US President Barack Obama, in a recent interview with the Atlantic magazine, threatened “nuclear potential for conflict with China” if it continues to antagonise its neighbours. The “antagonise” tag is a reference to China’s declaration of its territory and use of hotly disputed islands in the South East China Sea. “In terms of traditional great-state doctrines, I do believe that the relationship between the United States and China is going to be the most critical,” Obama said. (The Atlantic “The Obama Doctrine”, April 2016)

Australia’s 2016 Defence White Paper (DWP), which was released towards the end of February, reads along similar lines: “The roles of the United States and China and the relationship between them will continue to be the most strategically important factors in the Indo-Pacific region.

“I think we have to be firm where China’s actions are undermining international interests, and if we look at how we’ve operated in the South China Sea, we have been able to mobilise most of Asia to isolate China in ways that have surprised China, frankly, and have very much served our interest in strengthening our alliance with Taiwan continued.

Australia as a loyal deputy has facilitated the US in its efforts to isolate and surround China. “The United States will remain the pre-eminent global military power and will continue to be Australia’s most important strategic partner,” the DWP says as though the US has some arbitrary, self-anointed role as global cop.

Militarisation of region

The US, on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, has militarised the Asia Pacific region. Apart from its bases, training and other facilities in Australia, the US has in:

• South Korea – more than 27,000 troops and plans for a missile defence system
• Japan – more than 48,000 troops
• Philippines – more troops and weapons
• Guam – the small island has more than 10,000 troops
• South China Sea –
• Singapore – naval base, key logistics and military industrial complex and its insatiable appetite for super profits which can only be maintained by conflicts.

The second is to maintain its economic domination, where this cannot be achieved by other means.

The third is to halt and stifle the development of progressive political alternatives and other independent sovereign forces that reject its imperialist domination.

In other words, the US is not prepared to concede any power that challenges its global economic, political or military hegemony. It is prepared to go to any lengths to ensure that, including war – even nuclear war.

The DWP’s main focus is on the Asia-Pacific region where China has extended its influence or may do so in the future.

For some years, the US has had a policy of containment and the aim of breaking up China into smaller states and ending the rule of the Communist Party of China.

Sovereignty for sale

The DWP sets out to deepen and accelerate the integration of Australian military in the US war machine. The most recent announcement is for US long range, heavy bombers to be stationed in Darwin. US forces and air force bomber planes already use Australia’s Bradshaw Military Base near Darwin for exercises and reconnaissance.

In early April 2015, US Lieutenant Colonel Dougherty proclaimed Australia to be an empty place: “You guys have opened up your homes to us. We’re living in your guesthouse. The outback truly is out back, with vast wide-open spaces. There’s things we can do here we cannot do back in the States. [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.”

Territorial nullius is alive and well, with no recognition of Aboriginal communities or Aboriginal land.

Apart from a few patrol boats, the massive 10-year program for $1.95 billion additional spending on expanding Australia’s war capability has little to do with the defence of Australia. It is offensive in nature. The main focus is on maritime and long distance warfare, far from our shores. The target is China.

Profits of war

The government is purchasing 72 F-35A long range, joint strike fighters from Lockheed-Martin at a cost of $17 billion – that is before the blow-outs. Production was commenced prior to testing and the planes may require re-rofits at even more cost (See transcript, ABC’s Background Briefing program, Radio National 06-03-2016). The first are expected to be operational by 2018. BAE Systems is part of the team building them.

According to Lockheed-Martin, the “F-35A is characterised by a low profile design, internal weapons and fuel carriage; advanced radar; electro-optical and infrared sensors with advanced voice and data link communications; and the ability to employ a wide range of air-to-surface and air-to-air weapons.”

The six E-7A Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning and air-to-air refuelling aircraft, the 12 carrier-based EA-18G Growler Electronic Attack aircraft, the eight P-8 Poseidon for anti-submarine warfare, are amongst the purchases from Boeing.

These companies are part of the corrupt military complex, that through its lobbyists and swinging doors with the Pentagon ensure that the US never runs out of wars.

Even before the US announced its US Pivot into Asia-Pacific in 2011, more than 320,000 US troops and marines were already stationed in the Asia-Pacific. This number will grow much higher over the next five years with the announcement that 60 percent of the US military, naval, air and ground forces will be shifted to Asia-Pacific by 2020.

Continued on page 2
Concern over prison rates

An alarming rise in the number of Indigenous people being sent to jail since the 1987 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody is according to the chief numbers man in NSW, a matter of “real concern”.

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research chief Dr Don Weatherburn said the Koori Mail that the Royal Commission examined high imprisonment rates of Indigenous people back in the late 1980s.

And according to the latest figures released by the bureau, coupled with the NSW government’s tough-on-crime approach, the situation is unlikely to get better anytime soon.

“Back in March 2011, there were 2,250 Aboriginal people in jail in a total jail population of 10,000,” Weatherburn said.

“That’s now up to 2,900 in December 2015, of a total population of 12,000.”

Weatherburn described the latest figures as “a worrying result”.

“There wouldn’t be too many Aboriginal people, or anyone else for that matter, who hasn’t been to jail. It’s become an ingrained way of life,” he said.

“Aboriginal people are just two percent of the population yet they make up 20 percent of the prison population (in NSW).”

Weatherburn believes a reason the prison population is rising is because “the left hand (of government) doesn’t know what the right hand is doing.”

“We need to formulate alternatives instead of creating mandatory sentencing and a ‘tough-on-crime’ approach,” he said.

Police notice

Weatherburn said that Aboriginal people appeared more likely to come under police notice for two reasons.

“There is still a big problem with violence and substance abuse in some Aboriginal communities, but they also pick up more regularly for minor offences like public order offences.”

“This creates a vicious cycle,” Weatherburn said a rising prison population, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, was an area of “great concern”. According to its latest report, “the NSW prison population situation still growing”, BOCSSAR (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research) found that between June 2011 and September 2015, the number of people in prison rose from 10,000 to 11,801, an increase of 18 percent.

“The increase since November 2014 has been particularly marked, with an additional 1,421 prisoners added to the population in just 10 months,” the report says.

Weatherburn said the figures showed that current strategies to reduce prison rates were not working, and a new strategy was needed.

“People massively overestimate the effect that jail has in controlling crime,” he said.

“If you get a 10 percent increase in prison numbers you maybe get a 1.5 percent reduction in crime. You are better off trying to get that reduction with treatment options, and creating jobs for people.”

The Americans have realised this and they’ve been trying to empty their prisons because they’ve woken up to the fact that the system is not working.

“It costs around $230 a day to keep a person in prison. A far less expensive option would be things like community service orders, or supporting people to real employment.”

“It’s certainly something worth exploring,” Koori Mail.

War clouds gather

Mysterious 2% of GDP

There has been media speculation over the source of Australia’s defence budget target of two percent of GDP. It appears the two percent of GDP target from the US is the pivot in Asia and the permanent presence of 2,500 US forces in Australia. The budget that followed saw rapid hikes in military spending. The DWP commits to military spending reaching the US-set target of two percent within five years.

It is absolute madness for Australiato spend billions of dollars on war, it makes even less sense to wage war against our major trading partner. The idea that such a war will be confined to distant seas or shores is simply a lie.

Australians are already feeling the impact of its participation in the military build-up being led by the US. It is being used by cuts to health, education, social security and other important services.

Only this week, the government was again considering how to reduce the age pension, this time by including the value of the home in the assets test.

In war, the only winners are the military industrial complex and big banks.

An end to all wars and war preparations, mutual respect of sovereignty and independence is the only way forward.

Press fund

Last week the NSW government moved to bypass current environmental laws under which corporations that mine without authorisation could be fined up to $1.1 billion plus interest.

Instead, the government wants to apply an industry regulator disciplinary powers to merely fine the offending corporation $5,000. The government also wants to increase the number of personnel who will be able to forcibly remove anti-mining demonstrators, and to take draconian action against “insiders” who don’t know the rules.

These new initiatives prove the government is the servant of the mining industries and has no commitment to protecting the environment. You can follow further developments as we need you. Let us know if you wish to support our work and receive updates via the Press Fund contributions, so please send us something for the next issue if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week’s contributors, as follows:

G Spiers $60, Mark Mannion $55, “Rough Red” $55, “Round Figure” $10, Eddie Seymour $25

This week’s total: $105 Progressive total: $1,995

Hands of Timor’s Oil

According to international law the maritime boundaries between Australia and East Timor should be along the halfway line, but the Australian Government refuses to acknowledge this.

Two months before East Timor’s independence, Australia withdrew from the maritime boundary jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which means the ICJ has no jurisdiction to examine high imprisonment rates of Indigenous people back in the late 1980s.

During subsequent negotiations over oil and gas revenues the Australian Secret Service fitted surveillance devices inside the Timorese cabinet room so it could spy on government negotiators. The resulting temporary treaty is highly unfair to East Timor. Australia is ripping off one of the poorest nations in Asia.

It’s time we stand in solidarity with East Timor and demand that our own government resists to the International Court of Justice.

ADELAIDE
21 March – 12:30pm outside Parliament House
SYDNEY
23 March – 12:30pm (3 meeting spots) at Archibald Fountain Hyde park at Greenwood Plaza NSW at DFTF offices, Angel Place, CBD
MELBOURNE
24 March – 12:30pm at Archibald Fountain Hyde park at Greenwood Plaza NSW at DFTT offices, Angel Place, CBD
FRANKSTON
25 March – 12:30pm at Corner of Frankston Pde and Warrigal Rd
KANGAROO VILLAGE
21 March – 12:30pm outside Australia Post
MACKAY
22 March – 12:30pm outside Boral
MORRIS LAKE
24 March – 12:30pm outside Boral
MALIBU
25 March – 12:30pm outside Australia Post
KUNDAPOON
21 March – 12:30pm outside Australia Post
COURT HOUSE
23 March – 12:30pm outside Australia Post
STOKETON
25 March – 12:30pm outside Australia Post
GUARDIAN
Issue 1723 March 16, 2016
Which system? The capitalist system!

Banks aren’t popular with the people of Australia. Once trusted institutions are now held in contempt for their manipulative behavior. For example, the Commonwealth Bank is embroiled in a scandal over dodgy and self-serving financial practices concerning its life insurance. And the Commonwealth’s insurance arm, have surely sunk the bank’s self-proclaimed reputation for ethical behaviour and, along with it, that of the financial industry in general.

Dr Benjamin Koh has blown the whistle on Comminsure’s treatment of claims from terminally ill policy holders. The former National Australia Bank medical adviser was banned for five years for offences that include pretending to be someone else to change a death certificate.

We mustn’t throw our hands in the air and declare that this is an inevitable part of the capitalist system! It is restricted to a single rogue member of the “four” group of banks. The examples that have come to the surface are the tip of a very big iceberg. Earlier this month, a former National Australia Bank financial adviser was banned for five years for offences that include pretending to be someone else in order to obtain information on a super fund.

Of course, dishonesty is spread right across industry in capitalist societies. Substitution rackets, the underpayment of wages and entitlements, skimming on health and safety practices, regularly leading to death and disability, feature daily in the news and barely raise an eyebrow. It is now common as to be of little concern. It is a logical development of the basic theft carried out under capitalism – the private appropriation of wealth that is created socially.

The scope for this type of “business” has expanded markedly in recent decades. De-regulation and privatisation of the open and underhand kind have increased the agenda of both major parties. Corporations have been given a greater and greater role in the provision of services once seen rightly as the responsibility of government and trust. So it is little wonder that the CSIRO.

If health, education and research are fully privatised as dictated by the planners of the corporate state, we will be confronted with more and more “man-made” disasters.

We mustn’t throw our hands in the air and declare that this is “human nature”. It’s not. It is part and parcel of capitalism and there is an alternative. Socialism is a system of collective ownership and control of the means of production directed towards meeting the needs of people, including a healthy environment. The idea of swapping capitalism for socialism has been powerfully influential, cunning and well-financed enemies. In this battle, the working class and other exploited people have scant resources except for our capacity to organise. The time has well and truly arrived for more organised for the struggles ahead.

Concern over prison rates

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Australia’s political parties must stop eroding many of the vital foundations of Australia’s democracy, the Human Rights Law Centre said in a new report launched in Canberra last month.

Civil society leaders joined the launch to highlight the critical role that civil society plays in a healthy and robust democracy.

"Open government, a free press, a strong and diverse civil society and the rule of law are some of the vital foundations of our democracy. Yet we are witnessing an unmistakable trend in Australia of governments eroding these foundations with new laws and practices that entrench secrecy and stifle criticism and accountability,” said Hugh de Kretser, Executive Director of the Human Rights Law Centre.

“We need to stop this corrosive trend and strengthen our democracy. This report outlines a way forward. With an election later this year, it’s time for our politicians to commit to upholding our democracy,” said Mr de Kretser.

The Safeguarding Democracy report documents how federal and state governments are adopting new laws and practices that undermine critical components of Australia’s democracy like press freedom, the rule of law, protection rights, NGO advocacy and courts and other institutions. It outlines 38 recommendations to stop the erosion and strengthen our democracy.

Whistleblowers

The report documents increasing government secrecy, particularly in the areas of asylum seeker policy and national security. The Australian government has responded to whistleblowers with aggressive reprisals. New metadata laws give law enforcement agencies more tools to expose journalists' sources. “Where secrecy flourishes, human rights abuses become more likely,” the secrecy surrounding our offshore processing regime means that the Australian people are forced to judge the merits of acts done in their name without all of the facts on the table, forcing whistleblowers to take matters into their own hands. We urgently need to wind back our secrecy laws and increase the transparency and accountability of this regime,” said Mat Finkler, Director of Policy and Public Affairs at Save the Children.

Attacks on advocacy

The report documents increasing attacks on advocacy groups that challenge government in the courts, governments are adopting gag clauses in funding agreements to targeted funding cuts, to suppress advocacy and criticism from community organisations.

“Community organisations make a vital contribution to our society and our economy, from running homeless shelters to supporting people with disabilities to engage in the decisions that affect them. Advocacy is a key element of this contribution,” said Dr Cassandra Goldie, CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service. “It improves laws and policies and ensures the voices of vulnerable groups are heard in policy debates. Yet savage cuts through the last two Federal Budgets have eroded the contribution of many of these organisations. Instead of removing support for advocacy by community organisations, governments should welcome and encourage it, even when it’s uncomfortable for them. The health of our democracy relies on it.”

Attacks on peaceful protest

State governments in Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland have enacted or proposed far-reaching anti-protest laws that undermine rights to peaceful protest.

“ Australians know the fundamental importance of democratic rights to gather, associate and protest. That affect them. Advocacy is a key element of this contribution,” said Dr Cassandra Goldie, CEO of the Australian Council of Social Service. “It improves laws and policies and ensures the voices of vulnerable groups are heard in policy debates. Yet savage cuts through the last two Federal Budgets have eroded the contribution of many of these organisations. Instead of removing support for advocacy by community organisations, governments should welcome and encourage it, even when it’s uncomfortable for them. The health of our democracy relies on it.”

From the Franklin River to the Great Barrier Reef, conservation groups have played a vital role in protecting Australia’s special places, said Kelly O’Shanassy, CEO of the Australian Conservation Foundation. “Instead of trying to silence conservation groups through political attacks on charity tax concessions, the government should encourage them to speak out. It’s in all of our interests.”

The Australian government has done-funded a range of peak organisations that represented the views of their sectors and constituencies including the representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples.

“Our organisation provides a national voice for our people. It provides leadership, advocacy, advice and expertise,” said Congress Co-Chair Jackie Huggins. “Our board is directly elected by our membership which is open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. The government has cut our funding and appointed its own hand-picked advisory group. It’s a huge backward step for self-determination, reconciliation and our people’s future. It’s a huge backward step for our democracy.”

Reversing the regression

The report welcomes the repeal of excessive “move on” powers by the Victorian government and the removal of gag clauses from funding contracts by the Queensland government. It outlines a range of further steps needed at both federal and state level to reverse the trend of eroding our democracy and safeguard our democracy.

Human Rights Commission, slashing its funding and engaging in belligerent political attacks on its President in response to her investigation into human rights abuses against children in immigration detention. The government has also sought to limit the ability of courts to review government conduct and publicly vilified groups who challenge it in court.

“The unprecedented attacks on the Australian Human Rights Commission are symptomatic of the trend of the Australian government trying to remove limits on its own power,” said Mr de Kretser. “Our independent court system provides a vital check on government yet the Australian government is trying to sideline the courts in critical areas like immigration detention and national security. Groups that challenge government action in the courts are being vilified. Governments should promote the rule of law, not undermine it.”

“simple right to scrutinise decision making under environmental protection laws is an important accountability mechanism that the Australian government wants to restrict. Instead of limiting the ability of environmental groups to ensure government complies with these laws, we should be expanding it. We need to remove barriers to public interest legal action, not erect new ones,” said Brendan Scales, CEO of Environmental Justice Australia.

The report concludes: “Whistleblowers are vital to the rule of law, not undermine it.”

“Transparency is vital to prevent and respond to misconduct and abuse. Where secrecy flourishes, human rights abuses become more likely.”

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The 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.
Human caused global warming detected in 1930s

The last 16 record-breaking hot years globally reveal the influence of human caused climate change with the first signs appearing as far back as the 1930s, according to new research published today in Geophysical Research Letters.

“Globally all the record-breaking hot years we’ve had since the 1990s are so much outside natural variability that they would be almost impossible without climate change caused by humans,” said lead author Dr Andrew King, from the ARC Centre of Excellence for Climate System Science.

“But even at country and regional scales, where it is often much harder to detect global warming signals, the influence of human caused climate change still became unmistakable in many regions in the 1990s and for Australia as far back as the 1990s.”

“In Australia our research showed the last six record-breaking hot years and last three record-breaking cold years were made much more likely due to global warming,” said lead author, Dr King.

“We were able to see climate change more clearly in Australia because of its position in the Southern Hemisphere in the middle of the ocean, far away from the strong influencing of high concentrations of industrial aerosols.”

Previous research has shown that aerosols in high concentrations over specific regions had a cooling effect, reflecting more heat back into space. However, when those aerosols were removed from the atmosphere, the warming returned rapidly.

This cooling impact was seen very clearly by the researchers when they looked at five different regions, Central England, Central East Asia, Central US, East Asia and Australia.

Cooling periods, likely caused by aerosols, occurred in Central England, Central US, Central East Asia, East Asia during the 1960s and 1970s before accelerated warming returned.

These heightened aerosol concentrations also delayed the emergence of a clear human caused climate change signal in all regions studied except Australia.

“In regards to a regional human caused climate change signal, Australia was the canary in the coal mine for the rest of the world. The signal appeared there first and then over the coming years it became apparent elsewhere,” Dr King said.

“Recent increases in aerosols over East Asia has started to slow the rise in the number of the region’s record hot years and summers, again making the clear climate change signal more evident in areas.”

“High aerosol concentrations also significantly delayed the climate signals over Central US.” To get their results the researchers took a new approach. In the past, most researchers were part of a large human caused signals specific events and then tried to determine the role of climate change in those events.

By contrast, this study looked at when events started exceeding the range of natural variability. Using climate models, they looked at a world without human produced greenhouse gases and compared it to a world where the composition of the atmosphere corresponds with those found over time in the real world.

Where real world observations rose above the range of natural variability produced in climate models showing temperatures in a world without industrial activity, this indicated the unequivocal influence of human caused global warming.

“Everywhere we look the climate change signal for extreme heat events is becoming stronger. The key now is to determine how much warmer the climate will continue to get, so we can respond to the impacts this will inevitably bring,” said Dr King.

“This is particularly true for Australia, which is one of the warmest climate change signals for a populated country. As a nation, it will need to respond more quickly and clearly what future climate change brings.”

Key Facts and Figures

- The last 16 hottest years on record globally were all influenced by climate change.
- The first signs of global climate change in heat records appeared in the 1930s.
- Of the five regions analysed, Australia was most sensitive to global warming.
- Global warming in annual heat records was detectable in Australia as far back as 1980.
- The last six record-breaking hot years in Australia were likely due to global warming.
- The last three record-breaking hot summers in Australia were like due to global warming.
- The year global warming was first clearly detected in temperature records for each region studied was: Australia – 1980; Central US – 1990; Central Europe – 1989; Central England – 1990; East Asia – 1990; Central US – 2012

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Climate System Science is the only non-government based climate research centre in the Southern Hemisphere. It is funded by the Australian Research Council. The Centre is a partnership with the National Computational Infrastructure (NCI) Facility. The Centre’s focus, Climate System Science, is the quantitative study of the climate system designed to enable modelling of the future of the climate system. It is built on a core of the sciences of the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and land surface.

Gardener’s Tale

Pamela Curr

At 6am it is still cool enough to take stock of which plants are in danger of breaking hot spells to heat and take measures to protect the vulnerable. Watering and transplanting are essential. Some plants start to suffer if we allow the day’s heat may save some.

It is the same with people. Some seem to be more vulnerable than others – either through natural disposition or lived experience – who knows. The resilience of some is amazing in the face of survive cruelty and harshness where for the unfortunates does the spirit dies from the onslaught.

Cutting the drooping acanthus heart shows a fern which I did not think would survive and thrive, but hidden in this corner protected by the floppy acanthus leaves, it has tentatively sent forth the fronds of life. Joy to any gardener who sees a tired unhealthy plant revive.

I think of my friends down the road. If only we had the power to move them from the “factories producing mental illness”. Psychologists explain that their depression, anxiety and mental deterioration are caused by situational factors. Change the situation and their mental health will improve. I think of my rose which was dying behind the fence without enough sun. Moved to a pot and set against a warm brick wall, it is now thriving and rewarding me with delicate blooms.

In 2015 with babies born in Australia received the ultimate reprieve. Instead of being sent back to Nauru, they were relocated to the community in Australia. We saw mothers who had been admitted to mother and baby units suffering deep depression, leave the detention camps and thrive. The babies and children too started sleeping through the night. Bedwetting and nightmares faded. These releases were part of a deal with a Minister who crafted the bribe in order to get an ominous bill of horrors through the Senate. Even this could not sour the joy of seeing these young families released.

This coping psychiatrist reports making assessments and recommendations that the patient’s condition will not improve until they are released to the community to recover and heal. These doctor’s recommendations are not favoured by our political masters. As a result doctors have been subjected to threats and in lieu of the treatment which will cure their sickness but which the politicians will not allow.

Young women in particular have suffered severely in detention. Many came from the most appallingly political, physical and sexual violence with hopes of protection in Australia. Here they are subjected to a loss of freedom and hope which is destroying their minds. They are being subjected to treatments such as TMS (Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation) where a magnetic coil which emits electric stimulation is placed on the head for 40 minutes daily for 30 days. The patients tell me that they sleep for days on end. They return to the detention centre in a zombie like state struggling to remember the details of their lives. This is a treatment usually recommended as a last resort for Australian patients who have supportive and caring home environments, but who have not responded to the usual therapies. For the people in detention it is a therapy of first resort with heavy doses of drugs because removal from the damaging environment is refused.

Gardeners know that moving a plant to a place more suited to its needs, will see it grow and thrive. Again so it is with people; freedom is a more powerful therapy than any drug or experimental treatment. Yesterday a young boy told me that his destiny was to get out of detention. Such strange words from a child but said in such a heartfelt way. Now another year is ending. The longest refugee in detention faces his eighth Christmas behind the gates. Many others now wait years in this limbo hell with no reprieve in sight. There are babies born in detention who are now starting to show no one knows any other life than this institutional existence. Our Prime Minister says that it is an exciting time to be in Australia. For the people in the maw of the refugee regime and the people witnessing their pain, the PM’s words ring hollow.

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
Safe Schools Homophobic misinformation campaign

“It’s one thing for politicians to use electioneering to slander one another but it’s a very different thing to use that same mechanism to hurt vulnerable people in the community,” said the Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt.

“This leaflet is factually incorrect and deeply damaging. A review of research in this area shows the children of same-sex couples are, among other things, more likely to be unemployed, and sexual victims, and to have higher rates of STIs and drug abuse. National Director of Australian Marriage Equality Rodney Croome said:

“This is just the start of the anti-gay misinformation campaign millions of Australians will have to endure for the rest of the year, if parliament is simply allowed to do its job and has a free vote.

“Not only is the information on this flyer wrong, it will put the lives of young gay people and the children of same-sex couples at risk by reinforcing the message that they and their families are broken.

“In contrast to the negative tone of this material, we will continue to run a positive campaign about the importance of marriage equality and the equal dignity of all loving relationships and families.”

Dr Liz Short, who led the APS review of LGBTI parenting research, said:

“This leaflet is factually incorrect and deeply damaging. The APS’s review of research in this area shows the children of same-sex couples are likely to be at least as well adjusted, socially, emotionally, and academically, as other children,” she said.

Australian Psychological Society Psychologists, faith leaders and marriage equality advocates have condemned an anti-gay leaflet, saying the damaging claims, including against the children of same-sex parents, show how damaging and divisive a marriage equality plebiscite campaign will be.

The leaflet, authorised by former Liberal MP and Lyons Forum founder Chris Miles, claims the children of same-sex couples are, among other things, more likely to be unemployed, and sexual victims, and to have higher rates of STIs and drug abuse.

National Director of Australian Marriage Equality Rodney Croome said:

“This is just the start of the anti-gay misinformation campaign millions of Australians will have to endure for the rest of the year, if parliament is simply allowed to do its job and has a free vote.

“Not only is the information on this flyer wrong, it will put the lives of young gay people and the children of same-sex couples at risk by reinforcing the message that they and their families are broken.

“In contrast to the negative tone of this material, we will continue to run a positive campaign about the importance of marriage equality and the equal dignity of all loving relationships and families.”

The APS opposes a plebiscite on marriage equality and prefers a vote in parliament because we fear there will be much more of this damaging misinformation.”

The Very Reverend Dr Peter Catt, who is President of Progressive Christian Voice, said:

“This kind of material is very divisive for faith communities. There are views on both sides of the conversation and neither side should be claiming to speak on behalf of all of us.

“A plebiscite is totally unnecessary and this leaflet is just a sign of what is coming, in particular in terms of the damage that could be done to young people.

“It’s one thing for politicians to use electioneering to slander one another but it’s a very different thing to use that same mechanism to hurt vulnerable people in the community.”

Meanwhile, LGBTI community organisations in Victoria have united and called on the federal government to support the Safe Schools Coalition when a review of the program was submitted to the government last year.

“Coming together in support of the Safe Schools Coalition, the Victorian Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby (VGLRL), the Rainbow Families Council and the Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) said our schools should be a safe place for lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students.

“Going into the last election, the Safe Schools program was supported by all sides of politics. The mental health and wellbeing of LGBTI young people should not be a political football,” said VGLRL Co-Convener Brian Greaves.

“This review will only show what a loss the Safe Schools program is of enormous benefit to LGBTI kids, kids with LGBTI parents and their peers, and should be rolled out across more schools.”

Representing Victoria’s LGBTI-parented families, the Rainbow Families Council said that the Safe Schools program creates safer schools for LGBTI children, children with LGBTI parents and their peers.

“All children and young people have the right to feel safe in their school environment, and schools need to provide learning opportunities for everyone within their community about what it means to be respectful, welcoming and inclusive,” said Rainbow Families Council Co-Convener Amelia Basset.

“Safe Schools is a unique program that contributes to a school’s ability to create a culture of respect and dignity for all, and protect the health and wellbeing of its community.

“There are benefits all around; for example, kids in LGBTI-parented families feel more confident to talk about their home and family life where Safe Schools programs are running.

“Losing the Safe Schools program would not only mean an end to this critical work, it would send a devastating message to many children and young people and families that there is not a safe place for them in our schools – and by extension in our communities.”

As a community health organisation, VAC said the Safe Schools program is crucial to addressing and improving the mental health of LGBTI young people.

“We know that same-sex attracted, sex and gender diverse young people are significantly more likely to have poor mental health outcomes, and that these outcomes are linked to experiences of homophobic and transphobic bullying, often within the school environment,” said VAC CEO Simon Ruth.

“The work of Safe Schools to support these young people and to create safe, inclusive environments saves lives. It’s up to all of us to stand up for the programs for the absolutely vital work they do.”

At the end of last year Optus had 9,235 staff on its books. Now it is planning to cut 10 percent of its workforce, that is 1,000 jobs, to protect its profits after embarking on a strategy of buying up expensive sports media rights. A Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union spokesman slammed the proposed cuts.

“We are talking about almost 10 percent of Optus’s total workforce, serious numbers, over 1,000 staff and thousands more family members,” the spokesman said. The job losses are part of a three-year cost-cutting program. Hundreds of staff will lose their jobs in Optus’s network division, retail staff from its Virgin Mobile subsidiary, and workers in corporate support roles.

The NSW Baird government wants to give Transport Minister Andrew Constance the power to rip up railway lines in the greater Sydney area that are on land needed for “state-significant” developments, bypassing the need for parliamentary approval – and scrutiny. At the moment, a section of the Transport Administration Act prevents a rail owner from disposing of a line except by an act of Parliament. This plan has sparked concerns about the loss of key, publicly owned land from community group Save Our Rail. Save Our Rail had mounted an unsuccessful campaign to stop the closure of a two-kilometre stretch of heavy railway line into the centre of Newcastle. Kim Cross, Save Our Rail vice president, said, “It is about selling off the best tracks – that is what ‘state significance’ means. It is just the stuff with harbour views that is going to go for millions of dollars in our largest urban areas.”

Mehreen Faruqi, Greens transport spokeswoman, pointed out that “the law is there for a good reason: to provide a basic check and balance on the government. Last year, the government gave the go-ahead to rip up the Newcastle rail line without any clear scrutiny. This plan would make it easier for the government to do whatever it wants on our rail corridors”.

Lord Mayor of Sydney Clover Moore is and is an outspoken critic of the proposed WestConnex project – the most expensive toll road project in the world. The total cost of the project could reach $30 billion. “The City of Sydney asked SGS Economics and Planning (a company that prepares business cases for tolling companies) to review the updated business case and its response was damning,” writes Ms Moore in Sydney Morning Herald (29/02/2016).

“The company called it ‘a confused document filled with contradictions’. It does not properly analyse potentially cheaper alternatives such as public transport and demand management, it selectively overestimates benefits and underestimates costs and ignores that the second airport will change freight and commuter traffic patterns”. Ms Moore has called for work on WestConnex to be suspended until a better business case is proved.
Recent electoral successes by right-wing parties in Argentina and Venezuela have raised the question of whether the decade-long ascendency of left-leaning parties in Latin America is over. While the phrase of the “pink tide” is being reversed, it is still in balance; what is clear is that in its attempt to claw back power, the right has switched tactics to mobilise support.

Gustavo Fuchs explains in this following piece written before the left’s recent electoral setbacks, the right is shifting its rhetoric to the more appealing language of “justice”, “human rights” and “anti-corruption” rather than the neo-liberal staple of “slashing public spending”, “reducing taxes” and “privatisation”.

It has been over a decade since a new wave of left-leaning governments won presidential elections throughout Latin America, on the tail-end of post-Cold War triumphalism and the so-called end of ideologies. The right’s biggest challenge is to oust governing left-leaning parties and shift the political arena towards those that oppose the tax to a pr

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos: domestic policies have not turned back from the neo-liberal programme of his predecessor

It is not possible that all of this does not have moved uniformly towards these new strategies. Instead, the fragmentation of right-wing parties and movements has led them to try different coexisting strategies. This is why, for example, former Colombian president and now Senator Alvaro Uribe continues to oppose the Santos administration and is constantly featured in mainstream media calling for confrontation as the solution.

Venezuelan opposition

In Venezuela, the international media’s depiction of the country as a dichotomous “good versus evil” narrative has been stained by political murders and paramilitary links inside the López government. It is no coincidence that Henrique Capriles, the former presidential candidate of the opposition coalition, has backed away from marches in favour of López. The opposition Movement of Democratic Unity (MUD) has made deals with the government while respecting the country’s constitution, and López is not happy about it. Lpez was jailed after he and the opposition leader and former National Assembly member Maria Corina Machado launched a campaign dubbed “The Exit” to oust President Nicolás Maduro. The campaign led to increasingly violent demonstrations. Capriles stayed away from his long-time ally and criticised him for creating unreal expectations.

Right-wing tactics to take power

Three distinguishable tactics have characterised the right’s strategy throughout this period. The first is to target the left, accompanied by a challenge to democratic institutionalism.

With the help of the US government, the Venezuelan opposition coordinated President Hugo Chávez as early as 1999, after less than a year in office, rallying against a new constitution and deeming it illegitimate since before its birth, and despite the constituent assembly that drafted it and its passage in a nationwide popular vote. In the following years the opposition would continue to reject electoral results, despite the elections being consistently recognised internationally as free and fair.

In Bolivia, the far right organised independence referendums in the southwest that led to violent clashes as early as 2008, two years after Evo Morales took office. These regions argued that they did not want the legitimacy of the Bolivian Electoral Tribunal. A second tactic can be identified in the right’s attacks on the legitimacy of the Bolivian Electoral Tribunal.

A third tactic can be identified in the rhetoric that the electorates of both countries have used to stage coups. From the 2002 coup against Venezuela’s Chávez, the right has been裡 a strong state that will intervene in favour of its citizens’ well-being, including the passage of social programs and poverty alleviation programs, very much like the welfare state that predominated in Europe throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The right also questioned the legitimacy of governments and institutions, and instead of promoting individual rights (for example, to vote), the right has shifted its rhetoric to collective issues that appeal to a much larger audience.

Mobilisations and lobbying

Let’s take, for example, the case of Leopoldo López and the Venezuela’s opposition. Despite the politician’s personal history and the violent credentials of those who support him, his case is not presented as being about the political leader himself, but about justice, human rights and what is portrayed as a corrupt judicial system.

In Brazil, calls for the impeachment of President Rousseff are usually accompanied by the notion that corruption has increased during the Worker’s Party’s governments and that the Rousseff-Dilma bloc is a corrupt party that wants to continue to govern.

In Ecuador, the opposition and the main-stream press have thousands of signatures on a petition to the government’s proposed inherited wealth tax that was going to affect all of the population and not only the richest few. These groups quickly shifted their attention from the tax to a proposed government reform that would eliminate elected officials. As a group of former officials, the opposition focused their struggle on supposedly defending democracy. Their battle gained the legitimacy of incorporating those who had marginalised in the past, when they were joined by a sector of the indigenous movement, giving a fresh appearance of something new.

Perhaps the most striking example can be seen in Argentina. After Attorney Alberto Nisman died, the opposition leader and Buenos Aires Mayor Mauricio Macri ran a metro stop after the AMIA Jewish Centre which was bombed in 1994. He decorated the station with a mural and called for truth and justice. Nisman had been the chief investigator of the bombing of the Jewish centre. When he was found dead in his home in January, the right-wing attempt to place the blame on Peronist Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, saying that he had been bumped off because he had found incriminating evidence against powerful people in her government.

However, Macri’s call for “truth and justice” was selective. That same slogan had been a demand of Argentine human rights groups since the last right-wing military dictatorship, which forcefully disappeared thousands of Argentinians in the 1970s and 1980s. When a law was put forward for approval in Congress to investigate businesses linked to the dictatorship, Macri’s party voted against it without giving any explanation.

In the case of Uruguay, the right is also part of this new strategy. As the Chilean political scientist Cristóbal Rovira points out, these regions argued that the Rovira points out, these groups are increasingly involved in shaping public policy nationally and internationally.

In countries such as Argentina and El Salvador, right-wing forces from within the judicial system have also taken part in the efforts to block progressive governments.

“After they lost the elections, they called for a coup d’état.” But the Salvadoran army is now much more institutionalised,” explained Salvadoran lawmaker Nidia Diaz in an interview with teleSUR, referring to the army’s place as a legitimate institution in El Salvador’s democracy. “It is not the same armed forces that used to stage coups.”

“When this strategy failed, they began looking for a way to destabilise. And they found a powerful ally in the Constitutional Court, which now blocks everything related to government funding to asphyxiate the government,” she added.

A similar case occurred when the Argentine Congress and Senate approved a landmark law media in 2009. Due to a ruling by a local court in Mendoza, the law could not be fully implemented until 2012.

All of these efforts have counted on consistent backing from highly concentrated media outlets that hold historical prestige in each country.

Colombia’s Juan Manuel Santos

Maybe the best example of the future of Latin America’s right is Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. The former defense minister swiftly launched a historic peace process to end an armed conflict with the FARC guerrilla group. Peace talks were made possible with the cooperation of nations such as Cuba and Venezuela, giving him international recognition and popularity.

However, internally, Santos has embraced Tony Blair’s “Third Way”, which promotes a benign view of neo-liberal capitalism under the attractive ideal of a new political option that is neither left nor right. Santos has maintained diplomacy as a guiding principle for his relations with Colombian and Venezuelan governments.

But within the country little has changed for human rights activists, union leaders and left-wing politicians, who are still victims of selective murder.

Santos’ domestic policies have not turned back from the neo-liberal programme of his predecessor. Despite this, the fragmentation of right-wing parties and movements has led them to try different coexisting strategies.

This is why, for example, former Colombian president and now Senator Alvaro Uribe continues to oppose the Santos administration and is constantly featured in mainstream media calling for confrontation as the solution.

“What we have seen from former president Uribe is an attitude of confrontation, of permanent attack against peace in Colombia,” Colombian Senator Ivan Cepeda told teleSUR.

Despite Uribe’s outrageous allegations, he is not considered an isolated player in Colombian politics. In fact, President Santos has reached out to Uribe, seeking to neutralise the political strength of his former ally.

Guardian

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Magazine

6
IWD in Palestine under Israeli occupation

Steven Katsineris

A 50-year-old Palestinian woman was killed by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) on the morning of the March 8, in East Jerusalem, after a “stabbing attempt” against an Israeli policeman. The Israeli police shot dead Fadwa Abu Tair from Sur Baher town, East Jerusalem, near Al-Haddad Gate of Jerusalem’s old city.

An Israeli army spokeswoman claimed that the police shot Fadwa for her alleged attempt to stab an Israeli policeman. Large numbers of Israeli police rushed to the spot and closed the gates of the old city of Jerusalem following the shooting.

With her death, the number of female Palestinians killed since the outbreak of last year’s October uprising rises to 17. Shortly after the killing of Fadwa, the Israeli military kidnapped a girl from Qalqilya checkpoint, claiming she had a knife.

The same day, the Israeli military arrest ed Manal Tamimi, a mother of six and prominent nonviolence resistance activist against the Israeli occupation and illegal settlements from her home in Al-Nabi Saleh village. It is not known what charges the Israeli military will present against her.

She is also active in the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee, which presents community-based resistance rooted in a belief in the power of non-violent struggle, taking various forms, such as strikes, protests, and legal campaigns, as well as supporting the call to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

Manal could be held without charge under the repressive Israeli military court system practices where people are held without any charges or convictions as administrative detainees. Many Palestinian writers, journalists, lawyers, bloggers, artists, students, politicians and other activists are being held as administrative detainees by Israel.

For the past six years, the village of Al-Nabi Saleh held a peaceful demonstration every week against the Israeli wall and illegal settlements.

Coordinator of the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee (PSCC), Munther Amira, strongly denounced the kidnap, calling it a new Israeli crime against women, especially taking place on International Women’s Day.

Amira said that this act displays the Israeli brutality against all values of freedom and democracy and against all women, and Palestinian women in particular.

Manal’s husband, Bilal Tamimi said Manal was unable to participate in the demonstrations during the past few weeks, because she had a bad allergy from the massive amount of teargas that is fired during the protests. She was shot and injured in her legs twice, in 2013 and 2015.

Currently, there are approximately 60 Palestinian women held in Israeli jails. 118 Palestinian women have been detained since October 2015 and the rise of the Palestinian popular uprising. Ten Palestinian girls under 18 are imprisoned, and three of the Palestinian women imprisoned are held under administrative detention without charge or trial. The imprisonment of Palestinian women has risen dramatically alongside the mass incarceration of Palestinian men.

At least 188 Palestinians have been killed since the latest Palestinian uprising against the brutal Israeli occupation began in early October. Some Palestinians have been killed in protests and clashes with Israeli military, or in resistance attacks against Israeli soldiers, police or settlers, while others have been summarily executed by Israeli forces. And up till the end of February 2016 at least 15,645 Palestinians have been injured by the Israeli forces since the most recent revolt against the oppressive Israeli occupation began. As well, 30 Israeli soldiers, police and armed settlers have been killed. Also an American and Eritrean have died.

In a joint report, three Palestinian institutions: the Palestinian Prisoners Society, Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association and the Prisoners’ Affairs Committee – said that the Israeli occupation authorities arrested 616 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza in February 2016. This number includes 140 children and 18 women and girls.

The number of arrests since the beginning of the popular uprising in October 2015 has exceeded 4,120 people.

Freed prisoner Fatima al-Zak stated that the world should realise that while it celebrates International Women’s Day, many Palestinian women are “suffering behind Israeli prison bars from racist, repressive policies”.

“Where is the world when it comes to the Palestinian women who suffer horrors inside the Israeli jails, are treated inhumanely and denied access to the most basic rights,” al-Zak said, adding that the world has seemingly forgotten about the Palestinian women.

Al-Zak called on international human rights organisations to exert pressure on Israel to release Palestinian women and girls from Israeli prisons.

Sources: Samidoun, U-Free Network, Addameer, Palestine Chronicle, Palestine Red Crescent, Prisoners Affairs Committee and Popular Struggle Coordination Committee.
In April 2015, Quebec’s Protecteur de la Citoyenneté, or Ombudsperson, took a tour of detention centres in northern Quebec. Among other things, what Raymond Saint-Germain found was seven Inuit women locked up in a tiny cell originally intended for one or two people. None of the women had slept all night; there was not enough room for them to lie on the floor even if they had wanted to. In some detention centres, she found suicidal detainees held right alongside those who were being held for intoxication.

Saint-Germain’s special report, released in February this year, has put the media spotlight on a bitter struggle within Canadian society. Billions of dollars flow out of Quebec’s north through natural resource exports like oil and gas, a massive scheme for further exploitation of the region involving new railways, ports and mines, a plan the federal government called Plan Nord (Plan North). And yet social conditions faced by Indigenous communities are comparable to the Third World.

As Indigenous activists and allies across the country celebrate the promised federal inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls by the newly-elected Liberal government of Justin Trudeau, the reality will likely continue for at least a few years, weaving together roads to nowhere, the story of genocide and the ongoing struggle to come forward. The Quebec government has known about this probably for more than a century. Referring to the report, she concludes: “Two years later, my report has not yet been published.”

The justice system currently shuttles Inuit from Nunavut detention centres down to Montreal for court — a court which is 4,500 miles away — between New York and Miami. It then ships them back to the community, or to jail. As no roads enter the region, travel is by plane via Iqaluit on Baffin Island suggested they were also likely non-compliant with the Charter’s right to dignity. Cells are dirty and overcrowded with limited access to water, clean laundry, janitorial services, or even fresh air.

Seven to 25 detainees are often packed into small cells with dirty floors, long, narrow windows that let in the light but little else, and each overflowing with smells. The stench can apparently be smelled when you walk in, with urine and excrement staining the walls.

Saint-Germain said it reminded her of the worst she had visited in Africa. The Quebec government has known about this probably for more than a century. Referring to the report, she concludes: “Two years later, my report has not yet been published.”

The overwhelming majority of people in the criminal justice system are First Nations, and to top it off, Indigenous people in jail spend more time in segregation andolation than prisoners of other backgrounds.

An extension of this prison crisis is the incarceration rate of Indigenous women, in particular. Overall, while Indigenous people represent less than 4 percent of the Canadian population, 36 percent of female inmates are Indigenous — up 109 percent in recent years.

These numbers are just part of the context of the gendered colonial legacy of oppression against Indigenous peoples which recent events in the Quebec city of Val-D’Or have again exposed. Last fall, a group of Indigenous women told the provincial police officers in Val-D’Or routinely picked up women who appeared to be intoxicated, drove them out of town, and left them to walk home in the cold. Some allege they were physically and sexually assaulted.

Quebec First Nations leaders have called for change for the women who have come forward, and support demonstrations were held in Val-D’Or as well as Montreal. Indigenous activists have condemned the lack of support received by Indigenous people in the region, which is in the north-east of Quebec (and many kilometres to the south of Nunavut).

An open letter to the Premier signed by the Quebec Native Women’s Federation, as well as 12 other groups including the Quebec labour union federation, CSN, called the investigation now taking place into the allegations at Val-D’Or by the Montreal Police “fundamentally flawed.” Citing strong scepticism towards “police investigating police,” the group is calling for an independent investigation.

The Quebec Federation of Women (FFQ) has also expressed support for the women’s demands, calling them “whistleblowers” for a more systemic problem. Their statement echoed the message at the annual march for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and men alike. People’s World

Black Flint Rising
April Smith

FLINT, Michigan: “My fear is in two years, piper in the storm, but all the injustices that brought this about will remain,” declared Donn Neeley, Flint city’s emergency manager, at a multi-racial civil rights organisation based in St Louis. Flints claim was in response to the question “What is the fight beyond fixing pipes to make Flint fit for life?” posed by Advancement Project moderator Chelsea Fuller.

“We don’t have resources, jobs or money; our lives are disvalued,” said panelist Tim Abdul-Mahi. Members of the MADE (Money, Attitude, Direction, Education) Institute, adding that the city’s poverty rate is 45 percent. Demp’s executive director of UPAVS (Urban Centre for Post-Sec- ondary Access), said Flint is a typi- cal urban depressed, decayed area.” She said she would be the hardest at those living in predominantly African American north Flint.

It is not just in a few major gro- cery chains, no neighbourhood schools, vacant homes, and toxic brownfields, it is everywhere factories once stood. She noted the infant mortality rate is four times that of white neighbourhoods.

These conditions are created by and amplified by racism, Demp’s said. She noted that black and brown boys and girls are suspended from school three to four times more frequently than whites and punished more “intensely” for the same offence.

High school student Lalani Clay said it was “scary” just learning that lead had been running through the pipes for two years. “We can’t use the fountains at school,” she said.

Outside her school conditions aren’t any better: “The streets are all potholes,” she said. “There’s no streets, no schools, no jobs, why am I still here? Politicians making these decisions act as if we don’t live here at all.” She’s proud to be a “Flint- stone,” as Flint residents call them- selves, and would like to continue to live here, but worries if it’s worth it. “Like a scary movie, when does it end?” she asked.

Jia Ireland, a student at the Uni- versity of Michigan, Flint, talked of transportation issues. “Even in the land of GM (General Motors), people couldn’t pick up water because they didn’t have cars,” Ireland said.

Mott Community College stu- dent Ellen Porter worried about the “school to prison pipeline.” “It starts around the third grade. It needs to be stopped,” she said.

Asked about the importance of participating in elections Clay said, “Your voice matters, your vote mat- ters. Let your voice be heard and vote.”

Demp’s had many ideas for moving Flint ahead, starting with education investment all the way through college, not just Head Start, along with investing in infrastruc- ture. “We need environmental jus- tice,” she said. “Flint has some of the largest ‘brownfields’ in the country. Buick and GM shut down and left a mess.” She also called for getting power back from the city’s un-elected emergency manager, who was appointed by Republican Governor Rick Snyder.

Democrat Representative Shel- don Neeley noted the state’s emer- gency manager law spoke to what many see as a huge contributing factor to Flint’s current crisis, the rule by Governor Snyder’s appoint- ed emergency manager, replacing elected officials of the city. Calling it an anti-American law, he contin- ued. “We send soldiers abroad and we don’t have democracy here. We need to push back. We need to ask Snyder and the whole team to go.”

Bakari Sellers, former South Carolina state representative, rep- resenting presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, and Nina Turner, former Ohio state representa- tive, representing Bernie Sanders, addressed the crowd and vowed their respective candidate’s sup- port for solving the city’s problems. Speaking of the two Democ- ratic candidates Sellers noted the positive, that we now have “two 70-year-old white people calling out the criminal justice system.” People’s World
Turkey would have to be designated a country of origin. Under international refugee law, travel to another country for the purpose of return, even with the consent of asylum seekers, constitutes a mass removal of individuals from Turkey itself. This effectively removes any hope for asylum seekers in EU countries of returning to Greece in return of a resettlement deal as “messy but necessary”. The European Council, has expressed confidence in this new “collective” response to the refugee crisis, claiming that “irregular flows of migrants along western Balkan route have come to an end.”

Some of the press analysis on this sees the European-Turkish deal as “messy but necessary”. The Economist, for example, observes that the EU is “extremely keen” on the deal, which Ankara has been pursuing with some vigour. The largest matter, one that never goes away, is that of Turkish accession to the EU. Most striking of all is the refusal on the part of the EU to raise the issue of Ankara’s latest, and very aggressive, assault on press freedoms. President Recep Erdogan has every reason to be pleased, charging dissent and scruberous behaviour “with the aim of undermining the country’s peaceful development.”

Despite any reservations on the part of the Greek prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, his government still signed a readmission agreement for migrants crossing the Aegean to be returned. This further builds in a regime that promises to be more cruel that that of Europe’s “broom of the Maghreb”. Despite some reservations on the part of the Greek prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, his government still signed a readmission agreement for migrants crossing the Aegean to be returned. This further builds in a regime that promises to be more cruel that that of Europe’s “broom of the Maghreb”.

The strong message from Davutoglu in discussions with Tsipras indicated the determination to shut out third countries and transport points for those using the route through Turkey and effectively the Balkans, to get to EU countries. The agreements, he argued, sent “a clear message to those coming from third countries, rather than countries at war … that there is neither the political will [to allow their passage] nor the ability to cross to Europe.” Supposedly, that aspect of the deal will cover those migrants who are not deemed to fall within the international regime of protection. This re-admission into Turkey is problematic on several levels, assuming an orderly and expedient processing of individual claims. “I am deeply worried,” expressed a concerned UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, “about any arrangement that would involve the blanket return of anyone from one country to another without spelling out the refugee safeguards under international law.”

Such fairness is evidently missing to those who are bussed before the closed borders. Refugees chant “Germany will not return!”, “Our country is the Netherlands”, “We are not criminals!”. But she is wrong to assume that Europe is not acting collectively on this. A disunited position is rapidly forming into a handied, brutal stance of vicious unity.

Killing Asylum

Dr Binoy Kampork

Bribing officials. Relaying and returning migrants to poor countries without adequate scrutiny or screening. Closing borders. Setting up camps with appalling conditions. Barbed wire and armed guards. Europe now faces the most profound test on the refugee crisis so far: to persist in processing arrivals within its borders, or return them with indifference into unsafe territories. This is the Australian model of border control writ large. It enlists and politicises defence forces and border protection behind a veil of military grade secrecy. It shifts the burden of processing asylum seekers and refugees from wealthier states to poorer ones. It effectively suspends the application of the Refugee Convention and does a good bit of demonising of refugees along the way.

In October last year, before an audience attending the Margaret Thatcher gala dinner, the sniping and aggressive former Australian prime minister Tony Abbott warned of the pursuit of a rather venal plan of closures and expulsions, not of boats and bartering over human matter in safe territories. But, now it is being turned into Europe’s barrier against the huddled masses of the Middle East.

This was geographic reality – Turkey being the bridging country between two landmasses. But, argued The Economist, order had to return, with borders opened, to a certain extent; “it is more of a political travesty, an outcome of a failed Balkan closure as an “unsustainable” travesty, an outcome of a failed migration system”. Human flesh has become a measure of grand political bargaining.

The consequence of this haggling has been a trafficking and bartering over human matter in favour of new political realities. Turkey wishes to change. There is the issue of visa liberalisation, which Ankara has been pursuing with some vigour. The largest matter, one that never goes away, is that of Turkish accession to the EU. Most striking of all is the refusal on the part of the EU to raise the issue of Ankara’s latest, and very aggressive, assault on press freedoms. President Recep Erdogan has every reason to be pleased, charging dissent and scruberous behaviour “with the aim of undermining the country’s peaceful development.”

The European-Turkish deal as “messy but necessary”. The European Council, has expressed confidence in this new “collective” response to the refugee crisis, claiming that “irregular flows of migrants along western Balkans route have come to an end.” Something to say? Write to the Editor!

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Region Briefs

Japanese high school students are opposed to the Education Ministry’s restriction of forbidding students to join political activities without approval from their schools. A group of high school student representatives with Japanese Communist Party parliament member Ohira Yoshinobu recently went to the ministry and urged it to withdraw the restriction. The restriction planned to take down opposition of the Abe government by blocking school youth becoming politically active. One student said that teachers stopped her when she brought up a political issue in a classroom because of the restriction, and she wondered that students would become apologetic, not willing to join demonstrations and other political activities.

A number of Japanese activists went on a rally recently in Tokyo, protesting against the Abe government’s signing of the Japan-India nuclear energy agreement. The agreement would allow Japan to export nuclear power generation technologies to India, while India was not a member of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), meaning the country could skip any form of inspection from the international community. India was under sanctions after testing its nuclear weapons in 1998, however, the US and its allies have supported since 2008, lifting the sanctions for the purpose of containing China and Pakistan’s growth.

Hundreds of Pakistani female workers went on a rally organised by the Home-based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) and the National Trade Union Federation on International Women’s Day, commemorating working women’s struggle and demanding equal rights and better working conditions, especially for the home-based Pakistani female workers. The HBWWF general secretary said that “society would not progress until the rights of women were accepted and they are considered as equal citizens”. There are 16 million home-based female workers in Pakistan, contributing 40 percent of the country’s national economy, yet they were not legally recognized as skilled workers and their minimum wage is not protected.

The 12th Communist Party of Vietnam’s Central Committee’s second meeting opened in Hanoi on March 10, focusing on the working agenda of the socio-economic development plan for 2016-2020 and the nomination of top government positions such as prime minister and chair of the National Assembly. The Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong stressed that the priority of the working agenda should focus on key tasks and urgent issues, strengthening the Party, improving the socialist political system, fighting against bureaucracy, corruption and wastefulness, restructuring state-run enterprises, improving human resources, safeguarding national independence and more.
the living conditions of the Tsarist aristocracy before the Revolution. The contrast between much greater awareness of the crushing poverty of the poor émigrés. I was watching Antiques Roadshow last week, and two members of the public were exactly like the couple who happened to be looking at the jewels in the window of a garment store, and also full of sympathy for the plight of their grandparents’ ingenuity in sewing administrative detention without trial. He had been on hunger strike for drinking only water, since November 24.

Eassa Qaraqe, the head of the Detainees’ Affairs Commission of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation hailed the deal, saying “it is considered a victory for Mohammed al-Qeq and the Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails in the face of the unlawful Israeli administrative detention.” Qaraqe thanked the “Palestinian people and all popular and legal institutions and organisations and all international organisations and the Palestinians living in Israel for the important roles in supporting al-Qeq’s rights and demands throughout his strike and especially Knesset (Israeli Parliament) member Osama Sa’id.”

Over the years, thousands of Palestinians have been held in administrative detention by Israel. At this time over 250 Palestinian political prisoners are being held as administrative detainees in Israeli jails.

Administrative detention allows Israeli authorities to detain prisoners without charging them or allowing them to stand trial based on secret information, which cannot be accessed by either the detainees or their lawyers, for periods of six months that can be renewed on unlimited occasions. These administrative detention practices used by Israel’s military court system are a form of intimidation against these prisoners’ human rights. International law permits detention without trial under extremely limited and exceptional circumstances, but Israel uses the measure on a large scale, denying Palestinian detainees their due process. The world community should forcefully campaign to demand that Israel stop this blatant abuse of legal and human rights.

Steven Katsinis

Gay on Nauru: 14 years jail

Two gay men fleeing persecution in Iran have been sent to detention in Nauru, where they have been violently attacked for being together. Both were seeking asylum in Australia, but the Australian government’s punitive refugee policies have left them languishing on a tiny island where being gay is a crime. Afraid to leave their house for fear of further attacks, the couple have become virtual prisoners. Now 17,000 people from around the world are calling on Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to grant them asylum in Australia and halt the country’s cruel detention system.

“I was told in Australia you could be sent to Nauru if you were openly gay and it would be open. I was also told Nima*, one of the men who was held in Ramon where he asked the public execution for being gay. He arrived in Australia in August 2013 to seek asylum. He told Australian authorities he is gay, but despite being aware of the risks, Australian authorities sent him to a detention centre on Nauru.

Once in Nauru, Nima met Ashkan* who had also fled Iran, and the two began a relationship and started living together. “People from Immigration and Connect Services all tell us that we mustn’t hold hands or be affectionate in public,” said Nima.

Both Ashkan and Nima’s asylum claims were finally processed on Nauru and they were found to be refugees and released to live in Nauru – an island which is only 21 square kilometres. However, after a number of physical attacks the couple are afraid to leave their unit, and only go out once a week to buy groceries with an escort.

“When we were still going outside, we got beaten up and were attacked. Spat at, verbally abused, had stones thrown at us and hit with sticks. It’s been a horrible experience,” said Nima.

Having repeatedly made requests to the Australian government to move the men, the Human Rights Law Centre has called on the international Lesbian Gay Bi and Trans (LGBT) rights group All Out to launch a petition appealing to Australia’s Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, to let the refugee couple settle in Australia.

Under Nauruan law Ashkan and Nima risk being punished with 14 years of hard labour if they are found to have “carnal knowledge” of another man which the law states is “against the order of nature.”

This situation and similar ones on Manus are just one of so many levels. The Australian Government knowingly and deliberately allows gay men to be warehoused on tiny islands where they face assaults, prejudice and extremely harsh criminal penalties.

No one should have to suffer just for being in love. Nima and Ashkan’s story is another example of how cruel and inhumane Australia’s detention system is to those fleeing persecution. Prime Minister Turnbull has a responsibility to bring them to Australia where they’ll be safe, and to reform his government’s refugee policy to bring it into line with international standards.

This couple just want a home where they can be safe together and where they don’t have to fear for their lives. We don’t deserve to be living in limbo in a country where their love for one another and their right to live as they choose, and their safety is threatened.

*Not their real names

Human Rights Law Centre

Culture Life

The business of forgetting

Muammar Gaddafi turned Libya from an Italian colony into the most progressive and prosperous country in Africa, a tower of strength.

I was watching Antiques Roadshow last week, and two members of the public were exactly like the couple who happened to be looking at the jewels in the window of a garment store, and also full of sympathy for the plight of the poor émigrés.

No one commented that the jewels smuggled out were the property of the Russian people or that at the time of the Revolution, the bulk of the Russian population lived in extreme poverty. Smuggling jewels out of the country was actually stealing from the Russian people. Nor did anyone point out that émigrés who fled the new Soviet state with quantities of jewels concealed in their baggage or about whose person must have obtained those jewels by exploiting the labour of poverty-stricken serfs, poor peasants or workers in mines and factories!

One could, one would be naive to expect Antiques Roadshow to sympathise with the poor anywhere. By definition, the program’s focus is on how valuable antiques can be, and the luxurious houses they originally came from. However, only a few years ago there was a much greater awareness of the crushing poverty that affected the bulk of the Russian people before the Revolution. The contrast between the living conditions of the Tsarist aristocracy and the workers and peasantry whose labour created their wealth was extreme and most of the world knew it.

With the help of programs like Antiques Roadshow, however, history is being re-written. People’s understanding of modern historical events is being reshaped in the interests of the well to do. The Russian workers and peasants are now the oppressors of the suffering aristocracy! But it is not only Russia that is getting this new look. Just observe the way the Second World War, the war against fascism, is present-ed on television. If modern TV coverage is to be believed, all the victims of fascist terror were Jewish, all the fighting against Hitler was car-ed out by Britain and the USA, the Resistance in Europe was run by London and the under-ground groups who fought the Nazis were made up of middle class democrats. It is all nonsense, but what else are people to believe if that is the only information they are given? Which is the whole idea, of course.

Even more seriously swept under the carpet is the overwhelming popularity of Socialism among working people in the past. So popular was Socialism that the ruling class in Europe was run by London and the under-ground groups who fought the Nazis were made up of middle class democrats. It is all nonsense, but what else are people to believe if that is the only information they are given? Which is the whole idea, of course.

The many benefits that were won for working people by the trade unions, including everything from recognised meal breaks to paid holidays, are now thought of by many work-ers as something that simply happened, prob-ably by government decision. That these things were gained only after bitter struggle by the organised working class has also been buried. What the ruling class wants people to forget is their own arsenal, subtly remoulding social democ-
Film Review by Chauncy K Robinson

Race + Prejudice + Zombies

What does it mean to be a hero? What can we learn from our heroes? How shall we treat them? Two current films, Race and Risen, provide us with some answers, but also raise further questions. The subject of heroes has become central to American cinema. A parade of comic book superheroes, war heroes, detectives, doctors, and do-gooders marches through theaters setting standards for exemplary behavior. Race and Risen add to this perspective, two contrasting pictures of heroism.

Race is the well-told tale of Jesse Owens’ triumph at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, winning four gold medals and smashing the Nazis’ plans to use the games as a showcase of their racial superiority. Director Stephen Hopkins and 50 for women. (Austen herself died at 41.)

Lilly James, as the rebellious heroine, and Sam Riley, as her broad-minded zombi-fighting suitor Mr Darcy, have plenty of chemistry to keep viewers interested in the romantic subplot. Their classic scene of Elizabeth rebuffing Mr Darcy’s insulting marriage proposal is tweaked in the film to include a high-energy hand-to-hand combat between the two would-be lovers, that lends action to their fiery words. It’s almost as if Austen, in writing that now famous dialogue, knew that one day it would be infused with ninja combat and flying bodies. OK, that may be a bit of a stretch, but the fight sequence fits perfectly with the dialogue, as do many other scenes that fill out the well known classic with real battle.

You’ve got a strong heroine, a dashing love interest, an interesting subplot, good battle scenes, and the high stakes of world doom: All the makings of a solid zombie film with Austen’s social commentary mixed in for good measure. You don’t need to be familiar with the original novel, or the parody novel by Seth Grahame-Smith, to enjoy this P+P+Z, which stands alone as a fast-paced zombie film that happens to be set in the early 19th century. If you want an entertaining night at the movies with a bit more character development than merely the expendable bodies of the traditional zombie genre, then this film comes highly recommended.

People’s World

Film reviews by Michael Berkowitz

Race and Risen

Do you enjoy classic novels about manners, morality, education, and marriage in 19th century Britain? And do you also enjoy violent horror pictures about the zombie apocalypse? Then there’s a movie out that was made just for you. In fact, it could be suited for anyone who enjoys well-developed characters, strong female leads, and an overall fun time at the movies – that includes flesh-eating undead humanoids.

From the creators who brought you Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter comes the movie adaptation of one of the bestselling novels of 2009. Pride + Prejudice + Zombies is a horror film that meshes together the classic Jane Austen novel with a modern-day zombie twist. All the beloved, well known characters of the original source are there, but now in a world where the undead roam the earth as an ever growing threat. Yet this doesn’t stop us from continuing to push for a woman to be well behaved and well married.

Repressive patriarchal norms don’t take a day off, not even in the zombie apocalypse. The movie follows the journey of the main character, Elizabeth Bennett, as she negotiates a world where she’d much rather be slaying reanimated corpses than looking for a husband.

Burr Steers (Igby Goes Down, Charlie St Cloud) is the screenwriter-director for this project. He shows more than a usual man’s understanding of how to rise over our own misery. He never undermines the human triumph makes for a better picture. It is no miracle that the story of the human hero who shows us how to rise over our own misery of the human hero who shows us how to rise over our own misery, to ugly words. It’s almost as if Austen, in writing that now famous dialogue, knew that one day it would be infused with ninja combat and flying bodies. OK, that may be a bit of a stretch, but the fight sequence fits perfectly with the dialogue, as do many other scenes that fill out the well known classic with real battle.

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People’s World

The Guardian

March 16, 2016

Film Review by Chauncy K Robinson

Race + Prejudice + Zombies

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People’s World
Standing up for safety is not a “racket”

Dave Noonan

Steven Wyatt was a husband, a father, a brother, and a friend. Just 15 months prior to his death, in late 2014, another worker, Jorge Castillo-Riffo was also killed on that site in similar circumstances. Both tragedies involved a fatal crush injury when the men were in the scissor lift.

Both accidents were utterly preventable.

Castillo-Riffo’s widow, Pam Gunner-Hall has spent the last 14 months calling for a coroner’s inquest into his death so that – in her words – “this could be prevented.” In this, she has been joined by the CFMEU. South Australian secretary Aaron Cartledge has once again called for an inquest into this latest tragedy.

At the time of Castillo-Riffo’s death, SafeWork South Australia laid charges against the contractors who were building the Royal Adelaide Hospital, for failing to comply with health and safety regulations to provide a safe working environment.

It’s interesting to note, then, that this site which has been plagued by safety has been one of intense scrutiny by the Fair Work Building Commission (FWBC). In fact, taxpayers might be interested to know that an estimated $750 million has been expended by the FWBC persecuting and prosecuting workers on the health and safety site in Adelaide. In 2014, 23 workers were charged with fines of over $10,000 each for walking off the job over safety 12 months before. At the time, the water supply had been turned off, the toilets weren’t working, there was no drinking water and the emergency showers weren’t functioning for safety 12 months before. At the time, each for walking off the job over a precinct site in Adelaide.

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This year alone, there have been eight fatalities and while eight families are mourning the passing of a loved one, the Turnbull government has been threatening the country with a double dissolution election if the Senate does not pass the ABC Bill.

The government has been running the line for some time that the ABC is needed to be a tough cop on the beat to address crime and corruption in the industry, but the truth is that the ABC is only an industrial regulator. It won’t and can’t look at criminal matters, but what it can and most certainly will do is curb the rights of workers and make it even harder for them to stand up for their health and safety.

If anyone is in doubt about this, they simply need to recall the ABC’s prosecution of rigger Ark Tribe. In 2008, Tribe was facing six months jail for failing to front an ABCQ interrogation where he would have been required to report on who had spoken up at a site meeting about a safety matter.

At the end of 2015, two young men died on a construction site in Perth, and while the whole of Western Australia went into mourning, many of us in the CFMEU were angry.

We were angry that our union was prevented a total of 16 times from entering that site. One wonders what it was that the company didn’t want us to see.

Perhaps it was dodgy work practices – perhaps commonplace but nevertheless lethal safety breaches. Perhaps we would have found a lack of appropriate training and induction for people new to the construction industry.

These are the issues that cause arguments with employers who are always in a rush to get things done, always in a rush to cut a corner here or there in order to make a bigger profit. These are the things that a lot of employers don’t want to concern themselves with and regard us as pests for interfering in their work, calling on the Fair Work Building Commission to remove us from sites.

Everyone talks safety and everybody’s sorry when people are killed on the job. While I accept that their sorrow is genuine, the fatalities are nevertheless lethal safety breaches.

Criminals are hounded by the FWBC and smeared by the federal government authorities should abandon their cavalier and often hostile attitude to the union and sit down and cooperate with us to improve safety standards.

Construction sites are dangerous places. Workers need proper training and induction. Safety standards exist for a reason and must be implemented. To none, of these things are negotiable. It’s not something to address when you can get around to it, or when you have the time.

Unfortunately, it seems the CFMEU is the only party reminding employers it’s their legal obligations to address safety issues. It’s not an optional thing. And for that, we get labelled troublemakers and law-breakers, are hounded by the FWBC and smeared by the federal government in order to justify passing a set of laws that will make it even worse for workers and unions in the industry.

Recently, someone called talkback radio and in line with the rhetoric coming out of Canberra, labelled the CFMEU a “protection racket.”

It’s hard to know what they mean by that, what we’re protecting. But if fighting every day to protect the lives of people whose friends and families expect them home at the end of each day is considered a racket, then throw me in jail.

People’s lives matter. They matter more than making an even bigger profit margin for some developer.

Just ask the families of those who were killed. That’s whose side we’re on. That’s who we’re protecting. And all those clamouring for the return of the ABC want to stand in our way.

Dave Noonan is National Secretary of the CFMEU. Written in conjunction with Brad Parker, CFMEU Construction Assistant National Secretary.