The meeting of Commonwealth of Australian Governments (COAG) last week was characterised by the all too familiar battles over the allocation of money – in this instance the carve up of the GST takings between the states and territories. The situation was made more difficult by the Abbott government’s decision to cut funding to hospitals and education by $80 billion over the coming four-year budgetary cycle. It is also cutting funding to national partnership agreements (specific purpose payments).

The Abbott government then expected cash-strapped states to come to the table begging for an increase in the GST – either its rate or application to presently exempt goods and services. The GST exemptions include fresh food, education, health, childcare, water and sewage.

The government’s plans failed dismally. The Labor states – South Australia, Victoria, ACT and Queensland – refused to wear it. After all it would be political suicide.

West Australian Coalition Premier Colin Barnett was up in arms over the proposed carve-up of the GST between states. WA is facing a slight reduction in its share to just under 30 cents in the dollar on income collected there. He has no intention of backing down. He is demanding 100 percent.

The share of the GST takings allocated to each state is determined by a society-wide equity objective, depending on a state’s capacity to raise revenue from its own taxes (mining royalties, land tax, stamp duty, etc) and other factors that might affect equity.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott announced a “leaders’ retreat” with his state and territory counterparts to directly debate long-term structural reform without the “interference” of officials. He is looking for unanimity around plans to revolutionise state-federal relations – their roles, responsibilities and financing. The GST is an integral part of that agenda.

Towards these ends a number of reviews are underway. Issues papers were published late 2014 or earlier this year on a range of issues including industrial relations, taxation and five papers on federalism*. The aim is for Green papers mid-2015 and final White Papers by the end of 2015.

These papers are all interconnected and run in tandem with each other – who provides what services, how they are funded, etc.

Reform of the Federation Paper 1, A Federation for Our Future, is clear as to the government’s objectives: “The White Paper will seek to clarify roles and responsibilities to ensure that, as far as possible, the States and Territories are sovereign in their own sphere.”

It is not just about clarifying but changing many of the roles and responsibilities of all three levels of government and how they are funded.

The federal government is looking at how to restrict its policies to “core national interest matters”, such as defence, intelligence, national security, foreign affairs, international trade, quarantine, financial regulation, currency, immigration and citizenship and possibly other areas listed in Section 51 of the Constitution.

Clearly, it would have to retain responsibility for free trade and investment agreements and adherence to UN Conventions (not that it does now) and other international laws.

Sovereign states

Abbott hopes to gain agreement from the states and territories “about their distinct and mutually exclusive responsibilities and subsequent funding sources for associated programs.”

As far as possible the government wants to eliminate any involvement by federal and state governments in the same area. The federal government would keep “core national” responsibilities such as those mentioned above. One of the tasks of the White Paper is to determine the role it would play as a government and what responsibilities it would keep.

The states and local government would have complete responsibility for everything else and raise the funding themselves. For example, if the states are responsible for education, they would fund it. They could do as little or much as they like, but without the money from central taxation revenue. The for-profit, private sector could also play a greater role.

There would be a transition period as these changes were phased in.

The $80 billion in cuts to health and education and the slashing of funding under national partnership agreements are just forerunners of what is to come as the federal government bows out.

One of the key aims of the federal government is to reduce company tax to zero.

Targeting the GST

One of issues raised in the Federalism and Taxation papers is how the states and local governments could raise enough revenue to meet their responsibilities. They have enough difficulties already without the loss of federal government revenue.

The GST is the first obvious target. Present sources of other income include land tax, tollways, user pays, council rates (local government), stamp duties, payroll tax, insurance, royalties on resources, gambling and motor registration and licensing.

The Taxation discussion paper, Re:Think, examines these and other means of raising additional income for states and local government such as applying land tax to the family home and charging for the use of main roads based on distance travelled.

Continued on page 2
Austerity measures in Australia, Greece

Many countries, including Greece, Cyprus and Australia face serious economic problems. Production of commodities and services is at a low level. Less is being produced than in previous years. Greece has experienced less and less production each year for more than five years. If a country fails to produce and to increase production, economic crisis sets in.

The main strategy of government to raise capital and used wealth is to increase the profits of private enterprises, particularly the big monopolies.

The belief that if the monopolies increase their profits, more money will be ploughed into production, the levels of national production will rise and the economy will be stimulated.

To increase monopoly profits, governments are bringing in a range of measures which vary from country to country but generally aim at:

- Facilitating the formation of monopoly enterprises through government grants, tax holidays and provision of infrastructure such as transport facilities and reducing government regulation of monopoly activities;
- Hand-over of public sector enterprises, government services, government insurance schemes, and other public assets to the private sector; in that monopolies have greater ownership and control over the economy;
- Reduce government spending in the form of salaries and conditions of employees;
- Reduce government spending by axing public health and welfare, pensions and unemployment benefits and reducing government allocations for health, education and welfare.

That the people suffer under austerity measures is of minor concern as the aim is, first and foremost, to boost the profits of the monopolies. All will be well, so they say, if the monopolies are thriving and the tiny section of the population who run the monopolies get richer and richer.

While the monopolies are given such favourable treatment, the people have no choice but to struggle for whatever can be achieved to improve their miserable life. There is no option but for all the people affected by the crisis — workers and their families, the unemployed, pensioners, youth and students, women, small scale business owners and farmers, Indigenous, immigrant and community groups — to raise their level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them, any level of action on the matters that affect them.

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Iraq deployment – latest commitment to endless war

Bob Briton

Three hundred Australian troops are now stationed in Iraq. They have joined forces from New Zealand, Canada and, of course, the US. The governments of the countries involved don’t like referring to the soldiers as “boots on the ground” and prefer to stress their present training role instead. It sounds familiar. Every modern commitment to long, drawn out and incredibly destructive conflict on the part of imperialist powers has begun with such manipulation of language and soothing of public opinion. Prime Minister Abbott had some additional, suitable cover for the announcement, which came in the lead up to the ultra-hyped ANZAC commemorations.

The PM said the commitment was not “risk free”. The security situation at the Taji base north of Baghdad is precarious, as is most of Iraq. The withdrawal of US troops four years ago was supposed to have been made possible by a marked improvement in the fighting capacity of the Iraqi army. US Colonel John Schwemmer has returned for his sixth deployment to Iraq and indicated US forces. “It’s pretty incredible,” he said. “It’s my sixth deployment to Iraq and I’ve never been more clear or more urgent.”

The plan wasn’t for a sovereign Iraq and Syria living in peace. It wasn’t considered serious enough for US ally Turkey to prevent large numbers from pouring over its borders to fight the legitimate government of Syria. Long before the advent of IS, the plans of the US were for a long conflict that would deliver more compliant governments in the region. The plan wasn’t for a sovereign Iraq and Syria living in peace. It wasn’t for a resolution to the issues still causing tensions in the region, such as the deliberately forestalled statehood for Palestine. In fact, the US has moved to destroy the strongest advocates of a Palestinian state and the sovereignty of the countries of the Middle East. Plans to neutralise Iran’s influence continue despite talk of a diplomatic breakthrough.

The servility of Australia’s foreign policy was brought home recently by comments by commanders of US Marines arriving at their new base in Darwin. About 1,500 troops began arriving last week as part of the US “ Pivot” to the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean Regions. A confrontation with China is being prepared. The hospitality of the locals was commented on by US top brass. Lieutenant Colonel Eric Dougherty appreciates the hands off approach of Australian authorities, too.

“There’s things we can do here we cannot do back in the states,” Dougherty said. “[In the US] it’s very restricted; you have to worry about safety considerations like not shooting other units as you train. Here you don’t have those issues. It’s a blank slate.” “Blank slate” or “terra nullius”, the colonial attitude prevails. The need for an independent foreign policy and peaceful, mutually beneficial relations with our neighbours near and far has never been more clear or more urgent.

ANZAC Day and workers’ rights

Statement from CPA General Secretary Bob Britton

The intervention of the landing of ANZAC forces at Gallipoli is taking place in a troubling social and political context. A hundred years after the calamitous destruction and loss of life during WWI, wars in the interests of big foreign powers and monopoly business interests are still on the federal government’s agenda. The benefits that service men and women believed they went to war to defend or secure, including workers’ rights, are under attack. It goes without saying that class struggle will exist as long as there are exploiting and exploited classes but, in Abbott’s Australia, the war against the interests of workers has been escalated to a critical degree.

It is not the intention of the Communist Party of Australia to appropriate the traditions of ANZAC Day. That has been done shamelessly by the warmongers and big business interests and stands condemned by the public, particularly by war veterans. Something must be said, however, about the gross distortion of the history of the wars in which Australians have fought, including WWI. No doubt many did go off to fight for “king and country” and to defeat the “bogey”. These illusions evaporated very quickly.

Australian soldiers grew to hold their (usually aristocratic British) commanders in the contempt they deserved. Many were radicalised. Fred Paterson, who later became a Communist member of the Queensland land parliament, adopted his socialist politics as a result of the horrors he saw during the “Great War”. Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick, who famously saved many lives with his donkey during the Gallipoli campaign, was a socialist and a militant trade unionist.

Attention that this history and its valuable lessons aren’t lost in a flood of jingoism and militarism. We must struggle to maintain our authentic traditions and our hard-won rights. In practical terms, workers and their trade unions must regroup urgently for a fight back against the Abbott government’s onslaught or face a bleak future without any rights in the workplace. The Communist Party remains committed to this fight.

Pete’s Corner

NOT AT ALL. I’M PRETTY SURE BY NOW THERE’S NOT MUCH LEFT TO WORRY ABOUT

Guardian Australia

April 22, 2015

3

Sydney

CPA Port Jackson Branch invites comrades and friends to join us for our

Port Jackson Discussion Hour

Tuesday April 28 (please note change of date)
What’s wrong with the ANZAC commemoration?
Introduced by Comrade Denis

Tuesday May 5
Where did Australian manufacturing go & why?
Introduced by Comrade Steve

Tuesday May 19
Why you should be afraid of the TPP
Introduced by Comrade Steve

Tuesday June 2
Should Aborigines be included in the Constitution?
Introduced by Comrade Hannah

All classes: 5:30 pm at 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills

Enquiries: Hannah 0418 668 098
The lives of political asylum seekers in Australia are in danger

Iranian political asylum seekers are victims of economical and political deals. A horrifying felony is in part due to a discussion among two states, the one exporting refugees, and the other, ostensibly, accepting them. The deal is that refugees, antecedents to the age of war, are victims of economical and political deals. A horrifying felony is in part due to a discussion among two states, the one exporting refugees, and the other, ostensibly, accepting them. The deal is that refugees, antecedents to the age of war, are victims of economical and political deals.

Preparation of this joint operation by Australia and the Islamic Republic is an open and grisly felony, lost amid the turmoil of the nuclear deal. We believe the only force that could possibly stop the progress and occurrence of this mischief, is a vast international pro-test and pressure from public opin-ion and human and refugee rights organisations.

Human rights organisations throughout the world noticed the murder of Reza Barati, a 23 years old Iranian asylum seeker. Deten-tion centre operatives had assaulted him with mace and had cracked his head with a stone; these strikes brought him to an agonising death. There are also reports that, according to their lawyers, 45 Iranian asylum seekers, whose refugee applications have been denied, while refusing to go back, are under permanent detention inside refugee camps.

So is the status of Saeed Has-sanlou, who left Iran five years ago; his refugee application has so far been denied a number of times. Follow-ing a period of hunger strike, he is hospitalised in Perth and is said to be in a critical condition.

Thus, we political, social, cul-tural and media activists, whilst condeming these acts, demand instant cessation of these political deals against refugee rights and to treat refugees humanely and to respect their dignity in Australia. An appeal by Gozarrehgaran website: For workers’ and political rights: guzarrehgaran@gmail.com

CC to: Australian Foreign Ministry in different countries; Human rights organisations; UN High Commissioner for Refugees; Amnesty International; Refugee rights organisations; International democratic media; Revolutionary, progressive, and Democratic Parties and Organisations.

Havana: Josefinna Vidal, General Director for the United States of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has released a statement relating to the decision by the President of the United States, Barack Obama, to remove Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

In the afternoon of Tuesday, April 14, 2015, it was learned that the President of the United States, Barack Obama, had submitted the “Certification of Rescission of Cuba’s Designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism”. Through this measure, President Obama has decided to exclude Cuba from the list of state sponsors of international terrorism and report to this effect to the United States Congress, which will have 45 days to make known its decision.

The Cuban government recogni-ses the just decision taken by the President of the United States to eliminate Cuba from a list on which it never should have been included, especially considering that our country has been the victim of hundreds of acts of terrorism that have cost 3,478 lives and disabled 2,099 Cuban citizens.

As the Cuban government has reiterated on multiple occasions, Cuba rejects and condemns all acts of terrorism in all their forms and manifestations, as well as any action that is intended to instigate, support, finance or conceal terrorist acts.

Havana, April 14, 2015

Call for Qld govt to reject coal expansion

The Lock the Gate Alliance says it has obtained legal advice con-trary to the Palaszczuk govern-ment can reject the expansion of the New Acland coal mine and rectify the improperly approved-for-donations scandal that plagued the controversial approvals by the Newman government.

The decision on whether or not to allow the Stage 3 expansion to go ahead is likely to be made in the next two weeks.

Lock the Gate president, Drew Hutton, said the mine is a test of the new government’s commitment to accountability and clean politics, and an opportunity to signal a new direction for Queensland where governments keep their promises, and strategic cropping land is safe from open-cut mining.

“This is a large coal mine on the fertile eastern Darling Downs, on strategic cropping land, in a closely settled area and will heavily impact on surface and underground water,” Hutton said.

“The previous government broke its pre-election promise to protect farmland from coal mining and stop the Acland expansion. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in political donations were made by the proponent. The Labor Party said it would look into whether it could undo the Newman government’s betrayal and stop the mine. Our advice is that they can, and that’s what they need to do.”

Lock the Gate has shown the government advice that the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP) is not bound by the Coordinator General’s report on Acland Stage 3 and has the legal authority to refuse or fail to apply the amended environmental authority (EA) under the Environmental Protection Act 1994.

“This mine should never have been approved, and it is a relief for the farming communities around Acland and Oakey to know that the new government has the power to stop it and protect our precious farmland. We’re calling on Premier Palaszczuk, Environment Minister Miles and Mines Minister Lyneham to keep faith with the people of Queensland, who elected them to clean up this state, by stopping the mine.”

Statement on removal of Cuba from US terrorist list

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Lessons from Reclaim Australia protests

Peter Mac

The first lesson provided by the demonstrations organised by anti-Muslim group Reclaim Australia last week is that we should not underestimate the threat posed by organisations committed to racism and extreme bigotry.

The demonstrations took place in most capital cities. However, the one that grabbed the headlines was in Melbourne, where a counter-demonstration resulted in violence that was only curbed by police intervention.

In Brisbane Scott Moorland, one of Reclaim Australia’s organisers, gave a vitriolic speech, calling counter-demonstrators “traitors” and declaring “we’re going to give radical Islam the biggest bitch slap it’s ever had”.

The demonstrations followed incidents involving persecution of Muslims in several cities. A Sydney woman is on trial for having subjected a Muslim woman to a brutal verbal assault in public for wearing a hijab headdress, and last week the Rockhampton mosque was set on fire for the second time.

Background

Reclaim Australia makes a series of phoney and often contradictory assertions. Moorland claims, for example, that Muslims are Nazis and they form a small minority of the group’s supporters, yet Reclaim Australia was formed by Jim Saleam, former leader of the neo-Nazi National Socialist Party.

Moorland even makes the astounding claim that the “commies” are organising the infiltration of Reclaim Australia by neo Nazis! He maintains that Islam is intent on taking over Australia, and Reclaim Australia’s title implies this has happened already – although it also declares it wants to “reclaim Australia from the UN”.

Moorland also identifies white Sydneysiders as “gal immigrants” who should be driven out of our shores by “border protection forces”. The Prime Minister called on Muslims to condemn terrorism and “mean it”, implying that they actually sympathised with terrorists. His government has been almost totally silent about the rise of Reclaim Australia.

Right and wrong tactics

The second lesson emanating from the demonstrations by Reclaim Australia is that there are right and wrong ways of engaging with its presence and activities. It’s true that people demonstrating for human rights must defend themselves from physical attack. But the Reclaim Australia tactic, exemplified by Moorland’s Brisbane denunciation of counter-demonstrators as “traitors”, is to provoke a violent reaction so that its opponents are seen as the aggressors, or at least equally at fault for the violence.

In the 1960s US civil rights marches were led by Martin Luther King, marchers trained themselves to respond to provocation with non-violent action.

Unfortunately, similar tactics were not adopted by some participants during the recent “Reclaim Australia” counter-demonstration in Melbourne. The likelihood of an eruption of violence was boosted by the Mayor’s declaration that the Reclaim Australia rally provided a golden opportunity to shut it down, that “the neo-Nazis … must be swept off the Streets” and its recommendation to “drive the violent white supremacists out of stolen Aboriginal land”!

As a result during the Melbourne confrontation Reclaim Australia’s chant of “Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi” was met with shouts of “Fuck off Nazis” by some of the counter demonstrators, accompanied by spitting, punches and bloodshed on both sides.

Some counter-demonstrators also burnt an Australian flag, immediately lending weight to Reclaim Australia’s phoney claim to be the nation’s defenders.

Not all the counter-demonstrators took the bait, but those who did provided the abiding public image of the day’s events in Melbourne.

According to journalist Martin Mackenzie-Murray, “The anti-reclaim protesters organised themselves with guerrilla tactics and spoke in similarly militaristic terms as their opponents. For them, Federation Square was not a place to be symbolically reclaimed, but physically so. Their stated intention was to provoke the Reclaim march. There were no niceties here.”

Adelaide pastor Brad Chillcott observed with regret to the public’s impression of events: “Your audience is not the racists you’re shouting at, the people watching at home … [But] those watching at home … couldn’t tell the difference between the good guys and the bad. Then politicians have to condemn the violence on both sides, rather than [giving] an undiluted message condemning bigotry.”

Federal Labor MP Tim Watts commented: “...the way to convince people at home is not by burning flags, screaming or spitting. It’s about minimising and isolating”. It’s also about persuasion. It would be a grave mistake to assume that Reclaim supporters are incapable of changing their minds.

Events in Adelaide were very different from those in Melbourne. Brad Chillcott had worked out non-violent “subtle and symbolic” strategies in conjunction with local Muslim leaders, and even though they had to abandon some events (including a mass communal picnic) because of public safety concerns, nevertheless the counter-demonstration there was peaceful.

Demonstrations last weekend in Sydney and elsewhere in support of asylum seekers were also successful, despite Reclaim Australia’s attempts at disruption.

We must adopt appropriate tactics to restrict the growth and influence of Reclaim Australia, and we should not underestimate its influence. We should remember that the rise of fascism in Europe was facilitated by economic depression, by its appeals to sections of the working class and by the failure of governments to take action against it.
Salim Lamrani

President Hugo Chávez, who died on March 5, 2013, of cancer at age 58, marked forever the history of Venezuela and Latin America.

1. Never in the history of Latin America, has a political leader had such incontestable democratic legitimacy. Since coming to power in 1999, there were 16 elections in Venezuela. Hugo Chávez won the last on October 7, 2012, with one of his rivals with a margin of 10-20 percentage points.

2. All international bodies, from the European Union to the Organisation of American States, to the Union of South American Nations and the Carter Centre, were unanimous in recognising the transparency of the vote counts.

3. Jimmy Carter, former US President, declared Venezuela's electoral system was “the best in the world.”

4. Universal access to education introduced in 1998 had exceptional results. About 1.5 million Venezuelans learned to read and write thanks to the literacy campaign called Mission Robinson.

5. In December 2005, UNESCO said that Venezuela had eradicated illiteracy.

6. The number of children attending schools increased from 6 million in 1998 to 13 million in 2011, and the enrolment rate is now 93.2%.

7. Mission Robinson II was launched to bring the entire population up to secondary level. The result of secondary school enrolment rose from 53.6% in 2000 to 73.3% in 2011.

8. Missions Ribas and Sucre allowed tens of thousands of young adults to undertake university studies. Thus, the number of tertiary students increased from 850,000 in 2000 to 2.3 million in 2011, assisted by the creation of new universities.

9. In regard to health, they created the National Public System to ensure free access to health care for all Venezuelans. Between 2005 and 2012, 7.873 new medical centres were created in Venezuela.

10. The number of doctors increased from 20 per 100,000 population in 1999 to 80 per 100,000 in 2010, or an increase of 400%.

11. Mission Barrio Adentro I provided 5.34 million medical consultations. About 17 million people were attended, while in 1998 less than 3 million people had had no access to health. 1.7 million lives were saved, between 2003 and 2011.

12. The infant mortality rate fell from 19.1 per thousand in 1999 to 10 per thousand in 2012, a reduction of 49%.

13. The infant mortality rate increased from 72.2 years in 1999 to 74.3 years in 2011.

14. Thanks to Operation Miracle, launched in 2004, 1.5 million Venezuelans who were victims of cataracts or other eye diseases, regained their sight.

15. From 1999 to 2011, the poverty rate decreased from 42.8% to 26.5% and the rate of extreme poverty fell from 16.6% in 1999 to 7% in 2011.

16. In the rankings of the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Program for Development (UNDP), Venezuela jumped from 83 in 2000 (0.658) at position 73 in 2011 (0.735), and into the category of Nations with “High HDI”.

17. The Gini coefficient, which allows calculation of inequality in a country, fell from 0.46 in 1999 to 0.39 in 2011.

18. According to the UNDP, Venezuela holds the lowest recorded Gini coefficient in Latin America, that is, Venezuela is the country in the region with the least inequality.

19. Child malnutrition has been reduced by 40% since 1999.

20. In 1999, 82% of the population had access to safe drinking water. Now it is 95%.

21. Under President Chávez, social expenditures increased by 60%.

22. Before 1999, only 387,000 elderly people received a pension. Now the figure is 2.1 million.

23. Since 1999, 700,000 homes have been built in Venezuela.

24. Since 1999, the government has provided/received more than one million hectares of land to Aboriginal people.

25. Land reforms enabled tens of thousands of farmers to own their land. In total, Venezuela distributed more than 3 million hectares.

26. In 1999, Venezuela was producing 51% of food consumed. In 2012, production was 71%, while food consumption increased by 81% since 1999. If consumption of 2012 was similar to that of 1999, Venezuela produced 140% of the food it consumed.

27. Since 1999, the average calories consumed by Venezuelans increased by 50% thanks to the Food Mission that created a chain of 22,000 food stores (MERCAL, Houses Food, RetroVYMA), where products are subsidised up to 30%.

28. Meat consumption increased by 75% since 1999.

29. Five million children now receive free meals through the School Feeding Program. The figure was 250,000 in 1999.

30. The malnutrition rate fell from 31% in 1998 to less than 3% in 2012.

31. According to the FAO, Venezuela is the most advanced country in Latin America and the Caribbean in the eradication of hunger.

32. The nationalisation of the oil company PDVSA in 2003 allowed Venezuela to regain its energy sovereignty.

33. The nationalisation of the electrical and telecommunications sectors (CANTV and Ericomelica de Caracas) allowed the end of private monopolies and guaranteed universal access to these services.

34. Since 1999, more than 50,000 cooperatives have been created in all sectors of the economy.

35. The unemployment rate fell from 15.2% in 1998 to 6.4% in 2012, with the creation of more than 4 million jobs.

36. The minimum wage increased from 100 bolivars ($16) in 1998 to 247.52 bolivars ($330) in 2012, i.e. an increase of 2,000%. This is the highest minimum wage in Latin America.

37. In 1999, 65% of the workforce earned the minimum wage. In 2012 only 21.1% of workers have only this level of pay.

38. Adults at a certain age who have never worked still get an income equivalent to 60% of the minimum wage.

39. Women without income and disabled people receive a pension equivalent to 80% of the minimum wage.

40. Working hours were reduced to 6 hours a day and 36 hours per week, without loss of pay.

41. Public debt fell from 45% of GDP in 1998 to 20% in 2011. Venezuela withdrew from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, after early repayment of all its debts.

42. In 2012, the growth rate was 5.5% in Venezuela, one of the highest in the world.

43. GDP per capita rose from $4,100 in 1998 to $12,000 in 2011.

44. According to the annual World Happiness Report 2012, Venezuela is the second happiest country in Latin America, behind Costa Rica, and the 19th worldwide, ahead of Germany and Spain.

45. Venezuela offers more direct support to the American continent than the United States. In 2007, Chavez spent more than $8,800 million in grants, loans and energy aid as against $3,000 million from the Bush administration.

46. For the first time in its history, Venezuela has its own satellites (Bolivar and Miranda) and is now sovereign in the field of space technology. The entire country has internet and telecommunications coverage.

47. The creation of Petrocaribe in 2005 allows 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, or 90 million people, secure energy supply, by oil subsidies of between 40% to 60%.

Endangered wild animals- Some good news

Steven Katsinseris

With lots of bad news regarding so many species of threatened wildlife that are in danger of extinction, it is very encouraging to read some good reports regarding endangered wild animals. Recently, there was really wonderful news about one of the world’s most endangered animals, the Giant Panda. The Giant Panda population has risen by 268 in the last 14 years, increasing to a total of 1,864 animals, according to the latest Chinese survey. This represents a total increase of 86%.

Found only in China, Giant Pandas are listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List. The only surviving member of its genus, the giant panda lives almost solely on bamboo. It is currently threatened by habitat loss and land degradation.

In addition to a rising population the survey found that Giant Pandas are also expanding their range. The species now covers 6.5 million hectares, an expansion of 11.8 percent since 2003 with about a third of the animals inhabiting range outside of protected areas.

“A lot of good work is being done around wild Giant Panda conservation and the government has done well to train the local people and partner with conservation organisations including WWF,” said Dr. Lu, the World Wildlife Fund China’s executive director of programs.

There has also been cheery news regarding Indian Rhino conservation. Even as poaching increases in India, there is also cause for optimism. A paper published this month by Assam’s environmental ministry reveals that the population of Indian One-horned Rhinos in the state has grown from 367 percent since 2006, hitting a high of 2,544 animals. This puts the population well on track toward the Indian government’s goal of 3,000 Rhinos by 2020. Smaller Indian Rhino populations live in neighbouring Nepal.

That represents a tremendous success for conservation, said Barney Long of the World Wildlife Fund, pointing out that there were only about 200 Indian Rhinos in the early 1900s. “I think this is a lovely story of conservation success, despite the hideous poaching crisis that we’re in,” he said.

“We know how to save rhinos,” he added. “You have to protect their habitat and you have to protect the animals themselves.” A third element involves moving the animals into new, safer habitats as their populations increase. “When rhinos get too dense of a population, they decrease their breeding rate,” Long said.

And there was further splendid news from India, this time about Bengal Tigers. India’s tiger population has increased by nearly 30 percent over the last four years! A recent census showed numbers of these forest-dwelling big cats reached 2,226 last year. While poaching remains the greatest threat to tigers in the wild today, the latest count released by the government of India proves that this tiger species can recover and thrive.

India is unique in having a significant number of tigers in the wild, in spite of growing population and resource extraction pressures on their habitat. The latest estimate of tigers in various landscapes published by the Ministry of Environment and Forests claims an appreciable rise in numbers of the big cat, up from 1,706 four years ago, to 2,226 in 2014 in India’s various nature reserves, ranging from the hills in the Northeast to central Indian forests and the Western Ghats, to the mangrove-rich Sundarbans delta. India’s great

50 truths: Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution
47. Venezuela also provides assistance to disadvantaged communities in the United States by providing fuel at subsidised rates.

48. The creation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) in 2004 between Cuba and Venezuela laid the foundation for an inclusive alliance based on cooperation and reciprocity. It now comprises eight member countries which places the human being in the centre of the social project, with the aim of combating poverty and social exclusion.

49. Hugo Chávez was at the heart of the creation in 2011 of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) which brings together for the first time the 33 nations of the region, emancipated from the American and Caribbean States by providing fuel at subsidised rates.

50. Hugo Chávez played a key role in the peace process in Colombia. According to President Juan Manuel Santos, “if we go into a solid peace project, with clear and concrete progress, progress achieved” even before with the FARC, “it is also due to the dedication and commitment of Chávez and the government of Venezuela.”

51. Efforts give it a special standing in the global conservation field. Some Indian states deserve credit for strengthening the protection of wild tigers. This shows the need to improve those aspects that lead to a rise in tiger numbers, voluntary relocation of forest-dwellers from core forests, a severe crackdown on the hunting of prey animals, improved patrols against poaching, safeguards against harmful land-use changes and constant monitoring. Converging Bengal Tigers is increasingly focused on saving ‘source populations’ of these big cats.

52. More inspiring news too is that the Amur Leopard has doubled in the past eight years, showing that recent conservation efforts are beginning to bear fruit. At least 57 Amur Leopards now exist in Russia’s National park “Land of the Leopard.”

Gerry Georgatos

Homelessness is on the increase. Children – babies and toddlers – sleeping on Austral- ia’s streets, in cars, in condemned squats and traps, in alleyways, in tents in bush outskirts off city highways or in caravan parks minus the caravan. Australia’s cities are hash on the homeless; they have no homeless-friendly precincts. Take one of Australia’s wealthiest cities – Perth – it is extraordinarily harsh on its poorest – the homeless. But in Perth, for 40 days now, a safe space for the poorest, a friendly pre- cinct has been manufactured – Matargarup refugee camp.

The camp has reached up to 51 tents and 150 people at any one time – the majority who are homeless. It is a much needed and long overdue safe space for the chronically home- less. There would be many more at the home- less camp but far too many of those homeless who would wish to be within its safety have been scared back into the dangerous alleyways, squats and traps by three police-led City of Perth Council raids. Their tents, swags, belongings taken and still in the possession of a ruthless City of Perth Council worried more about “wider public interest issues” than the physical safety and mental, emotional well-being of the homeless.

But the Council has been hit with a letter of warning from a kind-hearted lawyer, Stephen Winstead, who is acting pro bono – for the Matargarup homeless. Mr Watsd has stated that he believes the homeless have a right to camp on the island and that it was illegal for the Council to steal their tents. I suggest the word steal because this is what I believe in effect they have done. They have taken from the homeless their protection from the elements, their dignity of a little space for themselves in this world, where they could lay their bones to rest, and locate their few possessions.

Matargarup camp in a place of camarade- rie, psychosocial health, social and emotional well-being. It is a place the wider community is aware of and where health workers voluntarily visit to do medical checks on its “resident,” where ordinary citizens in droves drop off food parcels, essentials and spend some time yarn- ing with the locals. It is a place where song, dance are present, a place of solidarity unlike the despicable life threatening loneliness of city alleyways where the sleepers are vulnerable to sexual attacks, violence, being rolled.

Have you any idea how many have died on our streets? But they get no mention in the media. On whose hands is their blood?

53. The Perth City Council is a wealthy one. Perth is a wealthy city. Western Australia is the rich- est jurisdiction in the second wealthiest nation on earth per capita, in the world’s 12th largest economy. Perth City Council can lead the way forward or it can do as it has done so far and snub any last hope of a way forward for the homeless.

There are nearly 20,000 children under the age of 12 years homeless in Australia. Perth City Council can be either visionaries or profoundly cruel.

55. There is no greater legacy that one can have for our First Peoples – by those who have suffered most at the hands of horrific social policies, eugenics and other criminality for nearly two centuries in Western Australia.

I know just about every councillor on the Perth City Council. I hope that they have the vision to carry on the striving for the common good to do for our homeless what no others before them ever have. One of the councillors was one of my Guild Presidents at a university Guild where I was its General Manager. True, I was more political and radical than the students but he also volunteered with a group – Swags for the Homeless.

Stealing dignity

He needs to stand up and be counted – he cannot deliver himself on the back of raising funds to buy swags for the homeless and then be part of a council that steals the tents, steals the dignity from the homeless. A few other councillors I know to be good souls but the actions of the council they are part of tarnishes their reputations – the reputation that matters – you know the one about where deeds speak volumes. At this time, the councillors represent and endorse a Council that raids the homeless, steals their tents and belongings, that moves on the homeless, that destroys their vestiges of dignity.

In the end, you are what you do. What you have to say does not mean anything as much as what you do or what you are part of. You cannot argue that you are “an internal voice” or the “conscience”, that just doesn’t wash when you remain part of the wrongdoing.

As I have the inside word that another raid, once again police escorted, is on the table for next week, I will just state it as it is: if the Council shuts down once again Matargarup on the simple basis that it is a public park thor- oughfare, excusing itself with by-law issues, then this council and its councillors are uncaring, mean spirited, lazy bureaucrats, cowards and ruthless.

So very few others use Matargarup, in gen- eral it is barely used by the wider public. How many dead bodies have to be collected from the streets for someone in any form of government, local, state, federal, to say “no more”?

But if the councillors rise to the occasion and welcome the Matargarup homeless and assist them at every turn then I and many others will applaud their humanity, one that will be there for all to see.

Example is our only morality.

There is no greater legacy that one can have in any form of government office than to have improved the lot of the most vulnerable, to have saved lives.

The Stringer

Matargarup, home to the homeless

At this time, the councillors represent and endorse a Council that raids the homeless, steals their tents and belongings, that moves on the homeless, that destroys their vestiges of dignity.
Michael Lesher

What, exactly, was remembered during Israel’s Holocaust Remembrance Day this week? Not the victims of Israel’s latest slaughter in Gaza, where more than 2,200 civilians were killed less than a year ago. In the propagandistic world of “Holocaust memory” only Jews can be victims, so mainstream media marginalise the hundreds of Jewish Holocaust survivors and their descendants who publicly condemned “the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza” (their words). Instead, a leading Israeli newspaper informed us this week that most children of Holocaus-

t survivors in Israel tend to be more anxious than their peers … about the Iranian nuclear threat – even though Iran has no nuclear weapons and has never attacked Israel.

The erasure of Palestinian suffering from public memory is a particular affront to the Arab public. “When an event is presented at an Auschwitz commemoration, everyone present certainly knew (at least) hundreds of thousands of people unlucky enough to stand in the doghouse for opposing the US-backed coup that put Nazi sympathizers into power in Kiev (where their predecessors assisted in the slaughter of some 30,000 Jews in 1941), so naturally he didn’t belong real at a Holocaust commemoration. On the other hand, none of the event’s organizers seemed to object to the representation of countries that supported the empowerment of neo-Nazis in Ukraine, whose capital, whose capital (as everyone present certainly knew) was less than 600 miles from the site of the ceremony.

Apart from dividing worthy victims from unworthy ones, Holocaust “memorials” adopt the priorities of Western power politics. That’s why the president of the country that bore the brunt of defeating Hitler, and actually liberated the Eastern European death camps, did not even attend the memorial for the 70th anniversary of Auschwitz’s liberation. President Vladimir Putin was “absent,” as the Associated Press’ Vanessa Gera delicately put it, as a “result of the deep chill between the West and Russia over Ukraine.”

In plain English, Putin was in the doghouse for opposing the US-backed coup that put Nazi sympathizers into power in Kiev (where their predecessors assisted in the slaughter of some 30,000 Jews in 1941), so naturally he didn’t belong real at a Holocaust commemoration. On the other hand, none of the event’s organizers seemed to object to the representation of countries that supported the empowerment of neo-Nazis in Ukraine, whose capital, whose capital (as everyone present certainly knew) was less than 600 miles from the site of the ceremony.

Exploitation of history

World Jewish Congress President Ronald Lauder used the ceremony to decry complaints about last sum-

mer’s massacre in Gaza as “vili-fi-

cation of Israel.” Hollywood’s Steven Spielberg echoed that message, blaming the “pernicious demons of intolerance” on “anti-Semitism, radi-

cal extremists, and religious fanatics” and warning of “a growing effort to banish Jews from Europe.” (He pre-

sented no evidence of this “growing effort”; as far as I know, the only prominent politician who has been calling for the removal of Jews from Europe is Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyah.

) Claims of rising European anti-

Semitism represent yet another exploitation of Jewish history for the benefit of Israeli propaganda. “The question of whether Jews have a future in Europe is an, unfortunately, timely one,” Johns Hopkins University Professor Dorothea Wolfsen wrote recently, following a confer-

ence at which Benjamin Ginsberg, another Johns Hopkins professor, ominously claimed that it is now “harder for Jews to be openly Jewish in Europe without being harassed.”

For Israel, the country most often complained about in recent feuding, Jews received overwhelmingly favourable marks in a 2008 Pew Research Centre poll on views of religious groups – and this despite growing public anger over Israel’s brutal occupation of Palestinian land and the ostentatious support of that occupation by most of the world’s Jewish leadership.

A recent survey taken by France’s National Human Rights Consultative Committee actually concludes that Jews are by far the best accepted minority in France today, as compared to Muslims, Blacks and immigrants of North Afri-

can origin, and far and away more accepted than Muslims. Yet the prop-

aganda churned out by Jewish groups and their apologists would have us believe that Jews, and only Jews, are in Europe’s crosshairs.

Apart from being untrue, the hope about a “new anti-Semitism” is cynical. Deborah Lipstadt’s typical column in The New York Times last August – perfectly timed to deflect attention from the Israeli massacre in Gaza – contained predictable hand-

wringing about the growing threat to Jews in Western Europe. “This is not another Holocaust,” she wrote, “but it’s bad enough.”

To serve the better Israeli cause, Lipstadt also took a sideswipe at the Hamas charter as a forum of resurgent Jew-hatred. But nowhere in her column did Lipstadt even mention Ukraine, the one country in Europe – probably in the world – where a political movement linked to genocidal anti-Semitism really has made a comeback.

If anti-Semitism had been her real subject, Lipstadt could hardly have missed a target so obvious. But the neo-Nazis in Ukraine are support-

ed by the United States and haven’t been condemned by Israel, so – well, enough said.

Moral imperative

All that is bad enough, but the worst thing about the propaganda, it seems to me, is that it manipulates Holocaust memory to obscure what should be its most important teach-

ings. There is a dangerous wave of bigotry sweeping much of the world today, but it is aimed predominantly at Muslims, not Jews.

According to the Pew Research Centre’s figures, unfavourable attitudes toward Muslims exceed favourable ones in an astonishing number of countries: the list includes France, Germany, Spain, Poland, India, South Korea, Japan, China, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and South Africa. This is particularly troubling when we remember that since 2001, attacks by Western forces have killed (at least) hundreds of thousands of people in predominantly Muslim countries including Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan.

Under these circumstances, the sensible thing for Jews to do is to make common cause with Muslims in opposition to religious intolerance, and to campaign against the impe-

rialist wars that have devastated so much of the Muslim world – the all too obvious global consequences of which include anger, sometimes violent, over Israel’s role in many of those wars.

Writing as a Jew myself, and particularly in light of Holocaust his-

try, I find such a response more than political common sense; for me, it is a moral imperative. And for the same reason I cannot remain silent while Jewish elites turn the lessons of the Nazi genocide upside down – intending to use the very methods the Nazis used to convert Germany into a killing machine.

“The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders,” Hermann Göring, a leading Israeli, told an Allied-appointed psych-

ologist while on trial at Nurem-

berg. “All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and pronounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the coun-

try to danger.”

Even as the corpses piled up in the rubble of Gaza last summer, overloading some morgues so badly that the bodies of children had to be housed in ice cream freezers, many Jewish leaders were following Goer-

ning’s line, with one writer from my own Orthodox circles musing about the “courage, motivation and faith” of the Israeli killers, sowing at Jews “who speak of the evils of modern Israel” and condemning the defend-

ers of Gaza, who allegedly “prayed with teenagers with suicide bomber belts.”

No evidence, of course, was given for this claim.

The worship of power and mili-

tary force, the usurpation of religion to cloak conquest in sanctimonious rhetoric, the demonisation of those people unlucky enough to stand in the way of the dominant race’s appe-

tites – all this, unfortunately, has clearly survived the fall of the Third Reich.

That it has infected so much contemporary Jewish discourse only proves that Israel’s memorials of the Nazi genocide serve no decent pur-

pose. Until we are prepared to turn its lessons inward – where all moral lessons belong first and foremost – it would be far more respectful to the victims if we could simply resolve, in the words of Norman Finkelstein, “to preserve their memory, learn from their suffering and let them, finally, rest in peace.”

The Guardian

April 22, 2015

International

Palestinian suffering forgotten

Holocaust survivor Avraham Har Shalom, right, lights a torch with his grandson at the opening ceremony of the Remembrance Day at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial, in Jerusalem on April 15, 2015. (Photo: Abir Sultan, EPA)
Ukraine: Silence broken on assassinations

Daniele Pozzati

Italy’s second largest newspaper La Repubblica has broken the western media’s silence over the latest wave of political murders in Ukraine.

The newspaper has for the first time published in mainstream western media an article on the matter, which is like this, which report Putin’s statements without the slightest attempt of casting his words in a somewhat negative or misleading way.

Coverage of the Ukraine crisis by La Repubblica is thin compared to far better than those of its British and American counterparts.

In a departure from this bias the article says that murders in Ukraine are taking place “within the silence of many western media”. More interestingly, Buzina’s assassination is set in a context of a series of political homicides with the assassins described as “organised criminals” and “professional hitmen”.

The motives behind the assassinations are clearly explained: “Yesterday evening [Wednesday, day], again in the Ukrainian capital, a commando killed Sergey Sukhobotok, owner of an internet site and of a small newspaper which contests government policy and puts forward an alternative vision of the Ukrainian government borne from last year’s Maidan revolution.”

The article then quotes President Putin as saying that this is “what many times of the new Ukraine”. One would be hard pressed to find, anywhere in mainstream western media, other articles like this, which report Putin’s statements without the slightest attempt of casting his words in a somewhat natural or misleading way.

The Ukrainian government borne from last year’s Maidan revolution was participating in over 200 cities around the country. A series of statements of support, including Alameda Labour Council, in California, by American professor Josie Camacho’s pledge that the country’s 100,000 union members stand solidly with the campaign, called to bring struggles together across traditional organising lines. 

Tully, president of the California Faculty Association at San Francisco State University, drew attention to a low-wage constituency not always recognised: part-time, adjunct college and university lecturers, many of whom she said earn less than $15 an hour.

“I earned my Masters and my PhD at UC Berkeley,” Tully said, “and I can barely make a living in San Francisco.” She works in soliarity with fast food and retail workers, and with all faculty members, she said. “We know when we stand together, fight together, we win.”

A related message was brought by Devonte Jackson of the Black Lives Matter movement. “We’re seeing that not only are black people being murdered on the street, but we’re seeing state-sanctioned violence in the gentrification and displacement of our communities, in income inequality, inadequate public schools, and a less sweeping away of every form of political opposition taking place in Kiev.”

The paper was reacting to yet another assassination in Ukraine – the second in a week – of a popular journalist, Oles Buzina.

“Not shy of calling a spade a spade, the article leaves no doubts as to what has happened, and is happening in Ukraine, right from the start and end of all those common Russian-fascist murderers in Kiev. It is the third political homicide in 24 hours.”

The captions describe Oles Buzina as a “journalist and writer very well known in the Ukrainian case” and his murder as an “execution on his door step”.

Nobody is systematically killing all those exposed to the Ukrainian government borne from last year’s Maidan revolution.

Noteworthy here are the invert ed commas into which the Italian newspaper puts the word “revolution”, thereby putting in doubt the democratic nature of the regime change in Kiev.

The article then quotes President Putin as saying that this is “what many times of the new Ukraine”. One would be hard to bring up the whole country. Vu said that the lives and youth for the revolutionary cause, and he called for the youth to learn this revolutionary spirit and to bring peace and prosperity to the country. About 8.6 million people (10 percent of the population) in the country are war veterans, heroic mothers and relatives of martyrs, and they are benefiting from the government’s preferential policies in education, housing and healthcare.

An elected seven-member President held the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on April 15. Drafts on the political tactical line were presented to the congress, covering the history and achievements of the political tactical lines in the past 25 years. During the congress, 29 amendments were passed and two resolutions were adopted.

China’s Ministry of Environmental Protection ordered Hebei province to stop pollution in Baiyangdian wetland (150 kilometres from Beijing), which is part of the Northern China’s environmental landscape in the area, as reports showed that the wetland was polluted and damaged by unauthorised development. No industrial waste should be dumped in the water and residential sewage pipes should be properly handled. Illegal aquaculture and tourist projects would be cancelled or removed. The wetland is the largest freshwater wetland in northern China. Moreover, the province is known for its air pollution in China, but recently it vowed to clean up smog by reducing coal-related pollution. The province’s Vice Governor, Zhang Jiehui, said that the province would cut by half emissions from coal-fired power stations.
AGL flags end to coal power

It’s great to see AGL finally listening to the 9 out of 10 Australians who want renewable energy and move in an environment to leave dirty coal fired power. It’s just a shame the company will keep pumping carbon into the atmosphere until 2050. We need action on global warming right now, not 35 years down the line when most of their dirty power plants would be expected to have shut anyway.

The announcement had nothing new to say about AGL’s failure to support the existing Renewable Energy Target, and was silent on AGL’s continued investment in coal seam gas. This announcement comes hot on the heels of AGL’s Macquarie Generation purchase, which instantly doubled their carbon pollution from about 19 million tonnes to over 40 million tonnes, making AGL the biggest carbon polluter in Australia.

This announcement follows GetUp’s Dirty Pennies, which showed AGL, EnergyAustralia and Origin were among the worst polluters in December 2015. AGL’s total carbon emissions in 2015-16 were in excess of 40,000,000 tonnes CO2 e – 7.5% of Australia’s total carbon emissions.

81% of the electricity produced by AGL owned generators comes from coal – 7% gas and a declining 11% renewables.

Toxic emissions (i.e. not carbon, stuff like fine particulate pollution) from AGL’s dirty power stations are now more than 20 times higher than five years ago.

Hopefully we’ll be hearing from Origin and EnergyAustralia on their plans to start wiping out their carbon emissions too.

James Grueven
GetUp

Sovereignty was never ceded

Given that sovereignty and what it stands for will be the flavour of the decade, it is only proper for me to retrace a timeline for our people to see how the issue of sovereignty has evolved to this day.

We can say that Aboriginal people throwing spears at the first white man was an act of sovereignty. Peoples in defence of their lands, territories and dominions. If we are to examine the political legal action by the people and their spear throwing, it was a military exercise authorised by their law and customs which, in total, represented an Act of State on behalf of the People.

They were exercising their sovereign right to defend what was theirs. The mass destruction of our people through the foreign diseases imported to this land by the illegal British boat people was tantamount to germ warfare. The fact that the invaders were massacring hundreds and thousands of people with impunity, through private militia groups and the British Redcoats, was one of the earliest forms of genocide that equated with any of the British crusades of the earlier centuries.

Ghilliar, Michael Anderson
Convenor of the Sovereign Union, Co-founder of the 1972 Aboriginal Embassy

The century of the futile but costly ANZAC landing is almost upon us, and the propaganda mills of capitalism are working at full bore. “War, glorious war”, they shout, oblivious to the death, destruction and misery that accompanies it.

In their usual way, they are busy recasting the First World War as some sort of noble struggle for truth and justice, for the defence of small countries against wicked invaders. Much the way they do with the wars imperialism is fighting today, really, whether in Syria, Yemen or already (covertly) in Venezuela.

But now, as then, imperialism’s expressed war aims are a travesty of the facts. The First World War was sold to the public in Britain as a war against the Central Powers. Britain, French, US and Japanese troops had been ordered to support.

The Russian Revolution – Its Impact on Australia

Revolution broke out in Germany and Hungary; there were mutinies among French and British troops on the Western Front. While the leaders of British, French and US imperialism schemed to eliminate the Bolshevik menace before it could grow any stronger, they soon realised that continuing the War was not feasible.

By mid 1918, with empires collapsing around them, they had to bring the War to an abrupt close. “The fact that England was still at war with Germany was a mistake. There must be an immediate cessation of hostilities on the Western Front and a coalition against Bolshevism.”


The anti-Soviet character of the Armistice between the Allies and the Central Powers in November 1918 is revealed in a little-known clause that stipulated that German troops should remain for as long as the Allies considered it expedient in whatever Russian territory they then occupied.

However, months before the Armistice, British, French, US and Japanese troops had been landed in Russia, to deal with the Bolshevik problem. The Japanese High Command provided the thousands of Japanese troops in Siberia with little Russian dictionaries in which the word “Bolshevik” was defined as “wild beast” and followed by the notation: “To be exterminated.”

By mid 1919, the territory of Russia had been invaded by the armed forces of no less than 14 states, namely Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, USA, Czechoslovakia, Serbia, China, Finland, Greece, Poland, Romania, and Turkey. None of them declared war on Russia. After four years of the World War, going to war with revolutionary Russia would not have been a popular move. So they pretended they were not at war with Russia.

Winston Churchill supervised the allied campaign against the Bolshevik menace, but wrote ironically of the Intervention in his book: “A proclamation from British General Sackville-West to the Russian people: ‘Hands off Russia!’”

“Sackville-West’s personal motives may or may not have been altruistic, but his aim was certainly clear. ‘“Hands off Russia!” had been shouted from the rooftops in the Great War. Now the object was to make it mean something’” (Sayers and Kahn: The Great Conspiracies.

A proclamation from British General Sackville-West to the Russian people: “Hands off Russia!”

British and US military leaders resorted to anti-Semitism to explain their actions in Russia.

“A proclamation from British General Headquarters in Northern Russia, which was read to British and American troops, [explained]: ‘We are up against Bolshevism, which means anarchy pure and simple. ‘Look at Russia at the present moment. The power is in the hands of a few men, mostly Jews…”’

The Russian Revolution represented the hopes of workers everywhere. In Britain and Australia and many other countries, the union movement rallied around the slogan “Hands Off Russia!” Manifestos and Resolutions from Labour Councils and even the ALP Federal Conference demanded an end to intervention and the cessation of hostilities, proclaiming the right of the Russian people to work out their own destiny.

Our heroes were not the misled youngsters sent to fight in a war on the Gallipoli Peninsula in an attempt to gain control over Russia’s oil and coal and steel, or those that were subsequently sent to fight and die in the hell of the Western Front.

Nor was it those who, when the War was supposedly over, were sent to fight against Revolutionary Russian workers and peasants. No, our heroes were the men and women who demonstratively and defied the police to oppose all conscription for imperialist wars and when the Conscription referenda were defeated and the War repeatedly over, came out again to demand the withdrawal of all Intervention troops from Russia, and to defend the world’s first successful socialist revolution.
tax rates for the rich (and their companies) were drastically reduced – from 83% to 60%, a huge give-away to the very rich. The British government exploited a hangover from its colonial past – the “non domicile rule” – to allow foreign magnates to live in Britain tax-free. The rule has originally been introduced to encourage rich colonials to come “home” to spend their money, but now it was used to allow any rich person to avoid tax if they could show that they had a connection to a foreign country. This, it was claimed, would encourage them to develop their riches and the money they spent would build the national economy. This was the so-called “trickle down” or “trickle through” effect, but it is bogus because the super rich spend their money on trophy objects that don’t create jobs or income for the mass of the people at all. The money stays pretty much in the world of the super-rich themselves.

As the top one percent got richer, the rest stagnated. In real terms, since prices rose all the time, especially for things like houses or rent, the mass of the people actually got poorer. The OECD now says the British economy would have been 20% bigger had British governments not tried to woo the super-rich.

When Britain finally imposed a “wealth tax”, it was a flat £30,000 a year. But, as one British financial adviser says, that was hardly an imposition on the super-rich: “It’s the sort of money they would spend on a birthday party for one of their kids.”

Former tax inspector Richard Brooks explains the cosy relationship that tax inspectors (and the taxation department – the Inland Revenu) developed with companies where if the inspectors vigorously pursued tax from a company it would count against that inspector’s career prospects.

Cambridge academic (and “one of the world’s leading economists”) Dr Ha-Joon Chang points out that for 30 years, it is obviously not working. “Investment as a share of national income has fallen, economic growth has fallen… The argument was that if you gave these rich people more money they would create more jobs, more income, [but] they haven’t done anything.”

They may not have created jobs or done anything else to boost people’s incomes, but they doubled their own share of income since the 1980s. In the US, billionaire Nick Hanauer believes the growing inequality threatens the future of capitalism itself. He speaks colourfully of the pitchforks coming. His concern, and that of others like him, is the impoverishment of the middle class (not so much the working class), because their concept of a healthy capitalist economy is dependent on a flourishing middle class (“consumers”).

An unblushing Hanauer tells Peretti that he earns a thousand times the median wage in the US. “But I don’t buy a thousand times as much stuff. No matter how much money I have, I cannot sustain a great national economy. Only a robust middle class can do that.”

Professor Thomas Picketty, author of Capital in the 21st Century, is a French academic who has “revived” Marx to bring him “up to date.” His work is extremely popular among bourgeois economists at present. Peretti calls him “the world’s most influential economist.” Picketty says “The middle class is very important for the economy, because this is what allows us to develop mass consumption, and to develop mass investment in construction, and it has started to shrink to some extent in the past 20 to 30 years, and I think it will be a major threat to our democracies if it was to continue shrinking in the coming decades.”

Jacques Peretti is no Marxist, but merely a concerned bourgeois democrat, disturbed at the way his country has been polarised and rendered more unequal by the ruthless pursuit of outrageous wealth by a small minority and the governments they control.

Well worth watching, if only for the statistics.
Mariam Veizadshedh. (Photo: Katherine Grifffiths)

because we appreciate that not only is it a dis-service to residents in New South Wales, but that perhaps only having one bias crimes co-ordinator and one intelligence officer allocated is inappropriate when New South Wales has residents who are diverse in their gender, disability status, sexual orientation, homeless status, racial or ethnic background and religious beliefs.

Bearing the brunt

The very idea that a handful of privileged people, mainly men, can debate whether the term "Islamophobia" even exists, or by calling it an "imaginary backlash", or even whether racial minority deserves any protection under the Racial Discrimination Act, is telling of where we are as a country. We are experts at denying, silencing and erasing alternative discourses. And women bear the brunt when sexism and Islamophobia is denied or silenced.

We do not wear the badge of "victimhood" and those who believe that Muslim women, when they draw attention to racism, sexism or Islamophobia are "playing the victim card" are confused.

This belief is built of the foundations of bigotry, where you see only Muslims on one side of the Gun. Australian Muslims do not deserve "collective punishment" for criminal acts they did not commit.

As an Australian Muslim there is an expectation that we denounce terrorism and violence, where the assumption for Australians who are not of the Muslim faith is that of course they denounce terrorism and violence.

We are not afforded the same assumption. Australian Muslim women are constantly being viewed through the distorted prism of violence and radicalisation, as conduits for extremism.

Exacerbating our heartbeat is the fact that other women are complicit in the politicisation of Muslim women. We have become the latest casualty of the layers of gender inequality – domestic and family violence, reproductive and sexual health rights, freedom of movement, access to education, to justice, economic empowerment and political participation.

2014 was the year we saw women leading the way for social change. We saw women engage in dialogue with other women from a diversity of backgrounds to offer their support and we saw the transformation of hash tag politics into real action. #wildthethey. # hashtag feminism.

Australian women showed the country what true leadership looked like in the face of ugliness and hate. There was a disconnection in the way Australian women addressed issues of racism, sexism and Islamophobia and the political rhetoric that sought to divide, inflame and distract.

As women, in 2015, we cannot wait for government policy or organisations to address gender inequality. We have the capacity to empower each other and support each other not only within the borders of Australia, but on the international stage against racism, sexism and religious vili-fication. We foster resilience, speak justly and to be advocates for peace in the face of adversity.

Just like Mariam.