claims.

Hands off Ukraine and Venezuela

The hypocrisy of Secretary of State John Kerry’s statement on Face the Nation, “You just don’t in the 21st century behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped up pretext”, is beyond belief. What about the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, or regime change in Libya, or the threats to bomb Syria and attack Iran?

The US has waged a massive propaganda campaign of misinformation, distortion, and outright lies and the national media has taken them at face value. The US media does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US. The US government does not cover the most dramatic new stories, which are the crimes of the US government, not those of the US.
IWD March Sydney

Several thousand people turned out for one of the best International Women’s Day marches and rallies for some time on March 8, with strong contingents from the trade unions, the Communist Party, and other left and progressive parties, women’s organisations and solidarity organisations as well as many individuals. One of the main themes was women’s reproductive rights, in particular Zoe’s Bill, legislation currently before the NSW parliament, which aims to give a foetus legal status of personhood. Other issues included pay equality, women with disability, women’s legal services, women and education, poverty, sole parents (see page 6) and solidarity with women in other parts of the world. [Photo: Anna Phil]

Proven: Pilliga groundwater contaminated by CSG

The Lock the Gate Alliance is calling for all coal seam gas exploration in NSW to stop immediately after proof emerged last week that Santos have contaminated groundwater in the Pilliga. It has been revealed that groundwater near the Pilliga in north-west NSW has been contaminated as a result of a leak from Santos’ CSG exploration pilot in north-west NSW.

Uranium levels recorded in the groundwater as a result of CSG activities are at 30 times the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. It is the nightmare that the communities of the north-west dreaded, and we hope that the contamination is contained and does no harm. Groundwater is the lifeblood of towns and rural businesses and the worst fears of local farmers are being realised.

Documents obtained by the Wilderness Society showed that groundwater in the Pilliga has been contaminated. The NSW Environmental Protection Authority have confirmed the contamination event, but failed to act with any proper legal force, choosing to fine Santos only $1,500 dollars.

“This proven case of contamination in the Pilliga makes a lie of all the claims Santos have made about their CSG operations being safe,” said Drew Hutton, president of Lock the Gate Alliance.

“The uranium contamination of groundwater confirms that CSG is a dangerous, toxic industry and it needs to be stopped dead in its tracks before more extensive damage is done. It’s extraordinary that contamination as serious as this has been swept under the carpet by the NSW government and trivialised with a paltry fine.

“We are demanding that the NSW government now stops all CSG exploration immediately, and conducts a far reaching investigation into how things have gone so horrifically wrong,” he said.

“Groundwater contamination with high levels of uranium from CSG activities is our worst nightmare,” said Mark and Cherie Robinson, dryland farmers from west of the Pilliga, who were recently arrested protesting Santos CSG drilling activities in the Pilliga forest.

“We are completely reliant on groundwater on our farm and cannot survive without it. Our water is our lifeblood. Now we know for sure that CSG puts all that at risk.

“There’s no way we are going to allow this polluting industry to spread any further across our region. It needs to stop now,” they said.

“The Pilliga is an important recharge area for the Great Artesian Basin which means Santos actions are a direct threat to our greatest inland water resource.

Take action

Santos have said this type of contamination could never happen – now we know that it already has. The NSW government must immediately halt all CSG drilling in the Pilliga and throughout NSW in response to this alarming news, and protect our groundwater from any further damage and contamination.

Phoe the Premier and Deputy Premier

Coalmine farmers Mark and Cherie Robinson are travelling to Sydney to call for the government to stop the coal seam gas drilling in the Pilliga following contamination of groundwater with uranium and heavy metals.

Will you stand with them and add your support by phoning the Premier and the Deputy Premier and asking them to stop all coal seam gas drilling now that there is concrete evidence that it is not safe?

Barry O’Farrel and Andrew Stoner Premier and Deputy Premier of NSW: (02) 9228 5239 Deputy Premier: (02) 9228 5209

Talking Points

Start with your name and where you live, then:

After all the promises by Santos and the NSW government that CSG wouldn’t contaminate water resources, the worst fears of farmers in the North West have been realised, and waste water from Santos’ coal seam gas operation has leached into groundwater and contaminated it.

It was very poor form for the NSW government to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Santos just days after the EPA fined them for contaminating groundwater in north west NSW.

The fines of just $1,500 issued by the EPA for such serious pollution is totally inadequate and reveals a system that is broken.

The Pilliga is a recharge aquifer for the Great Artesian Basin – the lifeblood of western NSW. Will they now act to protect this irreplaceable resource, and announce a moratorium on any further coal seam gas drilling?

Lessons for Qld

Queensland should heed a strong warning following the disturbing revelation that coal seam gas company, Santos contaminated an aquifer with uranium and other toxic heavy metals.

Santos is operating a huge coal seam gas project in Queensland. The company’s joint venture partner, Eastern Star Gas, allowed water to seep from one of its CSG water holding ponds into a shallow aquifer. The aquifer was damaged beyond repair.

Drew Hutton said such pollution could occur when a holding pond leaks, when a fracking or drilling operation goes wrong or even when contaminated “produced water” is sprayed on roads as dust suppressant.

Mr Hutton said the Pilliga incident proved contamination is a real problem and Queenslanders should be on notice.

This incident has put the lie to the CSG industry’s claim it has never contaminated an aquifer and should set alarm bells ringing about similar incidents happening in Queensland,” he said.

“Once an aquifer has been contaminated, it cannot be fixed and so there are farmers and towns all over Queensland hoping that such an incident does not happen in their communities.”

Queensland authorities are totally dependent on the companies informing them if such a polluting incident happens. At present companies are able to spread produced water from the coal seams all over our rural roads with no regulatory controls whatever.

“This means that salt, uranium and other toxic pollutants could be sprayed over the countryside in any amounts and it is illegal to do so,” said Mr Hutton.

The Queensland state government has also given the Origin energy company permission to spread drilling muds over agricultural land with no controls over dangerous contaminants.”
Abbott wants bosses’ unions or no unions

Anna Pha

Last month two workers were injured when scaffolding at a construction site in Mascot, Sydney collapsed. They rode the falling materials ten metres to the ground and were taken to hospital, lucky to be alive. The falling scaffolding brought down power lines and fell across the footpath and one lane of the road. It was only luck that no pedestrians or motorists were hit in this busy street.

According to the Construction division of the CFMEU, there was a stoppage by workers at that site just before Christmas over safety concerns with the scaffolding. It was one of two serious accidents on construction sites in Sydney last month. The other involved a concrete pour, with the pump truck tipping over the next day. Luck alone saw no one killed or injured.

In January, a construction worker died in a fall at the controversial Lend Lease site at Barangaroo in Sydney. Reports indicate that he fell 30 metres from scaffolding. Last August a 19-year-old was driving an excavator on a site in Lindfield, Sydney, when a metal rod flew up and became lodged in his head. In the same month a slab of concrete fell form a crane onto a worker causing back injuries at an inner-Sydney site. A 22-year-old worker lost his life when he was crushed by metal beams at a demolition site.

The list continues of “accidents”, not just in Sydney but on construction sites across Australia.

One of the most notorious sites is the Royal Adelaide Hospital which has been riddled with safety issues. Fifty sheets of wood fell more than two metres onto decking in one incident as a crane lost its load in November last year. It is sheer luck that no one was on the deck underneath. It was the second crane malfunction in one month.

It is not hard to find safety breaches. It is uncommon to see unsafe scaffolding, sites not locked after hours, workers wearing runn- ways or no hard hat, dust not hosed down, rubbish scattered along walkways, ladders not secured, and so on. For examples, visit http://smashaustralia.org.au and click on photo galleries, Safety Shockers!

In a number of the cases cited above, the CFMEU had previously warned employers of dangers, had called stop work meetings or made demands for inspections and engi- neers’ reports. But building contractors and companies act with impunity. State inspection authori- ties are grossly under-staffed and not carrying out the necessary inspec- tions or enforcing health and safety regulations.

Building workers are constantly being hit by shonky contractors and builders who purposely attempt to avoid paying their workers’ entitle- ments, even when wages in some instances. The same outlaws go belly- up and re-emerge as a new company to rip off more workers. Employ- ers sign workers up as contractors to avoid paying their workers’ compen- sation insurance, superannuation, sick leave and other entitlements.

They act with impunity, outside the law, putting workers and the public’s health and safety at risk and denying workers their entitlements. They know that at worst they might receive a slap on the wrist for these misdemeanours.

The union is the only force seri- ously attempting to protect workers from the criminality of their bosses. But this has been made far more diffi- cult than ever thanks to a number of government measures.

Instead of pursuing the real crim- inals, the Abbott government is set to increase the powers of the Australian Building and Construction Commis- sion (ABCC) (at present an inspec- torate under Fair Work umbrella, FWI) which needless to say does not hound employers.

The system does not jail negli- gent employers for the loss of life or serious injuries. But unions and their members face hefty fines and dam- ages actions if they take any form of industrial action to save lives, reinstate sacked delegates or recoup unpaid or underpaid entitlements. Officials also face loss or suspension of their entry permit.

Unions and individual work- ers are also penalised if they take action for other reasons. The ABCB is now in the process of prosecut- ing 76 building workers – serving subpoenas on them one by one – for participating in a union/community rally or protest, by “inciting a breach of the peace”. The workers were employed on the John Holland children’s hospital site in Perth and the rally was 12 months ago. They face fines of $10,200 each. (Abbott’s ABCC legislation, which has retrospective provisions, increases the maximum fine to $34,000 for individuals and $170,000 for unions.)

Last December the Federal Court fined CFMEU Queensland assistant secretary Joe McDonald a total of $193,600 for their role in “unlawful industrial action” at Citic Pacific’s Sino Iron project.

Federal Court judge J Barker said: “Mr McDonald’s conduct involves a calculated and careless attitude to the law governing the employment of persons by employers. It was calculated to cause dis- ruption to employers carrying out building and construction work on the site and it was careless in that McDonald was aware of the legal consequences of his actions and pur- sued them nonetheless”.

The ABCB had taken McDonald and the union to court, claiming he had attended and entered the site on February 21, 2012. “He addressed an unauthorised meeting of 87 site employees. Seventy-seven workers subsequently withdrew their labour,” the judge said.

Legitimate trade union activity is outlawed. The aim of the hefty fines is to bankrupt unions and intimate workers. In this instance, workers were dealing with safety concerns, the use and abuse of Section 457 visa workers who were being paid 40 per cent less than local workers and an attempt to drive down wages and conditions of all workers on the site. The company was also attempting to deny the CFMEU the right to organis- e and collectively bargain.

The Fair Work Amendment Bill 2014, which Employment Minister Eric Abetz presented to Parliament, contains further limitations on the right of entry of union officials. It gives employers greater flexibility to undermine wage and penalty rates on an individual basis and in effect could see building companies shut the union out when enterprise agree- ments for new (greenfields) sites are determined.

An investigation into the con- struction industry is urgently required. There have been several Royal Commissions, the last one, launched by Tony Abbott as Min- ister for Industrial Relations in the Howard government, found evidence of massive corruption and criminality on the part of employers. The Cole Commission was used to clamp down on building and construction workers, and the ABCB was set up to destroy unions in that industry.

The $56 million Royal Com- mission did not result in a single conviction for criminality and only one civil prosecution of a company for pay; it was used to provide a blueprint for destroying unions in the duration of the ABCB. But the unions have survived.

So now we have Abbott back again, with a $100 million Royal Commission. This time there is no pretense of “even-handedness”. The inquiry is not into the industry but into the trade unions. The real crim- inal and corrupt elements – the Coalition’s employer mates – will not be under the microscope.

The findings will again be used to launch another round of attacks, on building unions, possibly deregistra- tion of the CFMEU and an opening for the employer-friendly Australian Workers Union.

Without a strong, militant union presence, construction workers would be turned into slave labour, unpaid or underpaid for their labour, forced to work in unsafe conditions and arbitrarily sacked for speaking out. The cost would be huge in lives and injuries.

The government has so far got away with murder (literally and figu- ratively) in its treatment of asylum seekers, playing the race and “they are illegal” cards. They are not ile- gal, and even if they were, such bar- baric treatment is not justified under Australia’s justice system.

The CFMEU and other unions in the industry are the next in line. Abbott and Abetz have no inten- tion of stopping there. The Maritime Union of Australia is also squarely in their sights. Once the stronger, more militant unions are out the way, the aim is to do over the rest of the union movement.

And it will not stop there. The defeat of organised labour would remove the main barriers to the gov- ernment’s attack on left and progress- ive forces. It would remove the main barriers to its austerity measures, such as the abolition of bulk-billing, privatisation of Medicare and public education, slashing of pensions and unemployment benefits, and even worse.

It is imperative that the unions, left and progressive parties and all forces that support basic human and democratic rights unite now to defend our hard won, fundamental rights.

An anti-ABCC rally in Sydney, 2009. (Photo: Anna Pha)
Manus Island tragedies
Major human rights questions

Peter Mac

The murder of 23-year-old Ira-
nian asylum seeker Reza Bara-
ti, and the injuries suffered by more
than 70 others during an attack on
detainees in the Manus Island
detention centre three weeks ago,
has raised profound questions
about Australia’s immigration
policies.

Barati was a qualified architect,
but he could never practise. Because
he was from the oppressed Kurdish
minority, and because of economic
restrictions from international sanc-
tions, professional opportunities were
virtually non-existent for him.

His fiancée remained in Tehran.
He had wanted to study architecture in
Australia, but ended up in an asylum
seeker boat and then in Manus Island after
being fast-tracked through the system.

He never had the chance to see
one of his designs materialise, beauti-
fiul buildings to serve human needs, or
to marry, raise children and experience a
full and productive life.

Barati died in an attack in which
Minister Scott Morrison immediately
blamed detainees for the violence and
called for the deaths to be avenged by
himself by escaping with them from the
detention centre.

However, his cousin informed
relatives that he and Barati were in the
same cell at the time of the attack when
the attack began.

When Barati opened the door to investigate, he was pulled out, savagely beaten and dragged
away.

Moreover, evidence given by
witnesses to the coroners’ inquiry
Interpretive Avita Bokal, forced Mor-
rison to admit that “almost all” the
detainees’ injuries were inflicted by the
instigators of the violence.

Article 31 of the Convention
forbids host countries from penalis-
ting refugees who declare themselves to
authorities. Article 36 forbids their
expulsion or removal to any place in
danger of their race, religion or belief.

The PNG Prime Minister has
denied that police had
admitted that police had
been charged or tried for any offence,
against Australia, and who have not
been excluded from their
by the Department of Immigration
and the Australian Human Rights
Commission.

Both those organisations have
seen no definitive evidence of the
indefinite detention of asylum
seekers from the Department.

Indefinite detention is in effect
a punishment for arriving here
without permission. The
punishment is magnified
by the banning of asylum seekers who
have no visas from ever settling in
Australia.

On Manus Island detainees were
told that if they complained they
would be excluded and that the
Australian government would not
be accountable to the United Nations
High Commissioner for
Refugees. There is no evidence
that the Department of
Immigration and the Australian
Government are even aware of the
existence of detention centres in
the island.

The Prime Minister has declared
that the Abbott government
should fly detainees from Manus
Island to Canada, at its own
cost, within 24 hours of the Senate
inquiry into the attack.

However, Greens Senator Sarah
Hansen-Young says that Senators
involved in the inquiry should visit
the island to see for themselves.
Moreover, flying detain-
ees to Canada and then return-
ing them to Manus Island would
inflict terrible psychological distress
according to mental health expert
Louise Newman from Monash
University.

In fact, the scope of the inquiry
should be broadened to include
detention in all offshore centres,
and parliamentarians should visit
the island to inspect conditions for
themselves. Moreover, flying detain-
ees to Canada and then return-
ing them to Manus Island would
inflict terrible psychological distress
according to mental health expert
Louise Newman from Monash
University.

If those parties refuse to amend
their vindictive approach to asylum
seekers, the Australian people will
have to replace them. It can and must
do.
I have been a single parent for 10 years. My two children are aged 13 and 16. I now face the challenges of raising teenage children on my own, which can leave me at times feeling worthless and inadequate. I am good boys though and I am proud to be their mother.

As single parents we endure discrimination in numerous places; in the work force, while applying for rental housing, finding loans in the media, from the public and even from some friends and family, but worse still, at the hands of our politicians.

Actions of governments

The Howard government started moving single parents onto Newstart when their youngest child turned eight, while those that belief kept their payments prior to that date were only allowed three visits a year. Women in rural areas found themselves forced to turn single parents onto Newstart. The gap between the highly paid workforce and single parents was 100,000 single parents off the Parenting Payment Single allowance, mostly over to Newstart. The outcome was that these “grandfathered” recipients left on Parenting Payment Single prior to 2006 should also find employment.

Julia Gillard claimed to be a “feminist” Prime Minister, yet she had the audacity to move more sole parents 40 percent below the poverty line. Her own Parliamentary Committee advised it was a violation of human rights. The day this bill was passed in Parliament, was the day she gave her famous misogyny speech in relation to then opposition leader Tony Abbott. In my opinion, Julia had no concern for women and in particular women who are the most vulnerable in our society. If she claimed to have cared about women’s rights, why didn’t she return all sole parents to Parenting Payment?

This move cost single parents $65 to $135 in their weekly income. This was further reduced by the loss of Pensioner Tax Offset at tax time where single parents were able to claim a rebate of up to $2,000, and a 1,000 percent increase in JET (Jobs, Education and Training childcare fees) without notice.

Women were caught unaware of the changes and could no longer afford the homes they were privately renting and had to break leases and move to cheaper accommodation. Others defaulted on their mortgages and/or on any loans they held. Many lost the roof over their heads and became homeless, forced into refuges and even into living in their cars, before joining already-bursting public housing lists.

Women were caught unaware of the changes and could no longer afford the homes they were privately renting and had to break leases and move to cheaper accommodation. Others defaulted on their mortgages and/or on any loans they held. Many lost the roof over their heads and became homeless, forced into refuges and even into living in their cars, before joining already-bursting public housing lists.

For this reason, all women and men should be aware of the changes and should be prepared to face the challenges of single parenting. Women and men should be aware of the changes and should be prepared to face the challenges of single parenting.

Access to childcare and healthcare

Another problem with single parents working is the affordability and accessibility of childcare for those who are lucky enough to gain employment. Then there is the issue of available casual childcare spaces for sole parents attending job interviews or those working odd hours in casual positions.

Waiting lists for public healthcare are lengthy and single parents can no longer afford private health cover. Going to specialists is too expensive so parents and children go without needed specialised care. This is how Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews wants to be able to stop welfare payments if we refuse to take a job that is more than 10 hours per week. It’s demeaning and lowers self-esteem.

This scheme costs between $4,500 to almost $8,000 per person, per year. This money could be better spent on drug, alcohol and gambling rehabilitation programs that not only educates parents, but also encourages them to make better choices and to give up these addictions. Or programs that can improve their self-worth such as job skill training, increasing numeracy and literacy skills, plus parenting courses. An option such as Centrepay, which is much cheaper to run, does almost the same as controlled income management by paying debts directly out of the welfare income – but at least it gives the recipient the feeling of still being in control of their own finances.

Stay-at-home?

Caring for one’s own children at home is not considered to be real “work” although it is considered to be “work” to care for someone else’s children. Go figure! Reliance on social security programs is once again referred to as “dependency” although reliance on a husband’s income is not. Increasingly it is considered unacceptable behaviour to have government support, yet acceptable for middle class welfare recipients to learn to accept this support.

Money well spent?

Forcing people into a Controlled Income Management scheme, which was introduced in the Northern Territory, is now being expanded across Australia to single parents. How are these vulnerable parents supposed to learn to be self-sufficient with this idea of control? It’s demeaning and lowers self-esteem.

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Pay

Australian unions have fought for the “family wage” since early last century which has kept men’s wages higher than women’s and limited the access of married women and mothers to the paid labour force. The gender gap per hour’s pay is still 18 percent higher, it is not closing and sometimes seems to be widening instead of decreasing, which is a shame considering this has been highlighted as blatant discrimination for many years.

This is clearly a feminist issue and needs to be picked up by women’s groups as separate from just the question of the levels of Newstart.

Parenting payment

We are sole parents. We need to have payments that are higher than normal income support for individuals looking for work or studying, because we already have a job that takes up time and energy.

So a payment – for example parenting payment – needs to be high enough to allow us to work shorter hours or study and still get some extra public support to give us the top up to at least a minimum wage payment. If we need to be there when children are sick, after school and in emergencies, we may have difficulties in finding the right job. All this needs to be taken into account in shaping the payments that will support us and our children decently.

I was one of the grandfathered recipients who moved onto Newstart in January last year. I was devastated. I was sent into a spiralling depression that lasted three weeks. I found a

Our job is to change the perceptions that single parents are lazy bums and welfare cheats. We work, we study and we do the best we can to improve our lives for ourselves and for our children.

This is Kerry’s story on how and why she became an activist which she related in a speech in Sydney for International Women’s Day. Kerry is a founding member of United Sole Parents of Australia. Her speech was greeted with warmth and enthusiasm.
You need a thick skin to cope with disability

Koren Helbig

“Change your appearance so you can be a little kinder on yourself,” a date once told Melbourne writer and activist Carly Findlay, referring to the genetic skin condition that leaves her skin forever scaly, itchy and shiny red. Too many people, assuming Findlay’s face is flushed crimson with severe sunburn, think it’s the opportunity to publicly tell her. “Or worse. ‘If I was in your situation, I’d top myself,’” someone once told her. She tries to adopt a more or less stoic attitude toward the daily “staring, commenting and teasing”, knowing it is part and parcel of life with a visible disability.

Findlay’s disability is doubly public, for she writes openly through her blog and social media about life with ichthyosis, an incurable condition that affects only 10 to 20 people per million. With heartfelt misives that read more like deeply personal letters, Findlay, who is 32, bares her private self to a world already looking, questioning and commenting on the outer shell they see. “I like to tell my story on my own terms,” she says. In a tone that suggests she has previously faced the kind of hatred that internet anonymity breeds, she adds, “I think you do have to have thick skin.”

Storm of ridicule

It happened late last year. She saw an incoming link to her blog from the user-submitted “social news” website Reddit, clicked through and found her photo had been uploaded to a storm of ridicule. One person suggested she looked like “something partially digested by my dog.” It was Findlay’s worst fear, the reason she had initially balked at putting her picture online when she first began blogging in 2001. “I don’t get many negative comments on my blog [normally] but I had comments coming over telling me I should kill myself,” she says. “It was weird.” She decided to fight back with a measured, informative response. In a way, it garners an apology from the person who originally uploaded the photo and support from others who clicked through. Still, it hurt.

A month after, the internet, like the fickle beast it is, gave her an opportunity to connect in a more positive light. Scouting around Twitter one morning in January, Findlay happened across the hashtag #AbledPeopleSay, through which people with disabilities were documenting things said to them as they went about day-to-day life. The trail led back to American disability activist Lydia Brown, who coined the hashtag to share remarks made daily about her own disability, autism. Things like: “If you try harder, maybe it will just go away.”

A group of people with disabilities — physical, mental, visual, invisible — were soon chiming in from around the world, including Findlay, who has received such comments as: “I know exactly how it feels to have a severe skin condition, I have my eyebrows waxed every day.” “I’m so glad they’re coming at it from the outside, because it’s out there and not locked away somewhere”, and “Don’t you wish there was a cure so you’d look a little less … unfortunate?”

As the Twitter comments multiplied into the hundreds, Findlay was reminded how intrusively people with disabilities are pigeonholed. “They say: ‘Sometimes, I just want to get on with my day. I don’t want to be the person who scares a child on the train or be the brunt of teenagers pointing’,” she says.

But it can be hard living up to that expectation. “Sometimes,” she says, “I just want to get on with my day. I don’t want to be the person who scares a child on the train or be the brunt of teenagers pointing.” Findlay understands that some people don’t know how to act around those with disabilities, yet she wishes they would at least kick off conversations sans empty platitudes and with a touch of politeness, just the way they would with anyone else.

Words cut deep

The unofficial Twitter campaign seemed to empower people. That week a woman wrote to Findlay, said she’d been holding on to a secret for years, a barbed sentence spat at her by another person, words that cut so deep it hurt even to write them down. She wrote those words to Findlay and something shifted. “People tell me their secrets,” Findlay says. “It’s kind of privileged.”

It’s a trust bred from Findlay’s own willingness to share publicly the intimate details of her life. She looks inside herself, “for the shiny bits and the darkness” and comes to know herself through writing. It’s therapeutic, a way, for herself and her readers. Recently, Findlay got a boyfriend and immediately began writing about the strangeness and the joy of sharing her life with another. “I shed so much skin,” she writes. “Initially I would brush it off his clothes, embarrassed I’d leave my mark on him. I’d worry about my peeling face in the morning or how my skin would fall off. He has said countless times that it doesn’t bother him. He finds my skin flakes in his pocket and smiles that he’s carrying me with him wherever he goes.”

Her frank, direct words have caught the eye of major news organisations and led to a flurry of speaking and disability activism opportunities. She has won a bunch of awards too; yet, Findlay says, she doesn’t always feel like the journalist she has become. She is just telling her own story, in her own words. Then again, she realises this is where her talent and power lies, especially when communicated through direct channels like Twitter. “Because it’s real people telling their story, it hits home. It’s a start in creating change.”

Domestic violence

Women suffering domestic violence have limited choices: either they leave a DV relationship and face months or years of homelessness, joblessness and bartering group and my main activist group United Sole Parents of Australia. We have run petitions, held rallies and appeared on television and radio shows. We write to politicians, magazines and anyone who will listen. Our job is to change the perceptions that single parents are lazy bums and welfare cheats. We work, we study and we do the best we can to improve our lives for ourselves and for our children. I saw the isolation for single parents and I am now trying to build local groups so single parents can network and gain support from each other. I hope to arrange guest speakers to come and empower the women in my groups. While I have been researching the changes that have taken place, I noticed that these changes weren’t just happening in Australia but in other countries as well. Cuts have also been taking place in Ireland, England and even the Netherlands. The sole parents in these countries were also given little notice. No thought has been given to the impact of these cuts, only of the money the governments can save at the cost of our children.

A one parent outlook

Single parent support group online, became active and started to raise awareness of what had happened to us. Now I run several Facebook groups ranging from housing, Centrelink advice, a single parent forum, a single parent small business and bartering group and my main activist group United Sole Parents of Australia. We have run petitions, held rallies and appeared on television and radio shows. We write to politicians, magazines and anyone who will listen.

Why change the perceptions that single parents are lazy bums and welfare cheats. We work, we study and we do the best we can to improve our lives for ourselves and for our children.

The 2013 Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot report showed that in April, when the Anglicare network surveyed over 56,000 rental properties across Australia, less than one percent of the properties listed were suitable for anyone on Newstart allowance, parenting payment, aged pension or disability support pension. Single parents are paying over 30–90 percent of their income for a suitable property. Single parents are suitable for anyone on Newstart allowance, parenting payment, aged pension or disability support pension. Single parents are paying over 30–90 percent of their income for a suitable property.
Manipulations in Venezuela coverage

Emile Schepers

The International Criminal Court in The Hague to consider the measure, as did some former independent of the chain of command.

The vote was 55-45 in favour of the SFU's Maduro, of the Venezuelan United Socialist Party (PSUV), are using these images to say that the mere presence of an channel of communication at that time to have been wrong-headed and inappropriate.

Stephen Lawrence was stabbed to death by a group of up to six white youths in an unprovoked racist attack at a bus stop in Eltham, south-east London, on April 22, 1993. In November 2013, Gary Dobson and David Norris, who is the first Iraq war veteran in the body. We have moved too slowly.” After blocking Senator Gillibrand’s Bill, the Senate overwhelmingly passed a weaker measure to eliminate the “good soldier defense,” which allows a service member’s character and military performance to be used in a defence.

“Prior to the unsuccessful attempt to parrot the line that there is no free opposition press in Venezuela. This puts them in synch with US foreign policy, which has been aiming at reversing the tendency of Latin American countries to unite in opposition to the traditional hegemonic control of the United States over the Western Hemisphere.

There are a number of far more reliable sites for Venezuela news, including the Venezuelananalysis website, and, of course, the People’s World online.

Stephen’s mother Doreen Lawrence said: “Mark Ellison must face by his own report suggested that the supposed dictator of Venezuela’s regime has so far suppressed the media so as to prevent the coverage of opposition political activities on television. People in Venezuela immediately spotted the misreport; in fact almost all private TV stations in Venezuela are run by people opposed to the PSUV government, which they regularly criticise. Called to account by Just Foreign Policy and others, who circulated a petition that got 13,000 signatures calling for a retraction, the Times finally climbed down and corrected its text.

However, many other US and international news agencies continued to spread a false impression that there is no free opposition press in Venezuela. This puts them in synch with US foreign policy, which has been aiming at reversing the tendency of Latin American countries to unite in opposition to the traditional hegemonic control of the United States over the Western Hemisphere.

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But Pentagons leaders opposed the measure, as did some former independent of the chain of command.

The debate and vote were the culmination of a nearly year-long campaign to cut equal–sex assault in the ranks.

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The EU’s Ukraine policy a moral bankruptcy

Peter Lovelle

The conversation between EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton and Estonia’s Foreign Minister revealing UK and US media. Brussels has some explaining to do.

We now have a “smoking gun” demonstrating the EU has been and remains in cahoots with fascists and extremists in Kiev. The political fiction that President Viktor Yanukovych ordered sniper attacks has been exposed. There are many (nasty and truly awful) things one can and should write about Yanukovych, but proof he ordered any targeted murders has always been hereby provided by Brat a ta, US Secretary of State John Kerry, and Western mainstream media.

Allow me to quote Urmas Paet, the Estonian Foreign Minister, from the buggest conversation believed to have taken place on February 26: “There is now stronger and stronger understanding that behind the snipers it was not Yanukovych, but it was somebody from the new coalition.”

It is pathetic that Kerry only had high praise for this “new coalition” when the victims of Kiev last week (with the promise of a billion dollar cheque – or should we describe it as blood money?) – blown up by Kerry, Ashton, and US State Department official Victoria Nuland know very well whom they have decided to anoint as Ukraine’s new leaders.

All three of these western officials intentionally overlook the racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-democratic sentiments of the “new coalition” because the rebel government in Kiev is anti-Russian and against ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine. That suits the EU and Washington just fine. The West’s push into Ukraine, it seems, has never been about democracy or “civilisational choice” – it is about raw geopolitical advantage at the expense of Russia’s legitimate security interests.

Instead of being honest and open about the thuggery the West has empowered in Kiev (and wants to invest in!), Western powers and Western media want the world to focus its attention on Crimea. This is a place that Russia has not invaded over the past few days, though it is a place that Russian military forces have been for 15 years under a treaty negotiated and ratified by Ukraine and Russia.

Since this crisis erupted in Ukraine back in November, we have learned of two bugged phone conversations. We now have a “smoking gun” demonstrating debates on how the West’s demands will be imposed on the Ukrainian people. I suspect those kinds of conversations happen every day. The public doubletalk and hypocrisy is unforgivable.

Catherine Ashton should resign immediately and an investigation should be started. What else does she know about criminal acts committed in Ukraine? The same applies for Urmas Paet and Nuland, as well.

But we all know this will not happen. This is because the Brussels gang (not to speak of the epicentre of this moral and political bankruptcy originating in Washington) believes they are all above the law and know what is best for the rest of us.

The conversations happen every day. The power elites intentionally overlook the “point of no return”. Kerry, Ashton, and Western mainstream media.

On February 28, the State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China published a report titled “Human Rights Record of the United States in the World in 2013”. Most cases and data used in this report are from mainstream Western media and the United Nations website. By providing and analysing these, this report reveals and criticises the number of US human rights violations and poor human rights conditions and their effect on lives and personal security, on civil and political rights, on economic and social rights, on racial discrimination, on women and children’s rights, and on violations of human rights against other nations.

On March 1, in the railway station of Kunming, the capital city of China’s Yunnan province, eight terrorists stabbed civilians in peak hour crowds. As a result, 29 people were killed and 143 people were injured. Four terrorists were shot dead on site, and the other four were captured. Kunming railway station was soon restored to order. After the investigation, the attack was found to be organised by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement. ETIM is a notorious Islamic terrorist group supported by reactionary forces which are hostile to socialist China, seeking Xinjiang province’s unlawful independence.

After being separated for a long period of time due to the imposed division forced upon them, families and relatives from Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and South Korea were reunited at Mt. Kumgang on February 25. Those from the DPRK told their relatives and families from the south how much they loved the country and how proud they were of living in DPRK. They all expressed their strong wish to achieve reunification of the Korea Peninsula.

On March 2, according to a Suan Dusit poll which surveyed 1,354 people across Thailand, 71 percent of respondents showed their support for holding bilateral talks between the caretaker Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and the opposition leader Sulheep Thaugsuban in order to end Thailand’s current crisis. However, more than six percent of participants disagreed, as they considered bilateral talks would only heat up the crisis, and 23 percent of participants were uncertain about bilateral talks, as there were no date and time given. Ninety one percent of the people who supported the talks insisted that the talks should be broadcast live on TV in order to keep transparency.

On March 3, after Indonesian Speaker of People’s Consultative Assembly Sidarto Danusubroto’s official visit to Vietnam, Indonesia and Vietnam reached an agreement to foster comprehensive cooperation in economics, culture, education and peace in the East Sea. Indonesia will become one of the world’s top 10 economies, whilst Vietnam is becoming even more attractive to foreign investment. Sidarto said he is confident that Vietnam will have more successful developments and its important role and position in this region will be recognised.***
Korean Human Rights Act”. This was not a critique of the DPRK issued by the UN is the one that may sound impressive, until you really read into the damage being done. The North Korean Human Rights Act was sponsored by Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas. The US Congress, called the “North Korean Human Rights Act”. This was the first time that the US was able to lead the UN by the nose. The North Korean Human Rights Act was sponsored by Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas. Since then Senator Brownback has become Governor Brownback, and is described by The New York Times as “a hero of the country’s Christian right” who is pushing “a bullishly conservative agenda” in Kansas. Senator Brownback’s act was included in a special office on “human rights in North Korea” at the US State Department. Part of the role of this special office was to “get a UN cover for this effort to defame the DPRK” (Workers World, USA). The office was headed up by Jay Leffkowitz whom the Washington Post describes as a “cerebral neoconservative”. To sum up the damning “human rights” critique of the DPRK issued by the UN is the brainchild of a US government department whose agenda is to bring about “regime change” in North Korea. It is as believable as the lies of the US and its NATO allies are interested in disrupting and wrecking. Changing the subject somewhat, have you noticed just how grim of visage Tony Abbott is these days? I mean, he always looks grim even when he’s smiling (that’s just him) but lately he looks grimmer than usual, assuming that’s possible. There are good reasons for this, of course: the country’s economy is going down the tube faster than you can say “mounting job losses”. By the time Abbott, Hockey and co get tossed out at the next election they will have overseen the most destructive period of de-industrialisation that this country has ever seen, with numerous major employers ceasing production, and tens of thousands of jobs sent offshore. Abbott’s only response to this catastrophic situation is to repeat his pathetic mantra that “the country’s economy is going down the tube faster than you can say “mounting job losses””. By the time Abbott, Hockey and co get tossed out at the next election they will have overseen the most destructive period of de-industrialisation that this country has ever seen, with numerous major employers ceasing production, and tens of thousands of jobs sent offshore. Abbott’s only response to this catastrophic situation is to repeat his pathetic mantra that “the country’s economy is going down the tube faster than you can say “mounting job losses””. Since the final report came through in January, the public pressure to save our Reef has been ramping up like never before. Community groups are now challenging the dredging in court. Even mining companies including Lendlease and BHP Billiton are getting cold feet, publicly withdrawing their interest in coal projects that would require dredging in the first place. The Australian government is embarrassed by the headlines. They should. But if we speak out together as a community this explosive new evidence into more that just a bad day in the press. We can make it into a critical turning point.

Louise Matthiesson
Greenpeace Australia Pacific

The interesting and important collection of writings are still as relevant and of interest as when they were written.

Angela Davis writes in the foreword to the book.

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 mankind and consequently attempted to analyse most of the major events within the history of the class struggle of her era.”

Angela Davis

The interesting and important collection of writings are still as relevant and of interest as when they were written.
In part two of The Search For Noah’s Ark, screening on ABC1 Sunday March 16 at 6.30pm, Joanna Lumley rather naively continues her search to find the “truth” and origins of the legend of Noah’s Ark and the Great Flood.

She began last week with the Biblical account, but this week various scholars in ancient texts bring to her attention the fact that the story of the man who survived the flood and saved his family and his animals is very, much older than the collection of books that make up the Old Testament of the Bible.

At the British museum she is shown accounts of the legend in cuneiform from Mesopotamia, and she also learns that there are older accounts still among the stories from the Indus Valley civilisation in India.

The story probably travelled to Mesopotamia from India via the thriving trade in cotton and ivory between the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia.

With the origin of the story now pushed back to at least 8,000 BC, Ms Lumley would clearly still like it to be true. She thinks it is important “to remember that the story of the man who beat the flood would be popular with the oral storytellers of olden times in hardly surprising. Nor is it surprising that the tale would be carried from land to land by these same storytellers. That the survival of the man and his family is credited to a deity is hardly surprising either, given age of the tale.

Did not watch the earlier series of Lost Ross Kemp: Extreme World, being put off by publicity that indicated it was cheap tabloid journalism. I have now watched the first episode of the new series (ABC2 Mondays from March 17 at 9.20pm) and it is certainly tabloid journalism is it is a very high quality variety. In this latest series Kemp looks into some important issues across the globe: the sex-trafficking of kidnapped girls across India, the invisible subterranean world of homelessness, poverty, prostitution and crime that lives in the streets of Las Vegas, America’s 24/7 party city, and the desabilisation of Lebanon, threatening another civil war.

But in this week’s episode, he is in Rio de Janeiro, a city trying to clean up its image ahead of the football World Cup later this year and the next Olympic Games in 2016. Brazil has the seventh largest economy in the world and a burgeoning middle class. Yet despite this new-found wealth, it’s also the largest consumer of crack cocaine anywhere on the planet. And like the crack wave that slammed the United States in the 1980s, the result is the same – lives are lost, destroyed, and become rich and powerful.

I have said before that the flood was sent by God as punishment. I think it is important to remember that to subsistence farmers (as they all were that long ago), who rarely if ever left their own village, any flood of their local area would cover “the whole world” and would certainly be devastating. That the exciting tale of the man who beat the flood would be popular with the oral storytellers of olden times in hardly surprising. Nor is it surprising that the tale would be carried from land to land by these same storytellers. That the survival of the man and his family is credited to a deity is hardly surprising either, given age of the tale.

The story of the legend of Noah’s Ark has been pushed back to at least 8,000 BC, and it is certainly tabloid journalism.

In this episode, Ross Kemp explores the drug trade in Rio de Janeiro. With great subtlety disturbing. It seemed distinctly unhealthy to me: he had no intention of letting “daddy’s little girl” grow up until he could pass her over to another father-figure (her husband) at the altar.

Scoops or parodies are not the common on US TV, because they are hard to sell and are not always understood. Mary Hartman, a genuine satire on American values as portrayed in their popular TV shows, was a flop because it was an actual satire not a spoof. The Spoils Of Babylon (ABC2 Thursdays from March 20 at 9.30pm) may fare better because it is recognisably a spoof.

It sends up – with a straight face and some clever writing – those multi-generational family sagas about Texas farmers who find oil and become rich and powerful. An easy target, you might say, but there are opportunities for wit here nonetheless.

Banned “famous author,” “Eric Jonrosh” (played rather well by Will Ferrell), the story quickly gets into its stride, with Jonas Morehouse (Tobey Maguire) digging relentlessly for oil as his daughter (Kristen Wiig) and adopted son (Tobey Maguire) begin a forbidden affair: As the saga continues, it covers everything from illegal arms deals and international espionage with the Shah of Iran to the creation of the doomed sub-prime market.

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March 13

DEBT, FRAGILITY & STAGNATION: CAPITALISM’S MISSING ENGINE

Frank Stilwell, Political Economy, Sydney University;

Jim Stanford, Economist, Canadian Auto Workers Union;

Rod Liddle, The Murdoch Succession and its Influence on Australian, British and American Politics

March 16

Challenging the 20 Year Obsession with Deterrence for Boat People by Successive Federal Governments – Needed More Than Ever!

Mark Goudkamp, Refugee Action Coalition;

Dianne Hiles, ChillOut (Children Out of Detention);

Shane Prince, National Convenor Labor for Refugees, Barrier acting pro-bono for refugees;

March 19

The Greek Crisis – The Unworkable State

Vassilis Soldatos, Journalist, Author Graffiti Over Marble due 2014;

March 20

The Murdoch Press and its Influence on Australian, British and American Politics

Paul Barry, Presenter, ABC MediaWatch, Author of new book Sex, Lies & the Murdoch Succession;

Please note move to Thursdays and Harold Park Hotel.

Also new start time of 6.30pm.

March 27

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Rod Liddle, Professor, Dept of Government, Sydney University, author of Murdoch – A Reassessment;
The ADL doesn’t address the fact that former Israeli soldiers fought alongside known neo-Nazi militants who now claim to reject anti-Semitism. This sends the paradoxical message that neo-Nazism is somehow acceptable. It is worth noting that the US media as well as the ADL refrain from using the term “neo-Nazi”, “neo-fascist”, and “extremist”. Instead of condemning this abnormal alliance, the ADL sees a glimmer of hope in the presence of former, albeit not well known, neo-Nazi militants who now claim to reject anti-Semitism or even fight against Russia and “it’s time to support Ukraine.”

It is worth noting that in a country struggling with an important national debt, Ms Kolomoysky has expressed its concern about the Svo-boda and Pravy Sektor, were “flying flags with neo-Nazi symbols” and were “distributing freshly translated editions of Mein Kampf and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Independence Square.” (Anshel Pfeffer, “The new dilemma for Jews in Ukraine”, February 5, 2014)

The ADL should not only firmly condemn the presence of all the fascist and neo-Nazi groups in the post-coup Ukrainian government, but also denounce the countries which support them and even fund or finance, like the USA, Canada, and member countries of the European Union.

In sharp contrast with today, Hillary Clinton was heavily criticised by Jewish groups in 2012 for “indirectly legitimising” the Ukrainian opposition party that entered into a parlia-mentary alliance with (a) neo-Nazi party”. The ADL has criticised the Ukrainian Opposition Party of Yulia Tymoshenko for having signed a parliamentary alliance that gave legitimacy to a far-right extremist party, known for anti-Semitic depictions of the president. (The Jerusalem Post, March 5, 2013)

The secretariat of the State Hillary Clinton has also come under fire from Jewish groups for having penned an op-ed published in The New York Times in which he expressed “alarm” at the strong electoral support for the neo-Nazi Svoboda Party. “Anti-Semitic rhetoric has been a mainstay of Svoboda’s leaders and campaign slogans,” Foxman said.

The presence of former Israeli soldiers in the Maidan protests along with neo-Nazi mili-tias and the attitude of the ADL and Israeli officials in this matter raise questions about what the Zionist lobby and Israel might possibly gain from the coup which put in power, among others, Igor Kolomoysky, a Ukrainian-Israeli who was appointed governor of Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine’s vital business and political centre.

The newly-appointed Dnepropetrovsk governor is Igor Kolomoysky, Ukraine’s third-wealthiest man, with an estimated fortune of US$2.4 billion. He co-owns the informal conglomerate Pravda which includes Ukraine’s largest bank – PrivatBank, which was reported to be a principal sponsor of the Maidan protests along with neo-Nazi mili-tias and the attitude of the ADL and Israeli officials in this matter raise questions about what the Zionist lobby and Israel might possibly gain from the coup which put in power, among others, Igor Kolomoysky, a Ukrainian-Israeli who was appointed governor of Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine’s vital business and political centre.

The first place is taken by the biggest Ukrainian bank – PrivatBank, the result of the election campaign in 2010, which the ex-prime minister reportedly lost to Yanukovich. Kolomoysky was reported to be a principal sponsor of the UDAR party, which is one of the three fuel-laden street campaign to oust Yanukovich. Kolomoysky has a dual Ukrainian-Israeli citizenship and controls his business empire from Switzerland.” (Kyle olympic games: Kiev appoints billionaires to govern east,” RT, March 3, 2014)

Kolomoysky also owns the Ukrainian interest news channel Jewish News One and heads the European Council of Jewish Communities which describes itself as the “pan-European umbrella body for Jewish communities and organisations across the continent, representing Jewish community life across West, Central and Eastern Europe covering around 40 countries.”

There is hardly any mention of the presence of neo-Nazi personalities in the new government on Jewish News One. It is also interesting to note that in a country struggling with an important national debt, Mr Kolomoysky’s PrivatBank was the Ukrainian champion of offshoring in 2012. Economic Pravda reported in July 2012: “Ukraine which is struggling from poverty of the majority of its population is able to make banking transfers to Cyprus and British Virgin Islands of billions of US dollars in two month period. The question is who does those transfers and what are the destinations?”

In 2012, now, having brought Svoboda into the government, it is up to Prime Minister Yat-senyuk to ensure that anti-Semitism is not tolerated and that democratic norms are adhered to. By sending that message to the people of Ukraine now, the prime minister will reassure the Jewish community and set an admirable example.” (Foxman, op. cit.).

What kind of example are we talking about exactly? Alliance with neo-Nazi groups is okay as long as they’re not anti-Semitic? The presence of former Israeli soldiers in the Maidan protests along with neo-Nazi mili-tias and the attitude of the ADL and Israeli officials in this matter raise questions about what the Zionist lobby and Israel might possibly gain from the coup which put in power, among others, Igor Kolomoysky, a Ukrainian-Israeli who was appointed governor of Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine’s vital business and political centre.

For the first two months of 2012 the PrivatBank has transferred the offshore US$3 billion 863 million.