Bob Briton & Anna Pha

The 2014-15 federal budget is the most reactionary and blatant attack on the working people of Australia in recent history. Millions of low-income workers, families, young and old people, Indigenous Australians and people with a disability will be thrown deep into poverty. Dreams of a good education will be shattered, visits to a GP or a blood test will be put off and the number of homeless will rise. The budget lays out the first steps in a fundamental change in the role of government along the lines spelt out in the National Commission of Audit report. The gap between rich and poor will become a chasm.

People were fed nothing but lies before the election, and that deceit continues in the budget statements and refusal of the Treasurer and government ministers to accept accountability for their actions. Millions of Australians are now fearful of what lies ahead of them. Overnight, they have been hit by a bombshell that could cut through their lives.

Opposition to the budget is mounting. Tens of thousands of people took part in March in May protests on Sunday in major cities. The opinion polls have turned dramatically against the government and Tony Abbott as PM. Seven state and territory leaders met in Sydney – five Liberal and two Labor. The West Australian Premier was the only absentee. The angry ministers were united in their rejection of the cuts which they could not possibly absorb. These include $80 billion in health and education over the next 10 years.

They demanded an urgent meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) which Abbott arrogantly rejected. They are furious over the cancellation of agreements and steadfastly refuse to call for an increase in the GST – three of them have elections within the next 12 months. It would be political suicide.

The corporate media deceitfully hammer the “budget emergency”, “Labor’s mess” and “tsunami of government spending” line as fact. The budget deficit and government debt as a proportion of GDP are amongst the lowest of any industrialised nation; the envy of many governments. It is pure fiction.

The Audit Commission’s target of a budget surplus (profit) of an arbitrary, one percent is adopted and used to defend cuts, but without any justification for such a goal. The government is not a company with shareholders seeking profits. It should be responsible for raising income and providing services and governing for its people.

Community, welfare and church organisations and the wider population have seen through the lies. “We are not in the throes of a fiscal crisis but if we embark on this treacherous path of US-style austerity we will be staring down the barrel of a social crisis,” said St Vincent de Paul Society CEO Dr John Falzon.

Brazen lies

“Frankly I have never witnessed such a brazen attempt by any Prime Minister to ruthlessly and so quickly impose such a vindictive, hard, right, cruel and ideological agenda on the Australian people and our environment [and] then to try justify it by deliberately concocting a fake national budget emergency,” Australian Greens leader Christine Milne said in her budget reply speech.

“It’s breathtaking to watch the Prime Minister and his cigar smoking Treasurer together with their hand-picked commissioners of Audit, aided and abetted by the Murdoch press, try to con the community into believing that everyone has a moral obligation to share the burden of a confected crisis, arguing that the burden is being shared fairly, whilst making absolutely sure that the full weight is carried by those who have no power to fight back, the young, the sick, pensioners, students and those least able to shoulder it, not to mention the natural environment and future generations.”

Continued on page 2
The government attempts to pit the billions of dollars in cuts and charges against medical research, by claiming the savings (including from co-payments) will be invested in a new Medical Research Fund worth $20 billion to finance research programs. (Not the $20 billion just the interest revenue.)

To a small extent that would provide some benefit. But which add up over time. This can be seen from the history of Medicare.

Allocated to research programs. (Not the $20 billion just the interest income from the Future Fund. The Fund's target is $20 billion with its interest income axed as departments and programs are shut down or gutted. In sharp contrast to the permanent cuts hitting the most disadvantaged, the two percent “deficit levy” on taxable income yields only $180,000 only runs for three years. One hundred and fifty programs for Indigenous Australians are to be replaced by five and more than half a billion dollars stripped, including from health programs.

Continued from page 1

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If you are already struggling they will stamp you down and make your life harder,” Senator Milne said.

Big business stands to gain in coming years from privatisations, tax cuts and tax functions; tax cuts and concessions, abolition of the carbon and minerals resource rent tax; increased fees, higher interest rates on and tollways. Public transport and infrastructure projects such as the South West Rail Corridor, with deregulation of university fees, higher interest rates on student loans and the ALP's “Tools for your Trade” apprenticeship scheme will all lose out.

Defeating the budget

The task now is to defeat the budget and throw out the Abbott Government. If the Labor Party, Australian Greens and populist-sounding right-winger Clive Palmer can work together in concert with a number of other reviews and whitepapers in the pipeline, for example the report of the Climate Change and Greenhouse Energy Policies and Procedures Committee to the Senate, the trade unions, industrial relations legislation, and plans to slash or replace the minimum wage and penalty rates.

The next big step in the battle against budget infamy is to defeat it in the Senate. One of the big questions surrounding the budget and push the budget through the Senate. One of the big questions surrounding the budget and push the budget through the Senate. One of the big questions surrounding the budget and push the budget through the Senate.

The budget totally neglects dental health and lays into preventative health programs. National Partnership Agreements with the states are also on the chopping block including a back-down on commitments to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Public education is in the firing line. The biggest cuts come with the health and aged care co-payment. The cuts to health and aged care are perhaps the most important to the aged and most vulnerable than any other payment. Without proper protection, Australia will fall behind when it comes to aged care compared to other nations.

Threatening the environment

The government has become medieval in their attack on science and research and evidence based policy to do with national research, the Bureau of Meteorology and its environmental science programs up to $547 million. The mining sector will continue to receive billions in subsidies, providing a $13 billion to $14 billion including the fossil fuel rebate. (see page 3)

The billions of dollars that can be found for infrastructure are mostly directed to building roads and tollways. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured. The co-payment is a tax on the sick, including young uninsured.

Military budget

At the same time as cutting 1,500 civilian staff, the government plans to give military spending a big boost in line with the Audit report. It is set to rise between 2015 and 2016. Defence Minister Conroy, a former Liberal, says the military needs additional $38 billion for the next seven years. The cuts hitting the most disadvantaged, the two percent “deficit levy” on taxable income yields only $180,000 only runs for three years. One hundred and fifty programs for Indigenous Australians are to be replaced by five and more than half a billion dollars stripped, including from health programs.

Govt cut social services

It cannot get much crueler than denying young people the right to unemployment benefits for six months of “work for the dole”. Hockey shamelessly told Parliament: “The Income Support and SBS are lined up for a death by a thousands cuts despite pre-election promises to the contrary. Despite documented promises.” The ABC’s $220 million, 10-year contract with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to run the Asia Pacific television service, Australia Network, is being slashed from $50 million per year. Rupert Murdoch missed out on this with the funding of $250 million which has been directed to the school chaplaincy program. With the added restricted of requiring it to be delivered by a religious provider with no express provision of any kind for providers;” Christine Milne pointed out in her budget reply.

“Once a government is in power, it will suffer, whether it is the Abbott or Rudd and Gillard governments. The pharmaceutical subsidies – increasing from $13 billion to $14 billion – includes the fossil fuel rebate. (see page 3)

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Abbott govt promotes climate change, rewards polluters

Peter Mac

The Abbott government’s first budget imposes many penalties on Australian workers and their families. However, the industries with the biggest carbon emissions not only emerge unscathed, but actually benefit because of the removal of the carbon tax.

The budget speech failed to mention climate change, but the budget itself reveals that the government wants to cut funding to renewable energy agencies or abolish them altogether. If the government gets its way, funding for programs intended to track or mitigate climate change will be cut from $5.75 billion to $500 million in 2017-18, with specific impacts as follows: * The Australian Renewable Energy Agency, which had $2.5 billion in funding and was responsible for promoting innovations in renewable energy, has been dumped in the budget. * The Clean Energy Finance Corporation, which provided funding for the development of new renewable energy systems, is also likely to be dumped when and if the government gains control of the Senate. * The CSIRO, the nation’s primary scientific institution, which has tracked climate change and issued many warnings about its menacing impact, will lose $111 million per annum. * The Bureau of Meteorology, the national weather forecaster, is due to lose $10 million in funding. * The Australian Climate Change Science Program is to be swallowed up into another agency. * The “million solar roofs” program has been dumped. * The ABC, the national broadcaster, has been the primary source of information on climate change in the mass media, now faces major funding cuts.

An ineffective plan cut in half

Even the government’s own climate change strategy, the pathetically weak and grossly misnamed “direct action” scheme, has been cut. Four weeks ago the Environment Minister pledged $2.55 billion for the scheme, but in the budget this had been more than cut to only $1.14 billion.

Other nations are aiming for emission cuts of 19 percent by 2020 and 40-60 percent by 2030, but “direct action” only aims to reduce the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions by five percent by 2020, and even that figure is now in question.

Under the “direct action” scheme industries would be paid by the taxpayer to reduce their rates of pollution. The biggest-emitting 130 companies would be invited to submit “reverse auction” bids, and those who offered the “smallest bids” (the greatest reductions in emissions) would win the rewards.

The scheme would be funded over the next four years, but there has been no commitment to funding it beyond that period.

The 130 companies would only be subject to penalties if they increased their level of emissions beyond the maximum level emitted by any company over the last five years.

The government has no intention of actually lowering the permissible level of emissions below that point over time, and in any case there is no guarantee that any action would be taken against companies that exceed it. In an unbelievably feeble statement the Environment Minister Greg Hunt said: “If they breach that, then that may be the cause for discussion or activity”.

The penalties for exceeding the specified level have not been defined, nor have the rewards for reducing emissions. Moreover, no penalties would be imposed before 2015. The government has given a vague undertaking that a committee will overview the scheme’s operations, but otherwise there appear to be no compliance mechanisms to ensure that companies cooperate.

Companies not included in the nominated 130 worst polluters would not be obliged to improve their act, even though they produce about half of Australia’s emissions. Climate change expert Frank Jotzo has said the scheme would not lead to any significant cuts in emissions.

Coal and gas rule the day

The government’s complete subservience to the coal and gas industries is shockingly evident in its concurrence with proposals to dump three million tons of sludge into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, to facilitate the movement of vessels carrying coal. The UN has voiced deep concern and may officially declare the Reef in danger next year.

The main beneficiaries of the budget will include the coal and gas industries, the petroleum industry and those involved in road construction. The fuel tax will not seriously affect petrol sales, because many Australians have little choice but to travel by road because of the lack of adequate public transport.

Farmers will lose the diesel fuel rebate, but the mining industry will still get it, on the government’s ridiculous excuse that mining vehicles don’t use public roads.

The government has attempted to justify the budget cuts by pointing to Australia’s national debt. It’s certainly true that debts are unwelcome because they incur interest. However, the nation’s per capita debt level and ratio of debt to GDP is far lower than that of other developed nations.

In fact money is being squandered on payments to polluting industries to cut their emissions, rather than penalising them for not doing so – not to mention the $12.4 billion purchase of 58 new fighter aircraft (which the US Congress refused to buy because of the cost), the offshore processing of applications for asylum, (which is hugely more expensive than rapid processing on the mainland), and the construction of massive new road networks (rather than efficient rail transport systems), among other things.

The global impact of climate change is now clearly evident. The average annual global temperature is rising, as is the sea level. Huge floods like those currently devastating Bosnia and Serbia are on the increase, and the rate of extreme weather events in the US has more than doubled since 1980.

Graeme Pearman, scientist and former leader of the CSIRO atmospheric research team, commented that the government is “not concerned about our children and grandchildren’s future at all.”

But plenty of other people are, and they’re the ones who will oust the Abbott government from power, hopefully in the near future.
Workers’ Union (AMWU) fears there is another serious threat — income.

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Youth Allowance. Then it will be whether that is “sustainable”.

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tive Jennifer Westacott said marginalised people meant to live and other impoverished,

town. How are the unemployed Hockey’s victims of failing system

panies struggling to diversify into new markets.

Business circles are also 

standing like a threat to the TAFE system will be 

(strtolowered) from the federal government. Under 30 years of age will have to wait six months to receive Newstart.

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The May Budget cuts will 

though from the federal government.

Newstart will lose $6,636.50 during its first stage of 

$6.4 billion in potential contracts being lost to industry, including 

the automotive sector. They appreciate its 

Weekly payments must not be passed or increased to 

payments to cleaning creeks and waterways, a short-sighted saving of $1billion. 

The thinking behind the scheme is that experience of the “Green Army” will soften younger workers up for lower wages and fewer entitlements. It is also a threat to 

rates of pay and conditions. 

over at some stage. 

the department. Then it will also be seven months without income.

Commonwealth workplace laws like the Health and Safety Act, Fair Work Act, the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act. The thinking behind the scheme is that experience of the “Green Army” will soften younger workers up for lower wages and fewer entitlements. It is also a threat to 

rates of pay and conditions. 

over at some stage. 

in the March in May protest in Sydney. (Photo: Linda)

Budget goes after victims of failing system

Bob Briton

Hockey’s first federal budget has shocked most Australians, even some residents of the big end of town. How are the unemployed and other impoverished, marginalised people meant to live and move out of their predicament on so little income or no income?

“The changes to Newstart [Allowance] look pretty tough, Business Council of Australia chief executive Jennifer Westacott said last week. “When you look at that against the unemployment figure going up, can this be done?” While tens of thousands of Australians have marched to express their anger at the prospect of greater poverty and suffering flowing from the federal budget, doubts are plaguing some business circles that a burgeoning and increasingly restive underclass will be created. Even they are asking whether they are prepared to suffer.

The fears are as justified as the attacks are savage. “ Pretty tough” is an understatement. People under 30 years of age will have to wait six months to receive Newstart. This is the same qualifying period for access to Youth Allowance. Then it will be six months of “work for the dole”.

If there is no job forthcoming at the end of that six months of virtual slave labour, it will be another six months without income.

The Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union (AMWU) fears that the axing of 10,000 manufacturing jobs could bring forward auto jobs losses, reduce Australian content on tens of major projects and strangle 

new markets.

Standing like a threat to unemployed Australians is Abbott’s “Green Army”. It is supposedly a “volunteer” organisation devoted to cleaning creeks and waterways, planting trees and putting up fences. Workers will receive between $304 and $470 a week below the minimum wage of $622. “Volunteers” will be exempt from

enforcement. Under 30 years of age will have to wait six months to receive Newstart. This is the same qualifying period for access to Youth Allowance. Then it will be six months of “work for the dole”.

When combined with cutbacks to Federal Budget 2014: ABC Friends urges Senate to block 

Budget hits industry and jobs

The Budget will instantly hit workers through higher medical bills and higher petrol prices but there is another serious threat — that is to their job security from the brutal slashing of industry programs meant to rescue and expand manufacturing.

The Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union (AMWU) fears that the axing of 10,000 manufacturing jobs could bring forward auto jobs losses, reduce Australian content on tens of major projects and strangle new technology firms and companies struggling to diversify into new markets.

The tte of $846 million in these varied industry programs over five years cannot be replaced by a single Entrepreneurs Infr.

The AMWU estimates that $6.4 billion in potential contracts to automotive firms could be sent overseas as a result of cuts to research and innovation bodies working with industry.

Premature job shedding in the auto industry is a risk as the Abbott government cuts $837.7 million to the auto industry, including ending the Supporting Automotive Sector jobs scheme. Cuts of $200 million to pro-

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Premature job shedding in the auto industry is a risk as the Abbott government cuts $837.7 million to the auto industry, including ending the Supporting Automotive Sector jobs scheme. Cuts of $200 million to pro-

grams over this and the next finan-

cial years could see car makers exit early.

The ATS money should be redirected immediately to parts manufacturers to allow them to transition, money is needed for training and assistance as the $100 million Growth Fund is woefully inadequate,” Ms Dettmer said. The AMWU estimates that $6.4 billion in potential contracts to automotive firms could be sent overseas as a result of cuts to research and innovation bodies working with industry.

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency is being abolished for a saving of $338 million. The May Budget cuts will undoubtedly lead to ABC staff numbers being slashed. This means more repeats, less investigative journalism and fewer enriching and in-depth programs.

Australia Network

Ms Straddijot said it is “simply unbelievable” that any government with the long-term interests of the nation at heart would shut down Australia Network. Other govern-

ments are vying for the influence that broadcasting affords in the Asia Pacific region. They appreciate its importance to building positive rela-

tions and trade with their country.

“the axing of Australia Network appears to be the first stage of a reawd for Murdoch-owned media outlets having campaigned for the Coalition in the last election. The government has already declared its interest to amend the legislation that presently prevents it from handling over Commonwealth-funded international broadcasting to the News Corp-backed Sky News service.

“Australians voted for a govern-

ment that promised not only that the ABC. ABC Friends will actively oppose the cuts. We are urging the Senate to block the Budget,” said Glenys Stradijot.  
Medicare was a reoccurring issue addressed by the March in May protesters in Sydney. (Photo: Linda)

Many GPs and pathology services have already stopped bulk billing following several decades of frozen and below CPI increases in rebates. They did so for economic survival as an alternative to fast tracking patients and reducing the level of care.

The co-payment will see many GPs in poorer suburbs or regional or rural areas forced to move to more prosperous areas or go fully private charging high fees instead of the $7 co-payment.

Most bulk billing GPs have running costs around 40-50 percent of gross income and bulk billing GPs working in Medical Centres as contactors pay the medical centre owner around 50 percent of their rebates. While the rebate is cut, the costs of running a practice remain the same, so the outcome is a net reduction in income of 30-50 percent or more. There are also the added administrative and accounting costs of collecting the co-payment.

The $7 co-payment to be paid by all, like all other payments in the delivery of health services, is a tax on the sick. If GPs stop bulk billing, the $7 co-payment will go down in history as the worst health policy decision in over 40 years,” said Doctors’ Reform Society (DRS) national president, Dr Con Costa. If the health measures in this budget are passed by the Senate, it will spell the beginning of a very painful destruction of Medicare over coming years and the full privatisation and Americanisation of health care in Australia.

The $7 co-payment is a tax on the poor. If they cannot pay the tax, they are denied access to health care—a position indicative of the contempt the government and big business hold for working people. It spells the death of universal access. The only other alternative is for a GP to forgo the co-payment. But then, as the Brisbane doctor points out, the GP is hit by the government with an $11.80 penalty—the rebate is cut by $5 and they miss out on a $36+ for a blood test and $36+ for the X-ray. Health costs will quickly become out of the reach of many Australians.

The government’s abandoning of universal health care and reducing Medicare is an attack on the health of all Australians. It is impossible to reverse. The budget also hits the sick with hefty increases in the cost of medications. In 2015, the $36.90 co-payment (price of script) is to rise to $42.70 and the annual safety net threshold by $176.60 to $1,597.80 for scripts after which the co-payment would fall to the concessional card holder rate. This concessional rate is also targeted with an increase from $6 to $6.90 per script. The present concessional safety net threshold is $360 —set at 60 scripts in a year—after which scripts are free. The budget proposes to increase this to 62 scripts in 2015 lifting the threshold to $427.80. It also includes future rises of two scripts per annum up to 68 in 2018.

At the same time the government avoids making a tough deal with Big Pharma on the price we pay for generic off-patent medications, which would save billions of dollars. For example, the Australian government pays $1.82 for off-patent cholesterol tablets Simvastatin, but in New Zealand they only pay $3 and in Great Britain $2!

Privatisation

The government is moving towards means testing Medicare, compulsory private health insurance for medical and hospital cover. Neither the government nor the Audit Commission provide any evidence for their claims of unsustainable health spending. It is one of many lies that underpin the government’s attempts to try and justify the unjustifiable.

The budget allocates half a million dollars in 2014-15 to “market test the delivery of a commercially integrated payment system.” This includes identifying “potential alternative approaches to the delivery of health payments.” Or in other words, the privatisation of the Medicare payments system.

The government is abandoning responsibility for the health of the Australian people.

There is already a direct correlation between socio-economic status and health outcomes. The gap will only widen as more people on low incomes cannot afford health services or medications.

The Australian people have one of the cheapest and most efficient health systems in the world. Treasurer Joe Hockey might think “the age of entitlement is over”, but as far as the people of Australia are concerned, basic human rights, including health care, are not up for sale. The co-payment and other increases in health care and cuts to the health budget must be nipped in the bud, before they become almost impossible to reverse.
Glen Ford

A chorus of outraged public opinion demands that the “Iranian president” and the Nigerian military “Do something!” about the abduction by Boko Haram of 280 teenage girls. It is difficult to fault the average US consumer of packaged “news” products for knowing next to nothing about what the Nigerian army has actually been “doing” to suppress the Muslim fundamentalist rebels since, as senior columnist Margaret Kimberley pointed out last week, the three US broadcast networks cooled off for the “news story about Boko Haram” in all of 2013. On the one hand, the misinformation corporations provide a nanosecond of coverage of the bloodshed in the Central African Republic; on the other, thousands of and a million were made homeless by communal fighting over the past year. That’s what the US military is all about, and they lie on the ground. A witness told The Times: “The soldiers made some calls and a few minutes later they started shooting people on the ground. I counted 198 people killed at that checkpoint.”

Extrajudicial killings

All told, according to Amnesty International, more than 600 people were extrajudicially killed by the Nigerian military in the first half of 2013 in detention facilities run by Nigeria’s military Joint Task Force, many in the same barracks in Maiduguri. Amnesty International quotes a senior officer in the Nigerian army as saying anonymously: “Hundreds have been killed in detention either by shooting them or by suffocation,” he said. “There are times when people are bought on a daily basis and killed. About five people, on average, are killed nearly on a daily basis.”

Chibok, where the teenage girls were abducted, is 80 miles from Maiduguri, capital of Borno State. In 2009, when the Boko Haram had not yet been transformed into a fully armed opposition, the military summarily executed their handcuffed leader and killed at least 1,000 accused members in the state of Borno, Yobe, Kano and Bauchi, many of them apparently simply dusts from suspect neighbourhoods. A gruesome video shows the military at work. “In the video, a number of unarmed men are seen being made to lie down in the road outside a church,” The Times reports, and where US government Jazeera reports in text accompanying the video: “As one man is brought all face death, one of the officers can be heard urging his colleague to ‘shoot him in the chest not the head I was told’.”

None of these are only snapshots of the army’s response to Boko Haram – that are part of the Nigerian military’s ghastly behaviour. The military has refused the group’s offer to exchange the kidnapped girls for imprisoned Boko Haram members. (We should note that everyone that detained as Boko Haram is actually a member – only the vigilantes for innocent and arbitrary execution.)

None of the above is meant to belittle Boko Haram’s “side” in this grisly story, but to emphasise the Nigerian military’s culpability in the group’s arbitrary execution. The soldiers made some calls and a few minutes later they started shooting people on the ground. A witness told The Times: “The soldiers made some calls and a few minutes later they started shooting people on the ground. I counted 198 people killed at that checkpoint.”

Serving policy purposes

The Chibok abductions have served the same US foreign policy purposes as Joseph Kony sightings in central Africa, which were conjured-up to justify the permanent stationing of US Special Forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, in 2011, on humanitarian interventionist purposes. (This past March, the US sent 150 more Special Ops troops to the region, claiming to have again spotted Kony, who is said to be dead by all, holed up with a small band of followers somewhere in the Central African Republic.) The United States (and France and Britain, plus the rest of NATO, if need be) must maintain a deepening and permanent presence in Africa to defend the financial elite.

When the crowds yells that America “Do something!” something is likely to already be there. Barack Obama certainly needs no encouragement to intervention; his presidency is roughly coterminous with AFRICOM’s founding and explosive expansion. Obama broadened the war against Somalia that was launched by George Bush in partnership with the genocidal Ethiopian regime, in 2006 (an invasion that led directly to what the United Nations called “the worst humanitarian crisis is Africa”).

He built on Bill Clinton and George Bush’s legacies in the Congo, where US client states Uganda and Rwanda caused the slaughter of six million people since 1996 – the greatest genocide of the post War World II era. He welcomed Sudan as the world’s newest nation – the culmination of a decades-long project of the US, Britain and Israel.

...
not yet the time

We swung a mighty hammer,
Our fourteen days of war;
The rock of Menzies shuddered,
We wedged his prison door.
But the clink of foreign money
Has sounded in his ear;
He signed the union warrant
Though his lips were white with fear.
“All out, and we will smash him,
all out, this is the day!”
But though our hearts are burning,
What does our knowledge say?
Not yet the time, not yet the day;
But every blow brings closer still
The time when he is swept away.

Our fathers fought before us
In bitter seventeen;
No honest man could stomach
The treachery they’d seen;
But the union had been handcuffed
And hunger beat them back,
Till Bloody Sunday freed them,
Gave Bloody Hal the sack.
Two years they toiled and waited,
But time runs swifter now;
We’ll clear our land of Menzies;
Our hand is on the plough.
Not yet the time, not yet the day;
But every blow brings closer still
The time when he is swept away!

Vic Williams

In November 1954 the Menzies government, pressured by the combined shipping lines, passed laws to strip the Waterside Workers Federation of power to recruit labour, their traditional right. The whole of the WWF stopped work, organised to make their issue public, set up picketing and relief. They handled all medical and perishables. After fourteen days when the law was passed they went back to work, with the agreement of Australian Council of Trade Unions and unions not to work with labour recruited by shipping lines. The shipowners backed off recruiting labour and the law was dead within days.

From Harvest Time and other poems.

serve the corporate good at the expense of their own basic needs.
The “Occupy” movement takes a stand against this self-destructive mindset, but any movement depends on publicity, and corporate-owned media will not attend to causes that don’t serve its interests. Social media may be the last tool available, but corporations have not ignored its dollar value, or the potential impact it could have if “we the people” are allowed to control it.

Net neutrality, the principle that every website, service and app is treated the same by the Internet service provider, has drawn the attention of those who seek to enrich their own, already-bulging coffers. Under new proposals by the US government, websites would get service dependent on what they are willing to pay for it. Once again, the small, independent entrepreneur is at the mercy of the corporate competitor, and, in most cases, has no chance of success.

So, this is life today in the much-vaunted “land of opportunity”. If one is already wealthy, opportunity abounds. However, for the 99% that aren’t, scrambling to make ends meet may be the best one can do.

Fremantle
Celebrate with us ...
Vic Williams’ 100th anniversary
Born 28th June 1914

Join us in a celebrating a life well lived.

Vic was a man true to his working class beliefs; a fighter for a better world, a thinker and a writer. Among his literary works are Harvest Time; Hammer and Seagulls; The Years of Big Jim; Along the Waterfront; Three Golden Giants; and Volcano on our Doorstep.

3 pm
Saturday June 28
Maritime Union of Australia (MUA)
2-4, Kwong Alley North Fremantle

Guest Speaker:
Dr Hannah Middleton
Long time campaigner for peace and former CPA General Secretary

More info 0421 113 343 or cpaperth@gmail.com
Organised by the Communist Party of Australia, WA Branch

Information Clearing House
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While Israeli Jews were trying to enjoy guilt-free street parties last week, news reports focused on the activities of their compatriots – the Palestinians who remained inside the new state of Israel and now comprise a fifth of the population. Estimates are that one in two of these 1.5 million Palestinian citizens is from a family internally displaced by the 1948 events.

More than 20,000 staged a “March of Return” to one destroyed village, Lubya, buried under a forest near Tiberias and close to a major Israeli highway. Long tailbacks forced thousands of Israeli Jews to get a closer view as they crawled past the biggest Nakba procession in Israel’s history.

For months, images of the marchers waving Palestinian flags and massively outnumbering Israeli police and a counter-demonstration by Jewish nationalists were seen on TV news, websites and social media. The assault on Israel’s much cherished national mythology is undoubted. And it reflects the rise of a new generation of Palestinians no longer willing to defer to more cautious, and traumatised, elders, those who directly experienced the events of 1948.

These youth see themselves as representing not only their immediate relatives but Palestinians in exile who have no chance to march back to their village. Many of Lubya’s refugees ended up in Yarmouk camp in Damascus, where they are suffering new horrors, caught in the middle of Syria’s civil war.

Palestinians in Israel are also being galvanised into action by initiatives like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s plans to legislate Israel as a Jewish state. They see this as the latest phase of an ongoing Nakba – an attempt to erase their nativeness, just as the villages were once disappeared.

Palestinians are making a noise about the Nakba on every possible front – and not just on Nakba Day. Media around the world reported on one such venture: a phone app called iNakba that maps the Nakba. Residents of Palestine that Israel hoped literally to wipe off the map have been finding ever more creative and provocative ways to grab headlines.

They arrange regular visits to destroyed villages that a growing number of curious Israeli Jews are participating in, often in the face of vehement opposition from the communities built on the rubble of Palestinian homes.

Zochrot has created a Hebrew info pack on the Nakba for teachers, though education officials ban it. Last year it staged the first Nakba film festival in Tel Aviv. It is also creating an archive of filmed interviews with Israeli veteran fighters prepared to admit their part in expulsions.

Zochrot also held last year the first ever-conference in Israel discussing not just the principle but how to put into practice a right of return for the millions of Palestinian refugees across the region. The Palestinian youth are taking up the idea enthusiastically. Architects are designing plans for new communities that would house the refugees on or near their old lands. Refugee families are trying to reclaim mosques and churches, usually the only buildings still standing. Israeli media reported last month that internal refugees had been attacked as they held a baptism in their former church at al-Bassa, now swamped by the Jewish town of Shlomi.

Workshops have been arranged among refugee groups to imagine what a right of return might look like. Youth from two Christian villages, Jiftiq and Biram, have already set up camps at their old churches, daring Israel to hound them out like their great-grandparents. Another group, I Won’t Remain a Refugee, is looking to export this example to other villages.

The size of the march to Lubya and the proliferation of these initiatives are a gauge of how Palestinians are no longer prepared to defer to the Palestinian leadership on the refugee issue or wait for an interminable peace process to make meaningful progress.

“The people are sending a message to the leadership in Ramallah that it cannot forget or sideline the right of return,” says Abir Kopyt, an activist with the Lubya march. “Otherwise we will take the issue into our own hands.”

Meanwhile, progress of a kind is being made with Israeli Jews. Some have come to recognise, however reluctantly, that a tragedy befell the Palestinians with Israel’s creation. But, as another march organiser notes, the struggle is far from over. “That is a first step. But now they must take responsibility for our suffering and make amends.”

IN SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA

Third Week of Denounce and Solidarity “5 days for the Cubans”

Date: June 4-11, 2014
Place: Washington DC, USA
More information in: www.thecuban5.org

Biden’s son on board of Ukraine gas company

According to today’s elite squatters in Washington DC, there’s no such thing as a “conflict of interest” anymore. Whether it’s Senator Harry Reid and son Rory’s involvement in lucrative land deals and the BLM’s federal Rikers Island, or today’s elite of interest” anymore. Whether it’s Senator Harry Reid and son Rory’s involvement in lucrative land deals and the BLM’s federal

For 66 years Israel’s founding generation has lived with a guilty secret, one it successfully concealed from the generations that followed. Forests were planted to hide war crimes. School textbooks mythologised the events surrounding Israel’s creation. The army was blindly venerated as the most moral in the world.

One, “Nakba” – Arabic for “Catastrophe”, referring to the dispossession of the Palestinian homeland in 1948 – would have failed to register with any but a small number of Israeli Jews. Today, only those who have never watched or read a newspaper can plead ignorance.

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Beginning over 50 years ago, terrorism was born in the United States struck ships, crops, and infrastructure in Cuba. They killed people here and around the world. Cuban leaders faced murder plots. Terrorists bomb ed an airliner fully loaded with passengers. Such murderous, destructive attacks seemed to stop, however, with the Havana hotel bombings in 1997. But you would have lost your bet that terrorist preparations had ended.

On May 7 Cuba’s Interior Ministry announced that four men of Cuban origin living in Miami were arrested on April 26. José Orlando Amador, José Rodri guez Gonzalez, Raúl Pacheco Santos, and Félix Morán had travelled to Cuba on several occasions in 2013 to study the scene and plan terrorist actions.

Who is this surprise? One, the Miami area continues as a safe haven for Latin Americans escaping their governments’ policies. Two, they have had the chance to collect intelligence. And at their trial in Miami, five of the defendants have admitted to planning terrorist attacks on American soil.

The Cuban government provided intelligence to a joint terrorism commission in Washington, D.C. that said Havana had been targeted over a dozen times between 2010 and 2013. The US government has been involved in such operations.

Some intelligence sources suggest that the US government has been involved in such operations. The US government is now considering the case. The US government has been involved in such operations.

About 400 elite mercenaries from the notorious US private security firm Academi (formerly Blackwater) are taking part in the Ukrainian military operation against pro-autonomy activists in near the Donetsk region.

In March, media reports appeared suggesting that the coup-imposed government in Kiev had deployed private military companies to the region. Some analysts argue that such operations are not uncommon in such conflicts.

At the time, the Russian Foreign Ministry said that reports of Russian government actions or inaction may signal official approval for anti-Cuban terror.

Thus Luis Posada entered the United States in 2000, never to be convicted on that count, or for serious crimes, among them: the airline bombing attack in 1976, Cuban hotel bombings, and his plan with others to assassinate former Cuban President Fidel Castro in Panama. Despite requests, the US government refuses to extradite Posada on terrorism charges or proceedings related to the airliner bombing.

And in 1998 the Cuban government gave FBI personnel access to terror activities in Florida. The FBI responded by arresting Cuban military intelligence agents who helped collect that intelligence information.

And at their trial in Miami, five of the defendants have admitted to planning terrorist attacks on American soil.

The Bild am Sonntag newspaper, citing a source in intelligence circles, reported that Academi employees are involved in the Kiev operation and that company is not just working on pre-autonomy activists in the town of Slavyansk, in the Donetsk region.

On April 29, the German Intelligence Service (BND) informed Chancellor Angela Merkel’s government about the mercenaries’ participation in the operation. The Bild Deutschland newspaper stated.

The US government is now considering the case. The US government has been involved in such operations.

In particular, Greystone Limited, is a candidate for such a gendarmerie role. It is a similar and probably an affiliated structure of the Blackwater private army, whose staff have been accused of cruel and systematic violations of human rights in various troubled regions.

Among the candidates for the role of gendarmerie is the Barbados-area police force. The US government made sure those anti-terrorists were convicted. Its Office for Cuba Broadcasting subsidised Miami area journalists to produce over 800 prejudicial newspaper reports or television presentations to influence community and jury before and during the Posada trial.

Lastly, for the sake of destabilisation of a US flow money and weapons, terrorist energies in Florida. The FBI responded by arresting Cuban military intelligence agents who helped collect that intelligence information.

Summer 2004 reports noted the lack of context about the US government plans to suppress civil protests and instigate a genuine crisis,” the US government stated.

American security company Blackwater gained worldwide notoriety for the substantial role it played in the Iraq war as a contract private security corporation. In recent years it has changed its name twice – in 2009 it was renamed Xe Services and in 2011 it got its current name, Academi. The firm became infamous because of the Blackwater shooting of 17 Iraqi civilians in Baghdad. The attack, which saw 20 others wounded, was allegedly without justification and in violation of deadly force laws. Employees were detained to American security contractors in Iraq at the time. Between 2005 and September 2007, Blackwater security guards were involved in at least 95 shooting incidents in Iraq and fired first in 163 of those cases. A Congressional report said at the time.

Workers at the Hitachi Group’s factory in Osaka won short- er hours on May 6. Japan Metal and Information Machinery Workers’ Union (JMIU) is an affiliate of the National Confederation of Trade Unions. The JMIU’s branch at the Hitachi Group’s factory in Osaka helped the workers win shorter work hours. Workers in the factory have been working overtime for a long period due to a labour shortage. JMIU conducted a survey last year to investigate this issue, and the workers responded that they were unable to recover from fatigue because they had to work overtime every day. Nine work-related accidents were reported last year. The union then negotiated with the company. The company agreed to decrease the maximum number of overtime hours to the government-set cap of 45 hours per month and at least 11 consecutive hours off work between shifts.

The Communist Party of Vietnam held its Ninth Central Committee meeting from May 8 to 14. The meeting agreed to issue a new resolution on the building and development of Vietnamese culture and people to match the country’s sustainable development. The Party’s General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong said “It is necessary to inherit and further develop the Party’s viewpoints on cultural enrichment” and “economic growth should be accompanied by cultural development and social progress and equality.” He added that “the culture that we are building is a modern one with strong national identity, which unites the diverse cultures of Vietnam’s ethnic groups, and bears the typical characteristics of nationality, humanity, democracy and science.”

In an interview with Tibet Daily, Tibetan monk Konchog Tsetrim said that life in Old Tibet (before its liberation in 1950) was miserable and today’s happiness was hard won. Tsetrim is a rinpoche (spiritual teacher) at the Drepu Tseju Buddhist chapel in Tibet. He reluctantly became a monk at the age of eight. According to him, Old Tibet was a theocracy with rigid regulations; all monasteries in Old Tibet were classified into different ranks with different powers. The majority of Tibetans were in lower social positions, and they suffered from food and water shortages. Serfs had no personal freedom, as they had endless work in the field and running miscellaneous affairs for the serf owner. He added that contrasting to the life in Old Tibet, the chapel now has been equipped with tap water, electricity, newly built settlements, roads and solar street lights.

On May 14, China’s State Council approved the establishment of an inter-ministry joint conference mechanism to coordinate income distribution reform amid growing public concern over the widening wealth gap. This joint conference mechanism was led by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) which coordinates all income distribution reforms. It conducted policy studies, policy-making and reform plans, and also coordinated ministries involved in reform. It also monitors, tracks, assesses and reviews the process of the reforms.
Strange statement

German Chancellor Angela Merkel made a very strange statement recently. She advised not to celebrate Victory Day in Sevastopol because of the situation in the Ukraine. There are several points here that I’d like to make.

First of all, a German politician advocating against marking victory over fascism is skating on very thin ice indeed. Secondly, the people in Sevastopol have every right to celebrate not only the victory over fascism but also the 70th anniversary of the city’s liberation from German fascists.

Sevastopol is a hero-city, renowned for its heroic resistance during the war and its 250-day siege is a testament to its citizens who fought against the Nazis. To tell them what to celebrate and how to celebrate it is a bit, I am sure, Frau Merkel knows about the recent events in Odessa where Ukrainian neo-Nazis prevented people from leaving a burning building and consequently were burnt alive – very similar to what happened in Sevastopol.

Twenty seven million Soviet people died in fighting fascism – nobody asked them what nationality they were at the time. They were fighting together and they will celebrate their victory together.

David Cameron, the British PM, likes to be perceived as a good Christian, just like our own PM. In both cases, being a Christian doesn’t seem to make them any more compassionate towards the poor.

In Cameron’s case, the Bishop of Oxford, accompanied by the Reverend Keith Hebden, visited the PM’s constituency office with the intention of presenting the PM, through his staff, with an open letter on food poverty. The letter, part of the End Hunger Fast campaign, was signed by 42 Anglican bishops, a clear show of support for the fact that hunger is very real in Britain today. In the last year more than 900,000 people had fact that hunger is very real in Britain today. In the last year more than 900,000 people had
The Trials of Muhammad Ali (SBS ONE Sunday 25 May at 8.30pm) examines the famous boxer’s life outside the ring, beginning with the announcement of his conversion to Islam and the decision to change his “white man’s name” of Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali. Ali refused to serve in the Vietnam War — even after his status as a conscientious objector was denied — on the grounds of protesting racial injustice at home. His decision would lead him banned from boxing and facing a five-year prison sentence. Ali’s choice of belief and conscience over fame and fortune resonates far beyond the boxing ring, striking issues of race, faith and identity that continue to confront us all today.

Bill Siegel’s documentary feature captures Ali’s passion and anger in interviews and television appearances culled from a rich variety of archival sources. Siegel co-directed the Academy Award-nominated documentary The Weather Underground about the student radicals who took up arms against US involvement in the Vietnam War.

There are always people so dismayed by the mores and injustices of life under capitalism that they decide to renounce it all and “get back to nature”. Leo Tolstoy made such a lifestyle famous, and they practice it up in Nimbin today. This Way Of Life (ABC2 Sunday May 25 at 8.30pm) deals with a family in New Zealand trying to live this “free”, close to nature lifestyle on an isolated, half-burnt-down farm with six kids and 50 wild horses. Against the stunning beauty of New Zealand’s rugged Ruahine Mountains, Peter Karen and his wife Colleen think they are instilling in their kids superior spiritual values but really they are just immersing them in the very restricted world of subsistence farming. On the other hand, the New Zealand press all gave it four (or four and a half) stars, so what do I know?

Paint eight years ago, the government of China decided that any entrepreneur who wanted to open a factory or business enterprise on the country’s lucrative East coast had to simultaneously open an identical factory or business in the remote and poverty-stricken province of Western China. Such were the profits that could be made on the Coast that Western capitalists agreed to these onerous terms and Western China was propelled into the 21st century.

In this week’s final episode of Two Men in China (ABC1 Tuesday May 27 at 8.30pm), John Doyle and Tim Flannery are off to the boom city of Chengdu — the proud and ancient capital of Sichuan province in Western China. Chengdu is also the poster child for China’s rapid development.

Once upon a time, to have a tattoo was the sign of a mis- spent youth (or time in the Navy), but today all sorts of people have them. So much so that there is a television series devoted to showing people getting inappropriate tattoos “over-painted” with a new design to make the original invisible.

In this week’s episode of a different series, Bodyshockers, subtitled My Piercing Hell (ABC2 Wednesday May 28 at 9.30pm), we meet some British youth whose infatuation with trying to alter their body and its appearance has led to serious disfigurement. Some learn from their mistakes, others don’t.

The most questionable figures are the plastic surgeons who, for a suitably fat fee, pander to these kids’ desires to be “more beautiful” or simply “more fashionable”.

In this week’s episode of the Australian series The Men Who Made Us Fat (ABC1 Thursday May 29 at 9.30pm) Jacques Perretti investigates how the concept of supersizing was pushed on the public to change people’s eating habits and generate much bigger profits while appearing to offer customers “better value”.

He talks to former executives of fast food chains who explain how the “Food industry” persuaded people to eat bigger and bigger portions, unleashing an epidemic of obesity (and also type 2 diabetes amongst children, previously unheard of in the young).

It’s a sorry story of uncaring corporate greed, and also a story of political protection of the food industry’s interests even to the extent of burying health professionals’ adverse reports on the quality and marketing practices of fast food outlets.

The series actually illustrates how capitalism wages war against the public as consumers.

There have not been able to preview John Pilger’s new documentary Utopia (SBS ONE Friday May 30 at 7.30pm). Apparently SBS did not have preview copies available. Described as “an investigation into Australia’s suppressed colonial past and rapacious, often shocking present”, it is being shown to commemorate National Sorry Day on May 26.

“Most importantly, it sets out to break the stereotypes of the first people of Australia while telling a brutal history. The documentary film’s title refers to the vast region in the Northern Territory known as Utopia, which serves as irony for the struggles the first people have faced and still continue to endure.”

The film points out that in outback Australia, black Australians are imprisoned at up to eight times the rate of blacks in apartheid South Africa; the average life expectancy is as low as 37; children go blind and deaf from preventable diseases; and doctors describe the effects of malnutrition in one of the richest countries on earth, and tourists have no idea that their “resorts” have a brutal black history.

A film rightly intended to make one angry.

The second series of the romantic comedy-drama about rediscovering love late in life, The Last Tango in Halifax (ABC1 Saturdays at 7.30pm) looks more like a soap opera in its second episode: family crises break out in all directions, from loss of a job to teenage pregnancy to a lesbian wanting a baby and serious financial stress. That’s on top of the usual misunderstandings, jealousy and hurt feelings.

Alan (in Derek Jacobi) has survived the heart attack he had in the last series but is warned he won’t survive another. He and Celia get married anyway. I don’t fancy his chances.
Colin Todhunter

British Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary Owen Paterson is a staunch supporter of the genetically modified (GM) food sector. Despite criticisms of him being an industry puppet and content to ignore the devastating, deleterious health, environmental, social and agricultural impacts of GMOS, both he and other officials like his EU Chief Science Adviser Anne Glover have been more than happy to act as mouthpieces for the GM sector by making false statements and claims about the benefits and safety of GMOS that fly in the face of scientific findings.

Evidence recently emerged of meetings and briefings involving ministers and the ABC and industry lobbyists, with the latter meeting with groups worried about the impact of GM on human health and the countryside. In response, GeneWatch UK made a Freedom of Information request to find out what was said at the briefings. Paterson’s department refused to give any information as there was a formal complaint with the Information Commissioner in the hope that ministers will be forced to admit how GM companies are driving government policy. The evidence strongly suggested that the government is colluding with the GM industry to protect the return of GM crops to Britain.

Paterson’s department refused to provide details of a telephone conference between the department and the ABC on June 10 last year. Ten days later, Paterson made a speech calling for opposition to be dropped and claiming the government’s agri-tech strategy. Officials at the Business, Innovations and Skills (BIS) department even emailed the ABC asking for them to promote the policy.

But I digress. The GM sector is experiencing an ongoing attempt to get GM food into the EU via the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP/TATA). Both are shrouded in secrecy. The negotiations for this treaty are backed by the US GM sector: it is aimed at dismantling regulations on behalf of big corporations, bypassing democratic procedures and threatening governments with legal action.

The majority of the British public who express a view on GM food do not want it. However, we are experiencing a consistent, multi-pronged attack on democracy that seeks to distort the debate over the GM issue, hijack institutions, co-opt so-called “public servants” and pass off vested commercial interests as the “public”.

The GM sector will only get its products into Britain (and elsewhere) if its institutions and mouthpieces in government, academia and the media are left unchallenged. Part of the strategy involves countering on a misrepresented and easily manipulable public.

Church of Rome declares war on superstition. Oh, and demons

Paddy McGuinness

If you can’t say anything helpful say nothing at all, as this commentary does about the official sector, mostly in vain. There have been a fair few individuals who could have been consulted by GeneWatch UK seeking a formal complaint with the Information Commissioner in the hope that ministers will be forced to admit how GM companies are driving government policy. The evidence strongly suggested that the government is colluding with the GM industry to protect the return of GM crops to Britain.

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