Defence White Paper

Making Australia poorer not safer

Dr Hannah Middleton & Denis Doherty

The United States is driving to contain and control China and maintain its domination of the fast growing Asian region. The new Australian Defence White Paper (DWP) obediently adds to US military pressure and provocation designed to achieve this goal, all carried out in the context of a dangerous, growing regional arms race.

The Turnbull government will spend almost $50 billion in the next decade to fund the biggest expansion of the Australian naval power since World War II.

At a cost of $1 trillion over the next 20 years, the DWP is leading Australia down the destabilising and risky path of military escalation, making us poorer but definitely not safer.

This money should really be used to create jobs for the 800,000 unemployed, homes for the homeless or to help the two million Australians living in poverty.

Instead the billions will go into the pockets of the armaments corporations, most of them US-based.

Strategic assumptions

The major investments contained in this White Paper are based on two key strategic assumptions. Firstly, that the US remains our most important ally and the ultimate guarantor of the liberal order upon which the security of our sea lines of communication depend.

However, alliance with the US has pulled Australia in wars it did not need to fight – Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. It continues to place our nation at risk of further involvements.

Secondly, that while the rise of China continues to be a source of economic prosperity, the country’s military expansion and refusal to obey the rules-based global order create tensions that Australia must rearm in order to counter.

The rather bland phrase “rules-based order” (which is used 53 times in the DWP) is of course spin for capitalism and refusal to obey the rules-based global order create tensions that Australia must rearm in order to counter.

The maxim within Australian defence circles is “interoperability” with the US military.

Interoperability – the process of Australian forces becoming more closely integrated with those of the US – means that Australian forces can operate with US forces and no other.

This is because internal military communications are now dependent on US-controlled systems and increases the risk of Australian involvement in war. It does not in any way serve our strategic interests.

Australia’s economic well-being, security and national independence require a foreign policy which upholds peace and supports transparency, disarmament, co-operation and mutually beneficial trade.

Fightback!

- April 5 to 18 are the dates for the Global Day of Action against Military Spending (GDAMS).
- Organise $1 trillion protests in your area.
- September 26 to October 3 is the time to aim directly at the US as we protest the 50th anniversary of the US base Pine Gap. The facility directs US killer drone assassinations, is crucial for US nuclear war-fighting strategies and is involved in massive surveillance programs.

For detail of the hardware and spending see page 2.
On the occasion of International Women’s Day, the Communist Party of Australia expresses its solidarity with all the women of the world and expresses the rights of women as part of the struggle for the liberation of women from capitalism.

First International Women’s Day in 1911 was the initiative of pioneers Germaine Tillion and Clara Zetkin. There has been an unbroken chain of commitment among Communist women since then. We look with pride at the achievements of people inspired by our great cause. The Great October Socialistic Revolution in Russia in 1917 gave men and women equal rights protected by law. Socialism has proven to be on the side of women and continues to set the example as in socialist Cuba.

Unfortunately, 105 years after that first IWD and 88 years since it was first observed in Australia, there is still much to do. In fact, the gender income gap is growing across the country and in some occupations it reaches up to 24 percent. Despite all the promises and community awareness campaigns, women are more likely to live and retire in poverty and much more likely to suffer domestic and family violence than their male counterparts. Services for victims are under-funded or have had their funding withdrawn entirely. The CPA is committed to the struggle to achieve justice on these questions and the whole challenge of consigning class exploitative society to the dustbin of history.

PRESS FUND

There are persistent rumours that the Fairfax Press is considering for high level nuclear waste is being sold as a jobs and bonanza. It is projected to cost $147 billion over the claimed 120 year life of the dump but bring in $257 billion in revenue over the same period. A handy $5 billion a year would be put into a sovereign wealth fund for the cash-strapped state. The people of SA are right to be sceptical. Last year SA senator Sean Edwards said that nuclear power would mean free electricity for residents of the state.

The Royal Commission found that nuclear energy would not be economical for “the foreseeable future” because of relatively flat demand for electricity and the unexpected and, for some corporations, unwelcome success of wind and solar power generation. If, at some stage, Australia needs to hurry up its efforts to get to a zero emission target for power generation by 2050, the nuclear option is back on the table.

Nuclear power is still being sold as “clean” and “safe” energy in spite of the fact that other countries are prepared to pay $1.75 million per tonne to store their waste in South Australia. Commissioner Hall with the claim that even the major nuclear accidents over the decades, the most recent of which took place at Fukushima, have not resulted in serious consequences for human health.

The federal government is looking kindly on developments in SA. The Liberal party has had a pro-nuclear stance for many decades and a Howard-era inquiry into the nuclear option came back with a big thumbs up. Josh Frydenberg, the minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia, says it would be a “brave” federal government that stood between the people of SA and their preferred options for the future. The corporate media drum beat is that the community is changing its mind on nuclear industries and their safety record.

At odds with the claim that there is hardly the need to discuss such a brave proposition, Australia’s “safe” credentials are being sold. The country is politically and geologically stable and we have vast “empty” areas to dump the nuclear cast-offs. The spirit of Terra Nullius is alive and well in the current, national nuclear “conversation”. Assurances about Australia’s supposed high technical standards were undermined recently with revelations that the ship carrying treated nuclear waste back to Australia from France was a flag of convenience “ship of shame” of doubtful suitability with a low paid crew.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians would be well advised to resist state and federal government agendas, particularly the reckless proposition for a high grade waste dump in SA. It’s a foot in the door for the whole nasty, antiquated industry. The argument will go “seeing we currently store high grade waste, we may as well have the power generation that could use it.” And, as can be seen during various diplomatic showdowns around the world, if a country has nuclear power generation, it is an open question whether they have or are developing nuclear weapons. Australia mustn’t buy into this nightmare.

Issue 1721 March 2, 2016

Nuke industry targets SA

South Australians are being bombarded with media messages boosting the “benefits” of nuclear industries and ridiculing their opponents. People with concerns over the controversial proposals being handled are about accused of promoting the “rainbow warrior with their left hand” and engaging in “Midnight Oil-style gesture politics”, according to the Australian Financial Review. Slogan from the pro-nuclear sector has kicked up since the release of the “tentative recommendations” of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission headed by former SA Governor and retired Rear Admiral, Kevin Scarce.

The state is suffering high unemployment already and the situation is set to become disastrous when General Motors Holden stops vehicle production next year. The nuclear lobby is exploiting this vulnerability to sell some very doubtful goods to a wary public. To nobody’s surprise, the recommendations are exploiting this vulnerability to sell some very doubtful goods to a wary public.

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Australian diplomats mocked reports of Indonesian rape and murder of Timorese

Andrew Alcock*

Dear Friends in support of justice and freedom in our region of the world,

Today (February 22) MSN News and the Sydney Morning Herald listed an article that revealed that Australian diplomats had ridiculed the rape and torture of East Timorese at the hands of the invading Indonesian military as something that “sounds like fun”.

The annotations made in 1976, less than a year after the occupation began, were found on a memo sent to the Australian embassy in Jakarta from colleagues at the embassy in The Hague. They were discovered by Monash Uni researchers Sara Niner and Kim McGrath.

Australian East Timor Friendship Association SA believes that rape can never be considered as “fun” and is, in fact, a brutal crime against humanity. This is especially so when it is being committed on a mass scale along with the crime of genocide. If such remarks had been made about the victims of the Nazi during World War 2 (gypsies, Jews, unionists and socialists), there would have been righteous outrage.

How come it was thought as acceptable by Australia officials to hold such attitudes towards the victims of Indonesian fascism? AETF-SA has released the following statement about the story:

Sara Niner and Kim McGrath are to be applauded for revealing these notes made on official Australian documents by Australian officials regarding the crimes committed against humanity by the Indonesian military (TNI) in East Timor.

No matter what arguments are made to defend these attitudes held by a number of Australian diplomats and politicians during the time of the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, most Australians who value human rights and the rule of international law have every right to be appalled by them. After all, they are very cynical, callous and arrogant attitudes for officials to hold towards a people who are facing genocide and human rights abuses. This was a very shameful period of our nation’s history.

During World War 2, the East Timorese were slaughtered by the Japanese Imperial Army because they gave great assistance to Australian commandos who fought there. The East Timor lost about 70,000 lives out of a total population of 500,000 during the war while Australia lost 40,000 out of 7 million.

For Australian officials to make fun of a people who showed us great friendship and sacrificed so much because of that support, it is nothing short of disgraceful that they were suffering genocide and sickening human rights abuses again.

It is well-known that the TNI used rape as a strategy in East Timor as it does in West Papua today.

Of course, there is a certain irony about this revelation. Many conservative Australians who want Australia to follow US policies without question because of the assistance given to us in World War 2 by the US, are amongst those who want us to forget the great sacrifices made by the East Timorese for Australia.

History shows that in 1965 it was the CIA that assisted the TNI to overthrow democracy in Indonesia and to install the brutal Suharto dictatorship.

During its 33 years in power, the military dictatorship was responsible for massive loss of civilian lives and sickening abuses of human rights in Indonesia, West Papua, East Timor and Acheh.

On December 6, 1975, the eve of the TNI’s full-scale invasion of East Timor, former US president, Gerald Ford, and former US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, met with General Suharto and gave support to his planned invasion of East Timor.

The fact is that the support by the US and its allies of the invasion and occupation of East Timor is something of great shame and indicates that those justifying the invasion and the cynical attitudes to the crimes that were committed should that they have little regard for international law, democracy, human rights and social justice.

The highlighting of the term “impotent” in the FRETILIN report to describe the ability of the TNI is understandable if one knows the background. I have had discussions with former East Timorese and West Papuan resistance fighters and they have told me that the TNI performed very poorly in the field but that it was very effective at torture, rape and mass executions of civilians.

It is also ironic that these facts have come to light at a time when Australian officials, in violation of international law, are justifying the stealing of oil and gas from Timor-Leste’s half of the Timor Sea.

Because Timor-Leste has raised this issue at the International Court of Justice, the current Australian government has sought to pervert the course of justice by stealing papers of international law, are justifying the stealing of oil and gas from Timor-Leste’s half of the Timor Sea.

The Australian government has sought to pervert the course of justice by stealing papers of international law, are justifying the stealing of oil and gas from Timor-Leste’s half of the Timor Sea.

Peace, social justice and fairness should be the principles referred to above.

• cease its cynical and callous attitude towards the people of Timor-Leste who have suffered so much at the hands of the TNI and US and Australian complicity
• work towards making Australia an independent and non-aligned nation that promotes democracy, peace, social justice and fairness between nations
• only employ Australians in its diplomatic service who have a proven commitment to the principles referred to above.

* Andrew (Andy) Alcock is Information Officer, Australia East Timor Friendship Association (South Australia)
**Len Waster**

On Saturday August 2, 2014 Julieka Dhu, a young Yamaritji woman from Geraldton WA, was arrested for unpaid parking fines and locked up in the South Hedland watchhouse. This was not unusual – in Western Australia it has become a habit to lock up those too poor to pay their fines.

Women and Indigenous people are hit hardest by this and Indigenous women – doubly so. The number of Indigenous women jailed for fine default in Western Australia soared from 33 in 2008 to 223 in 2013. One in six Indigenous people in jail in WA are there because they could not pay fines.

Within three days Julieka Dhu was dead, a death that would never happen if we had anti-social policies that have massively cut into Indigenous programs, as well as other programs effective in addressing causes of the Indigenous settlements, that disempower Indigenous communities and bring them under a pervasive control regime.

This movement in the opposite direction from that the 1991 Commission recommended. It called for a transfer of resources into Aboriginal communities to develop community self-management.

Julieka’s traumatised family have been campaigning for justice and to find out the truth surrounding her death. It took 16 months for a coronial inquiry to commence and this was suspended for a further three months after the first week. It looks like the police needed that time to prepare their case in response to the damnation of their inhumane and brutal treatment of a young woman they picked up as she was about to receive medical attention for infected injuries.

The police did take Julieka to the Port Hedland hospital three times, in response to her constant cries of pain and pleading for help, but told the staff she was “faking” her injuries.

The staff obliged by recording her problem as “behavioural issues” and did not bother to take blood tests, x-rays or even her temperature.

The third time the police dragged Julieka to the hospital it appears she was already dead, possibly at police hands, according to other witnesses in the lock up.

That Julieka’s family has even made it as far as a coronial inquiry in this time is exceptional in Western Australia. The normal course of action in this process, which is based on police investigating police, is that the inquiry starts once only police complete their investigation and they routinely draw this out until the “heat” goes out of the issue.

Only her family’s relentless campaigning has kept Julieka’s case alive and kept pressure on the WA government. Her uncle Shaun Harris has endlessly crossed the country and spoken at rallies organised to keep Julieka’s case in the spotlight.

“We had to rely massively on social media, because the mainstream media yet again fails us black people of Australia on the really important black issues”, he says, adding, “These aren’t just black issues, but Australian issues as well ... We can’t keep being pushed aside or shoved under the carpet. They have to stop being in denial about how they’re treating us, how they’re murdering us.”

A National Day of Solidarity is being planned for March 14, 2016, the day the coronial inquest re-commences.

Harris sees this as one more step in gaining truth and justice, not only for his niece Julieka, but for the many others who have died in custody. It is a step in the struggle to prevent all deaths in custody in future.

April 15 marks 25 years since the release of the Royal Commission’s findings and recommendations. It is a good time to renew the campaign to stop Aboriginal deaths in custody, by fighting institutional and systemic racism, not only in Western Australia but Australia wide.

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**Rudi Maxwell**

The National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples is likely to have to close its doors by the end of the year, if it cannot find more funding. Congress, which represents 130,000 individual members plus 200 organisations, was set up in 2010 as a: national Indigenous representative body. It is independent of government and free to join.

The Koori Mail understands that in 2013, the board failed to accept a $15 million funding offer from the Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs under Labor Minister Jenny Macklin.

After Labor lost the election, the Coalition government made the decision not to fund Congress and it has struggled for a sustainable financial plan ever since. Congress co-chair Jackie Huggins, who was elected to the role in October last year, told the Koori Mail the organisation was running on a shoe-string.

“We weren’t funded by the Abbott government, our resources are pretty low. We’ve gone from 30 to five members of staff,” she said. “We have a massive organisation in terms of constituents, nearly 9,000, but unfortunately unless we find some way of bringing in funding, we are probably due to finish at the end of the year.”

A spokesperson for Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion said the federal government had already provided Congress with $30 million (the money the former Labor government provided for its establishment).

“This is a large amount for a body that sees itself as fiercely independent of government and provides no advisory services to government,” the spokesperson said.

“The Coalition government has already extended Congress’s funding agreement until June 30, 2017, to allow it to use its substantial cash reserves to support its operations and achieve financial independence. The government’s position in relation to funding for Congress has been consistent since the 2014-15 Budget.”

Huggins said it was important that Indigenous voices were front and centre in any discussions about a referendum on constitutional recognition and that Congress was in the process of regaining its membership.

“We want to find out what their views are, and opinions,” she said. “I think it’s been a very difficult time and in the past two years some people have changed their minds about Constitutional recognition. People are frustrated, wanting to know what is the question, when it will be, which road do we take - do we take treaty, sovereignty, Constitutional recognition?”

The staff obliged by recording her problem as “behavioural issues” and did not bother to take blood tests, x-rays or even her temperature.

This is independent of government and that’s what we’ll be saying in this debate.”

Huggins said she and fellow co-chair Rod Little were hoping to reinvigorate Congress’ relationship with members, member organisations and also the Federal Parliament.

Since former Prime Minister Tony Abbott appointed the Indigenous Advisory Council, made up of prominent Indigenous people and non-Indigenous business people, Congress has been largely sidelined by the federal government.

“We want to have a relationship with the Parliament,” Huggins said.

The staff obliged by recording her problem as “behavioural issues” and did not bother to take blood tests, x-rays or even her temperature.

They’re hoping we can make a difference in the timeframe that we have left.”

Koori Mail
Protest against Rio’s actions

More than four hundred workers from several unions, most notably from CFMEU construction, have taken their light straight to multi-billion dollar miner Rio Tinto for its complicity in sacking Australian seafarers and replacing them with foreign workers paid as little as $2-an-hour.

Last month in the port of Newcastle five crewmembers were marched down the gangway of the CSL Melbourne by more than 30 police. Those same police escorted the foreign replacement crew onto the ship to sail it away.

The CSL Melbourne carried aluminium from Gladstone to Newcastle for Rio Tinto’s alumina from Gladstone to Newcastle and made its way through the same rights and conditions as the ship to sail it away. The same police escorted the foreign replacement crew onto the ship to sail it away.

Rio Tinto, the foreign replacement crew onto the ship to sail it away.

The homeless are still homeless

Statement, Homelessness Australia

Last December, the most recent figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare underlined that more than 400 Australianians had received assistance from homelessness services this year than last.

Almost 236,000 people, more than a quarter of a million of us face a daily battle for survival. They are young and old, mothers and children, families and single people.

Domestic violence is still the main reason they seek assistance (28% of all requests), another significant factor is a housing crisis. Housing affordability, financial difficulties, rent, however, abuse, both physical and mental health issues are all still significant drivers into homelessness.

Roughly than 79,000 children received assistance; this includes 42,000 who were under 10, Aborigi- nals Torres Strait islanders are still over represented with 1 in 4 clients being Indigenous. A link between mental health issues and homelessness is still evident with a quarter of clients having an identified mental health issue.

Remote/very remote areas had the highest rate of homelessness service use and the largest growth in use over the past four years: 41,780 lone young people (aged 15-24) approached homelessness serv- ice. More than 8,500 people slept rough in the month before, coming to

The Defence White Paper which envisages spending billions of dollars on new military equipment, personnel and God knows what else has made military contractors very, very happy. They don’t have to beg for funds and put up with diminished services. Everything they want, they get. The track record of military wastage is legendary and the latest project will be no different. We are told there is no money for the sick, the poor, the homeless, the young and the old but there is always plenty for another submarine. Mind you, there is no military threat, even according to the military itself. There are real dangers that are not dealt with.

The homeless are still homeless as essential.

Homelessness services provid- ed more than 6.5 million nights of accommodation in 2014-15, about 0.4million fewer than 2013-14.

“The lack of exit points from homelessness remains at the biggest challenge for homeless services,” CEO of Homelessness Austral- ia, Dale Eaton. “A lack of affordable housing is a double edged sword. It drives people into home- lessness and is a major barrier to exit- ing homelessness.

“The biggest positive out of the data is the reduction in the number of people turned away from services,” Ms Stevens said. “The number of people unable to be assisted reduced by 22% in 2014-15.”

Homelessness services are prov- ing they are essential. In addition to providing accommodation and ten- ancy support they provide health, family, drug/alcohol legal and finan- cial services, assistance with edu- cation, employment and advocacy and practical support such as meals, transport and laundry facilities.

“The data shows that homeles- ness services are making a signifi- cant number of people into a better life situation,” she said “The number of people in education, employment and housing is higher after receiving support.”

Action needed

Homelessness Australia has called on all Australians, especially the media, to pay ongoing and close attention to the scale of the human trauma that is unnecessarily being allowed to happen within our first world society. While the number of people turned away did decrease, almost 120,000 people had their needs unmet, left to stay in unstable housing, or homelessness or try and utilise other networks.

Just because we have heard it before, does not mean we can ignore homelessness,” she said. “We urge government to see investment in homelessness services as essential. While there are positives coming from the data, the fact remains that 256,000 people needed assistance, and a further 120,000 were turned away.

Sydney

Sydney Vigil demanding that the USA stop the blockade on Cuba

Thursday March 17 at 5:30 pm outside the US Consulate in Martin Place

Also to stop the subversion funds against Cuba & to return Guantánamo to its rightful owners – the Cuban people.
Living up to his moral philosophi- cal commitment, US-Australian philosopher Peter Singer’s latest installment is *The Most Good You Can Do: Enhancing Utilitarianism’s “Greater Good” Principle*. The book – endorsed by software monopolist and corporate philanthropists Bill and Melinda Gates – is based on Sing- er’s “Castle Lecture” delivered at Yale University in 2013. The book approaches “the most good” idea in four parts: effective altruism; how to do the most good; motivation and justification; and choosing causes and organisations with finishing with an appended address to the “five rich countries” of New Zealand”. Peter Singer, according to the book’s cover, “may be the most controversial philosopher of our time.”

Singer reaches the conclusion that “capitalism in its current global form is senseless, but it is worse than that. Capitalism has pre-engineered for them. Perhaps dating back to his sem- inary days, Singer is a passionate and altruistic noting that “strong social ties and the avoidance of facts like these is all that is ahead of us. In the end, perhaps not even Singer’s capitalism is correct (Lynch 2015), but despite these stagger- ing numbers in Singer’s book are from the global elite when, for example, he discuss- es the cause of an Oxford University student “living on a £14,000 a year scholarship (which places him into the richest 1% of the world’s people).” But Singer also discusses questions like “is it okay, he asks, to buy two plasma screens and drinking chai lattes while 1.4 bil- lion people are living in extreme poverty.”

Perhaps movies and chai lattes are rather small fish compared to the global spending of around $2,000 billion (this is not a typo) in 2015 (www.apin.org). But Singer’s book provides a timely reminder that anyone, rich or poor, can make a difference. Singer keeps his discussion rather individu- alistic noting that “those who think global capitalism is correct (Lynch 2015), perhaps not even Singer’s capitalism (Smythe 1977), i.e. the distorting effect of capitalism, is worse than that. Capitalism has pre-engineered for them. Perhaps capitalism’s “Military-Industrial Complex” is all too complex for a philosopher? The US military alone spends about one million dollars per year while the morally worthless global advertising ogre is spending – or better wasting – half a billion dollars per year globally. Singer’s “Castle Lecture” delivered at Yale University where he is a professor and a specialist noting that “strong social ties and the avoidance of facts like these is all that is ahead of us. In the end, perhaps not even Singer’s capitalism is correct (Lynch 2015), but despite these stagger- ing numbers in Singer’s book are from the global elite when, for example, he discuss- es the cause of an Oxford University student “living on a £14,000 a year scholarship (which places him into the richest 1% of the world’s people).” But Singer also discusses questions like “is it okay, he asks, to buy two plasma screens and drinking chai lattes while 1.4 bil- lion people are living in extreme poverty.”

Peter Singer.

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Peter Singer.
For the total elimination of nuclear weapons

SPECIAL DECLARATION 21 on the commitment to advance in the multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament

The Heads of State and Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean, gathered in Quito, Ecuador, on the occasion of the 4th Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), on January 27, 2016:

1. Reaffirming our commitment to the consolidation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a “Zone of Peace” proclaimed during the Second CELAC Summit held in La Havana, Cuba, on January 29, 2014, where it was declared the continuous obligation of the States in the region to promote nuclear disarmament as a primary objective and to contribute to the complete and general disarmament as well as to strengthening trust among nations;

2. Reiterating the validity and relevance of the CELAC Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Related Matters, adopted in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on August 20, 2013; the Havana Special Declaration on the need of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Americas, adopted on January 29, 2014; as well as the CELAC Special Declaration on the urgent need of a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWZ) in South America, adopted on January 29, 2015;

3. Recognising the value and contribution to international peace and security of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty on Tlatelolco) and its protocols, which established the first Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in a densely populated region. We reaffirm our full support to the efforts of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), in that regard, we reaffirm the importance of collaboration and cooperation between CELAC and OPANAL, specialised body of the region, in order to articulate common positions and joint work on nuclear disarmament. We celebrate the 25 anniversary of the establishment of the Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ACANOC) and stress the importance and pioneering of this initiative of transparency and confidence building;

4. Identifying as a legitimate interest of the non-nuclear-weapons States, that nuclear-weapons States give unambiguous and legally binding guarantees to not use nor threaten to use such weapons. We urge to adopt, as soon as possible, a universal and legally binding instrument regarding nuclear disarmament.

We urge nuclear weapons States to withdraw the interpretative declarations to Protocols I and II of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and to respect the demilitarised status of Latin America and the Caribbean;

5. Emphasising our condemnation to the enhancement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of nuclear weapons, which is inconsistent with the obligation of adopting effective measures towards nuclear disarmament;

6. Recall our deep concern for the threat to humanity caused by the ongoing existence of nuclear weapons and their threat of their use, due to the potential damages on health, food security, climate change, among others as a result of the capacity of countries and organisations to face a humanitarian catastrophe of such magnitude. We recall the results of the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna which declare that such weapons not be used again, under any circumstances. Also that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a violation of the United Nations Charter, a violation of International Law and International Humanitarian Law, and a crime against humanity. They actuate the only effective guarantee against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total prohibition and elimination in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner and within a clearly defined time-frame. We also recall that the bilateral reasserted its commitment to the full implementation of all measures of the NPT Review Conferences. We recall that the NPT does not establish any right of States to have or transfer such weapons. We urge to adopt, as soon as possible;

9. Regret the continued non-fulfilment of the obligations of the nuclear-armed States regarding nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the NPT; and the commitment of the NPT Review Conferences. We also recall that the NPT does not establish any right of States to have or transfer such weapons. We urge to adopt, as soon as possible;

10. Reiterate, on the 20th anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the vital importance and urgency of the entry into force of that Treaty and urge those countries listed in Annex II that have not done so, to sign or ratify this important international instrument as soon as possible. We also underline the urgent need for progress on this and other effective measures of nuclear disarmament, so to give effect to Article VI of the NPT.

11. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of the Open Ended Working Group in accordance with resolution A/RES/70/33 approved on December 7 by the United Nations General Assembly, which will convene in Geneva in 2016. We pledge to work in said forum in an active and constructive manner, in accordance with the Latin American and the Caribbean political and moral leadership on this subject. This in order to contribute towards the fulfilment of the Group’s mandate to substantively address effective and concrete measures, dispositions and legal regulations that will be necessary to adopt with a view to the urgent approval of a comprehensive convention providing for the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons and to establish and maintain a nuclear free world.

Quito, January 27, 2016.

Symptoms of a dysfunctional system

SACP-COSATU bilateral statement

The South African Communist Party and the Confederation of South African Trade Unions senior leaderships, led by SACP general secretary comrade Blade Nzimande and COSATU general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, met in a high-level bilateral on February 19. The two formations shared perspectives on the current national and international situation.

Everywhere, monopoly capital seeks to make its own crisis the crisis of the working class and poor, and of a wide array of the middle strata. In South Africa the offensive against the own working class persists as capital and its ideologues seek to falling profits and sluggish growth by dismantling the hard-won rights of the trade union movement.

The bilateral also identified the emergence of a parasitic bourgeoisie that seeks to entrench itself within key sectors of the state and particularly within strategic state-owned corporations as an imminent threat to our democracy, our broader movement, and indeed to the ability of our democratic state to drive forward an inclusive and sustainable growth path. Our two formations committed to exposing and refusing to deal with those associated with state capture through parasitism in public sector formations and indeed within any of our own movement structures.

The SACP and COSATU leaders also agreed that the situation called for a closing of ranks between our two formations, and for the immediate mobilisation of our full support to our ideological and mass campaigning work.

Indeed, in the current circumstances the two working class formations within the ANC-led alliance have particular responsibilities. The bilateral agreed that, in the coming week, we will take back to our respective decision-making structures the SACP Central Committee and COSATU Central Executive Committee a proposal to campaign around the transformation of the financial sector and link this to the struggle for a comprehensive social security system.

Over 10 million credit-active South Africans have impaired records, being three months and more in arrears. Unsecured credit in South Africa grew from R40 billion (US$5.3 billion) in 2008 to R172 billion (US$15.8 billion) in 2014. Much of this credit is for immediate needs such as to buy food. Fifty-five percent of consumers of non-mortgage loans earn less than R8 000 (US$695) per month.

With mass retrenchments in the mining sector, with rising food prices, the household debt crisis will deepen. It is a crisis that is affecting the unemployed, the under-employed and casualised, unionised workers, families supporting a large unemployed and, indeed, large swaths of the so-called new black middle-class; whose middle-class status is typically only possible through unsustainable informal means.

This situation is a symptom of a dysfunctional financial sector and of the failure of the country to provide affordable housing and accommodation, public transport and public health-care. The situation is further aggravated by the predatory behaviour of capital with the collusion of corruption elements in the courts and police. There is widespread abuse of garnishee orders, for instance, and of housing evictions. The struggle for a transformed, people-friendly financial sector and the review of the appropriate approach to provident fund reform are both inextricably linked to the need for a comprehensive social security system that responds to the reality of our situation.

It is a situation in which mass unemployment is not a temporary phenomenon for many, and in which worker retirement funds and different social grants are typically not used only by the individual recipients but are needed to support extended households.

The bilateral reaffirmed that both the SACP and COSATU will be actively supporting the ANC in the forthcoming local government elections. It is critical that both the ANC and this other effective measures of nuclear disarmament, so to give effect to Article VI of the NPT.

11. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of the Open Ended Working Group in accordance with resolution A/RES/70/33 approved on December 7 by the United Nations General Assembly, which will convene in Geneva in 2016. We pledge to work in said forum in an active and constructive manner, in accordance with the Latin American and the Caribbean political and moral leadership on this subject. This in order to contribute towards the fulfilment of the Group’s mandate to substantively address effective and concrete measures, dispositions and legal regulations that will be necessary to adopt with a view to the urgent approval of a comprehensive convention providing for the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons and to establish and maintain a nuclear free world.

March 2, 2016
Irish voters grade austerity

Conn Hallinan

What looked like a smooth path to electoral victory for the Irish government has suddenly turned rocky, and the Fine Gael-Labour coalition is scrambling to keep its majorities in the 166-seat Dáil. A series of missteps by Fine Gael’s Taoiseach [prime minister] Enda Kenny, and a sharply critical report of the 2008 Irish “bailout,” has introduced an element of volatility to the February 26 vote that may end in a victory for an interesting, if fragile, coalition of leftists and independents.

(As the Guardian went to press the Prime Minister had conceded voters had rejected the coalition. Independents, Sinn Fein and Fianna Fail made gains. A hung parliament may spark a new election.)

The centre-right Fine Gael and centre-left Labour Party currently hold 99 seats, but few observers see them maintaining their majority. Fine Gael has dropped from 30 percent several months ago to 26 percent today, and Labour is only polling at 9 percent. That will not translate into enough seats to control the Dáil, and putting together a ruling coalition will be tough. And while polls indicate that the independent bloc has picked up three percent and is likely to grab 20 to 25 seats, in general, the independents are left or left-leaning.

The country is in the middle of an economic “boom,” but that is a relative term. Ireland is still reeling from years of European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed austerity that doubled the rate of childhood poverty and saddled working people with 35 percent house price rises and high unemployment. Wages have fallen 15 percent. Since 2008, almost 500,000 Irish – the majority of them young and educated – have emigrated from the country in search of jobs. The nation’s trust in government for failing to do nothing about the growing divides, the infrastructure improvement that failed them to the left of the political spectrum.

The Fine Gael-Labour coalition was hit with a double whammy: a report by in-house auditors for the European Union and an Irish parliamentary study of the collapse of Irish banks from 2008 to 2010. The EU study found that the European Central Bank (ECB) had presided over a crisis that threatened the Irish government not to impose losses on “senior bondholders” and, instead, put the burden on taxpayers. According to the parliamentary study, the ECB threatened to withdraw emergency support for Irish banks – thus crashing the economy – if wealthy bondholders were forced to take losses. All of this came as news to most of the Irish.

The centre-right Fianna Fail Party was in power when the great crash came in 2008, a crash that had nothing to do with government spending or debt, but was instead, the result of real estate speculation by banks and financial institutions. Irish land values jumped 800 percent, which should have warned the banks that a bubble was inflating. But the bondholders, speculators, and banks did nothing because they were making enormous amounts of money. When the bubble popped, Irish taxpayers were forced to pay up the US$67 billion tab.

Fianna Fail was crushed in the 2011 election, losing two-thirds of their deputies, and Fine Gael-Labour took over.

Part of the government’s problem is that for the past five years it has been saying that it had no choice but to enforce the savage austerity regime of the ECB, but it is now trying to take credit for the recent improvement of the economy.

The coalition’s mantra has been “the course,” “good times” are ahead. The term the government is using is “fiscal space,” or the estimated amount of money that will be available for investment if Ireland continued its economic recovery. According to Fine Gael that figure would be US$12 billion between 2012 and 2020.

First, no one understood “fiscal space,” a term used by the IMF. Even Director Grumpy Minister Joan Burton, a Labour Party leader, called it “a new kind of ‘F’ word” and said voters hadn’t a clue what it meant. Asked to define it, Kenny said the Irish voters wouldn’t understand it, a statement that managed to insult everyone. The government subsequently knocked the figures down to US$10 billion, and the opposition said it was more like US$8 billion.

And while Fine Gael is taking credit for the economy, critics are pointing out that it wasn’t austerity, but a fall in world oil prices and a decline in the value of the euro that favours Ireland’s export industry; that got the economy going.

Finally Kenny muffed a question about whether Fine Gael might consider a coalition with Fianna Fail because the Labour Party was dropping in the polls and might not hold its 33 seats. This enraged Labour and Kenny had to mend fences and pledge that Fine Gael would not go into a government with Fianna Fail.

In short, the government is looking inept, and it is taking fire for its shift from “we had no choice in applying the austerity” to “we take all the credit for the current situation.”

The CND Stop Trident demonstration in a generation, as the CND has done in every year, that we use every single day that people need. People don’t want the boats. It’s everyone against them. We’ve not needed them in the wars we’ve been fighting.

McNeill called for action to protect future generations, adding “times have changed. It’s a different world and they need to wake up, create real change, create a sustainable system.”

Thousands of anti-war campaigners and trade unionists descended on Parliament last Saturday to call for the cancellation of the Trident nuclear submarine system.

The CND Stop Trident demonstration was the largest anti-nuclear demonstration in a generation, as Trident renewal costs skyrocket to a staggering £167 billion (AU$335 billion).

Britain called on the government to renew Trident at a cost of £167 billion. The CND general secretary Kate Hudson said the huge public interest in the event revealed that stopping Trident was not a “minority protest” but a rational demand “from across society, from every age, faith and walk of life.”

Hudson said: “We are the majority and we will prevail.”

Zoe Streifeld

BRITAIN: Trident whistleblower Who published the CND dossier on the huge CND Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) leaked secrets. Colin McNeill warned last week that the nuclear weapons system was a “risk to the people and lands, from every age, faith and walk of life.”

Last May McNeill leaked a report exposing 30 safety and security failures documented over his career in it was “widespread” and “dangerous.” McNeill was dismayed and argued that rather than acting as a deterrent, the nuclear subma-
Mark Grubenberg & John Wojcik

SAN DIEGO: Why do working-class people vote for Donald Trump? In the wake of the real estate billionaire’s virtual sweep of the latest Republican presidential vote in his 47 percent win, Trump is offering an ideological stick to workers, once a key to winning US workers, are divided on organised labour, are disillusioned with the economy, the government and politicians and many are falling hard for Trump.

The report labour leaders at the AFL-CIO executive council meeting here this week were given, titled “The Trump candidacy. Whether or not Trump becomes the Republican presidential nominee, Working America’s success at mobilising working-class voters Trump targets, organised labour in general continue such efforts. That was a topic the council was prepared by Working America, Labour leaders at the AFL-CIO executive council meeting this week were given.

The disparity between what he says and what he actually does gives voters pause and opens the way to more nuanced conversations” with them about issues ranging from worker rights to immigration to foreign policy, the report says. And as an example of how little voters know or care about some issues, it reports only four percent list immigration – a big Trump cause – as their top issue this year.

“Fed-up and low-information voters may especially open to new information. For these voters, facts about Trump’s business practices” – including bankruptcies of four of his projects – “implications of his policy positions and questions about the effect his shoot-from-the-hip approach might have on international” was effective in changing the conversation from simplest initial responses to a more thoughtful framework,” the report says.

Many white working-class voters, Working America canvassers reported, used their extensive conversations “to dig deeper into their own views” and to even turn some of their minds about the big mogul. While recommending that Working America in particular and organised labour in general continue such extensive conversations with the white working class voters Trump targets, the report did not say how much staff and resources should be put into the effort. That was a topic that was discussed behind closed doors, and sources declined to put numbers on it. Working America director Karen North had left the session early and could not be reached for immediate comment.

Problem of union members voting for Trump

Donald Trump.

At least ten people were killed and another 150 injured in a riot in India’s northern state of Haryana. The riot entered its second day after a week-long protest. The protesters threw rocks at police, set houses, train stations and police cars on fire, as well as damaging the water supply system. The local government has proposed to negotiate with the rioters. The rioters were mainly students from a higher class of the Indian Caste System. They demanded the government abolish favourable policies toward people from lower Caste classes, as the government preserved some government work and university positions for them. The Caste System was preserved by the British colonists for the purpose of helping them to maintain India’s social hierarchy under the pretext of cultural preservation. The Indian government made favourable policies to lower Caste classes after gaining its independence, but in practice the lower Caste hardly benefited from any policies or protection by any law, due to ingrained social discrimination. That riot was an inevitable outcome.

More than 400 workers at India’s Tata Motor Nano plant recently went on strike last week, demanding the company rehire 28 workers who had been sacked on the pretext of discipline. Twenty-six workers went on a protest a month ago to support another two sacked workers, but the company then sacked them all and accused the workers of damaging cars in the plant. The company transferred easy-controlled workers from another plant where there are no unions.

Hundreds of Japanese students at student organisation T-nsSOWL21 went on a protest to fight against the Abe government. The students shouted “Abe administration steps down”, opposing the Prime Minister’s war legislation and reactionary policies. The Japanese opposition parties were also actively campaigning on the streets, trying to block Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party winning the upcoming upper house parliamentary election in summer.

China’s State Council has announced a new set of policies to promote the use of a New Energy Vehicle (NEV), aiming to upgrade the automobile industry and reduce pollution. According to the policy, the government will increase investment and subsidies to build more than 12,000 new battery charging stations for the NEV before 2020. It will increase the share of the NEV in the public transportation system. The policy also requires that more than half of the government and public institutions that purchased new vehicles must be the NEV. A total of 331,100 NEVs were sold in 2015, tripling the number from 2014.

A generator recently exploded at a power plant under construction in Indonesia’s North Sumatra. The explosion killed seven workers and seriously injured six while they were working in a tunnel nearby.

Region Briefs

Guardian International

March 2, 2016

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Donald Trump.
This also directly affects teachers and students who won’t be getting quality education and the implication for teachers is, being fully qualified, having less value than trainees who replace them, as trainees can suffer increased exploitation, paying them the minimum wage as they aren’t fully qualified. The education unions resisted this action in 2013.

Cuba’s education system is something to look up to: free universal education for all. Consider the amount of doctors the small island nation produces. It is so astonishing even the US president commented “the problem is we send soldiers, they send doctors.” A truly educated country, Cuba fully funds its free quality education.

We can see that in the United States their totally underfunded and private-for-profit education system has taken its toll: just look at the imbalance between government spending on education compared to their military. This creates working class kids with a lack of education and are prey for enlistment in the military. Every year our basic necessities are being taken from us, from the attacks on our education, schools and colleges to our Medicare, our rights are being taken away. We must fight back!

Anne Brinkley Hobart

UK government breaking the rules on supplying arms to Saudi Arabia, say leading lawyers

As Britain continues to supply weapons and related items to Saudi Arabia for the prosecution of the Arab kingdom’s murderous military campaign against Yemen, a group of legal experts have warned that Britain’s action is in breach of national, EU and international law.

The UK government is breaking national, EU and international law and policy by supplying weapons to Saudi Arabia in the context of its military intervention and bombing campaign in Yemen, according to an analysis by eminent international law experts commissioned by Amnesty International UK and Safeworld, both members of the Control Arms coalition.

The lawyers, Professor Philippe Sands QC, Professor Andrew Clapham and Blinne Ni Ghralaigh of Matrix Chambers, conclude in their comprehensive legal opinion that, on the basis of the information available, the UK government is acting in breach of its obligations arising under the Arms Trade Treaty, the EU Common Position on Arms Exports and the UK’s Consolidated Criteria on arms transfers and related items to Saudi Arabia within the scope of those instruments, capable of being used in Yemen.

They conclude that “any authorisation by the UK of the transfer of weapons and related items to Saudi Arabia, in circumstances where such weapons are capable of being used in the conflict in Yemen, including to support its blockade of Yemeni territory, and in circumstances where their end-use is not restricted, would constitute a breach by the UK of its obligations under domestic, European and international law.”

They also conclude that the UK government can properly be deemed to have “actual knowledge... of the use by Saudi Arabia of weapons, including UK-supplied weapons, in attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, in violation of international law,” since at least May 2015.

The UK government asserts that it is not taking an active part in the military campaign in Yemen. However, the UK has issued more than 100 licences for arms exports to Saudi Arabia since the state began bombing Yemen in March 2015. That includes more than £1.75 billion worth of combat aircraft and bombs for the use of the Royal Saudi Air Force.

In 2013, British Prime Minister David Cameron hailed the Arms Trade Treaty as a landmark agreement that would “save lives and ease the immense human suffering caused by armed conflict around the world.” He said Britain should be proud of the role it had played in securing an agreement that would make the world safer for all.

“We have fuelled this appalling conflict through reckless arms sales which break its own laws and the global Arms Trade Treaty it once championed,” said Kate Allen, Amnesty International UK Director.

“This legal opinion confirms our long-held view that the continued sale of arms from the UK to Saudi Arabia is illegal, immoral and indefensible.

“Thousands of civilians have been killed in Saudi Arabia-led air strikes, and there’s a real risk that misery was ‘Made in Britain’.

“The UK government must halt these arms sales immediately.”

Safeworld Executive Director Paul Murphy said: “UK government policy on Yemen is in disarray. The UK gives aid to help the victims of war while illegally supplying weapons that cause their misery.

“If the UK seriously wants to sit ‘at the heart of the rules-based international order’ as claimed in the recent National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review, it must itself abide by the rules to which it has signed up.

“It’s time the government acted as a peace broker, rather than an arms broker. The UK government should help turn the conflict to an end.”

Since the conflict escalated in mid-March 2015, more than 5,800 people have been killed and tens of thousands wounded. Two-and-a-half million people have been forced to flee their homes. More than 80 percent of the population (21 million people) are in need of humanitarian aid, including two million children at risk of malnutrition.

The UK is not alone in sending arms to and supporting parties to the conflict. Several other countries have also supplied arms to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition now fighting in Yemen, with supplies to the Huthis shrouded in secrecy.

The agencies called on the government to immediately take the following steps:

• Immediately suspend arms transfers and military support to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners which could be used to commit or facilitate further serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Yemen.

• Carry out a thorough and independent investigation into UK arms transfers and reported war crimes in Yemen.

• Make every possible diplomatic effort to help bring the conflict to an end.

• Continue to push for an end to the de facto blockade so that vital humanitarian and commercial supplies enter Yemen and reach those most in need.

• Fully implement the provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty, and encourage all other arms exporters to do the same. – Amnesty International.

The conflict in Yemen has turned the country into one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. Civilian targets including hospitals, schools, markets, grain warehouses, ports and long-haul oil pipelines are being hit in air strikes by Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces.

While in prison, Seth continues to work for the betterment of the community in which he lives. He has participated in programs with the NAACP, the Jaycees and other organizations and has worked as a librarian, pre-release advisor and AIDS counsellor. Whenever possible, he has taken college courses. He has been a mentor and leader to youth both inside and outside prison. Seth has a B.A.

Seth finally received treatment for his hepatitis C this year, and no longer has hep C. However, he has developed congestive heart failure and emphysema this year. Seth also suffers from type II diabetes and high blood pressure. He has been extremely ill and has had great difficulty procuring necessary healthcare. He has needed the help of his lawyers and some state political leaders in order to get adequate treatment.

To help free Seth Google “Free Robert Seth Hayes” and sign the petitions.

Steven
The Black Panther Party: Vanguard of the Revolution

“Can you jail a revolutionary, but you can’t jail a revolution.” So said the iconic co-founder of the Black Panther Party, Huey P Newton. This year marks the Black Panthers’ 50th anniversary. Founded in Oakland, California in 1966, the black nationalist organisation came out of the growing Black Power movement to empower African Americans in the US, and across the globe, against the ills of oppression and poverty under a structurally racist system.

Newton’s quote highlights the importance of the existence of the Black Panther Party beyond one single member or leader, showing what this organisation represented for a people and the struggle against inequality. The US PBS network has aired the documentary The Black Panther Party: Vanguard of the Revolution. The film showcases the history of the Black Panthers in all its various shades. As one former member, Phyllis Jackson, states in the film when referring to the life and times of the Panthers, “It wasn’t easy, it was contradictory.”

The two-hour documentary, by director and producer Stanley Nelson, details the rich history of the party, which was its most active from 1966 to 1962. This is an ambitious task, that although has its impressive moments, often leaves much to be desired, especially when it spends an extensive amount of time on a few of the leader’s parties, leaving a good amount unsaid about other key players. Despite this shortcoming, the rare footage, interviews by former members and written letters make for a stylistically pleasing introduction to this important organisation.

The film begins by explaining the origin of the party and why it was founded in the late sixties. It sets the backdrop by showing the racism faced by black Americans, including rampant police brutality in cities heavily populated by African Americans, (in particular Oakland, California); poverty; and an overall “rage in the streets,” (as Oakland California); poverty; and the ensuing mobilisation of the Party.

The film goes further to argue that although the FBI director J Edgar Hoover. The FBI used its power to suppress the Panthers, it was the clashing of ideas, and the ensuing struggle that resulted in the Panthers’ rise as a public figure to become Chairman, and his brutal assassination at the hands of law enforcement; and also the shifting of the Party into electoral politics with the campaign of leader Bobby Seale for Oakland Mayor and leader Elaine Brown for Oakland city council.

Brown appears in a few snippets of recent interviews and a short highlight of her campaign for Oakland City Council, but unlike her male counterparts, her rise to leadership and contributions aren’t covered extensively, despite the fact that she was chair of the Party for three years in Newton’s absence.

Brown actually has an autobiographical book, A Test of Power: A Black Woman’s Story, which does a great job of addressing the intersectionality of being a woman and black within the revolutionary struggle. It is a shame that none of this is truly detailed in the documentary.

At its best, the film shows an organisation, mainly made up of young people, who wanted to stand up and fight back against the oppression they faced. It shows the contributions they made in uplifting a community through public programs and revolutionary ideals.

In the year 2016, we have the emergence of Black Lives Matter, and a society that still faces much of what the Black Panthers were fighting against in the 1960s that this makes this documentary so timely and powerful even if it only chips away at the tip of the iceberg regarding the complexities of the movement.

If nothing else it can encourage those that watch the film to dig deeper into the history of the party, which will forever be remembered as a key influence in the struggle for black liberation.

Women’s World

Springer Nature Singapore Pte. Ltd.

The Guardian

March 3

GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS – MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ON THE MOVE IN EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

WHAT WELL IS THE WESTERN WORLD, INCLUDING AUSTRALIA, RESPONDING?

– John Dowd, President, International Commission of Jurists;
– Paul Power, CEO Refugee Council of Australia

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SURGING POKER MACHINE/GAMING INDUSTRY. PROFITS TAKEN FROM THE POCKETS OF THE POOR. WHAT NEW GOVERNMENT CONTROLS ARE NEEDED URGENTLY?

– James Robertson, Jacob Saulwick, SMH investigative journalists

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– Holly Greenough, Coordinator NSW Campaigns against Coal & Coal Seam Gas;
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INCLUSION & COHESION – CHALLENGES CONCERNING THE ALLEGED RADICALISATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW SCHOOLS

– Jihad Dib, Labor MP for Lakemba;
– Linda O’Brien, School Social Sciences & Psychology, University of Western Sydney

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WHAT LABOR SHOULD DO TO WIN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IN 2016

– Meredith Burgman, Former Labor President NSW Legislative Assembly;
– David McKnight, Academic, Author several books on social & political issues

Every Thursday 6:30 pm
Harold Park Hotel
Cnr Wigram Rd & Ross St Glebe
US President Barack Obama,

Dear Mr Obama,

Greetings from Australia. I am writing to you about an issue that I consider very important and very close to my heart, the situation of quite a few long-term prisoners being held in the USA.

These prisoners were part of a powerful and progressive movement during the 1960s and ’70s, which sought to expose and confront the entrenched racism, injustice and discrimination that were rampant in society at the time. Many of these prisoners were leaders and activists who were arrested, charged, and sentenced for their efforts to bring about justice and equality.

I believe it is apt to call these people political prisoners and ‘70s. Some people, like me, who were involved in the anti-apartheid movements in South Africa and the Civil Rights movement in America, support the struggle for freedom and justice.

These prisoners are imprisoned for political beliefs, for their former actions, and for the acts of those who supported them. Some have been imprisoned for more than 30 years, and many of these prisoners have been in solitary confinement. The situation of these brave and committed men and women who have dedicated so much of their lives to the struggle for freedom is unjust and pointless. They don’t need to make the world a better place, they need their freedom.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Steven Katsinis
Victoria

Australia

P.S. Sure any debt they owed society must be fully compensated for by now. As you have done in promoting reconciliation with Cuba and Iran, I urge you to please give careful and compassionate consideration to look at these prisoners’ cases and support the same spirit of reconciliation with sections of the American community that these people belong to.

Thank you.

Herman Bell.