



NBN asbestos bungle

THE CURSE OF PRIVATISATION

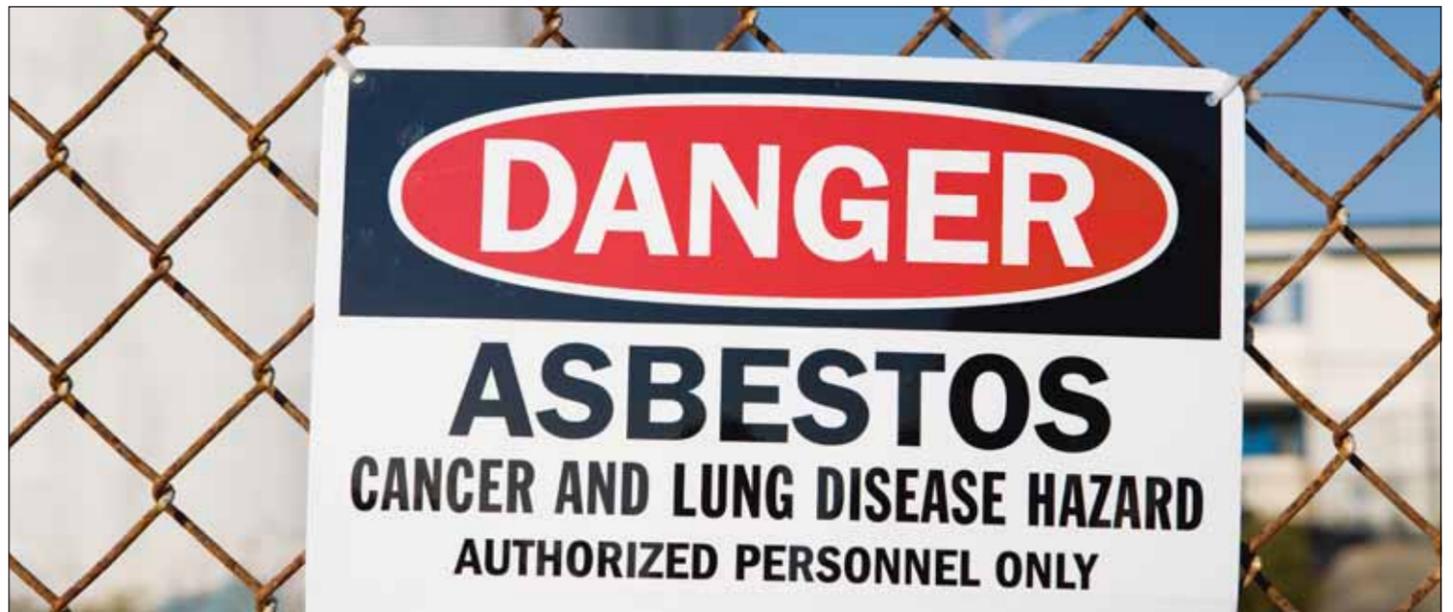
Bob Briton

Labor needed the NBN asbestos bungle like a hole in the head. Bags of asbestos left near a primary school in Victoria, a family home in NSW evacuated after botched work in another telecommunications pit, a contractor in Tasmania is issued "improvement notices" over its failures by federal health and safety agency, Comcare. Political opponents were quick to pounce and label this another "pink batts" debacle but, again, none of the major players were prepared to draw the necessary conclusion – that privatisation has been a curse and the people of Australia are continuing to pay a high price.

The \$37.4 billion National Broadband Network was already in the news. The fibre optic cable roll-out is way behind schedule and will fall short of its June 30 target by 44 percent. Work has stopped in the wake of the asbestos scare. Tensions over the leadership of NBN Co have been dragged through the business pages of the major dailies. But it is the presence of asbestos in five to eight million of Telstra's communications pits that has shaken the project to the core.

Privatised telco Telstra had been given \$11 billion in taxpayers' money to repair or replace the asbestos in the pits in preparation for the NBN. The government insists the relevant undertakings were not met. Sub-contractors were unleashed on the project with inadequate training and the usual "turn a quick buck" attitude to even the most hazardous work. Comcare reports of asbestos incidents at the pits have gone through the roof since January. An emergency meeting of Telstra, NBN Co, the federal workplace regulator and the national Office of Asbestos Safety was called last week and sweeping changes were promised.

Telstra will deploy a 200-strong taskforce to oversee asbestos remediation work. Its mandatory training and guidelines will be reviewed and updated. Any work deemed unsatisfactory will be taken over by Telstra itself. The commitments are to be welcomed but



a lot of workers and large numbers of people in the community have already been exposed to unnecessary risk.

Telstra will not create a fund for the likely victims of the exposure along the lines of the one established by James Hardie. The Asbestos Diseases Foundation had called for \$500 million to be set aside for victims but has accepted government-backed assurances from the telco that it will not "walk away" from victims. Claims will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Unions' role vital

The Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU) also backed the demand for a fund. It has been critical of NBN Co for failing to ensure safe work for its members. It has called for all pit and pipe work on the NBN to stop in light of the problems. CEPU WA branch president John O'Donnell wants better pay and conditions for workers

on the project and for the Commonwealth to provide \$100 million for the upskilling of Telstra's NBN workforce. The union raised concerns that contractors in Tasmania were set to work after completing only online training courses.

The role of unions in Australia's ongoing asbestos problems drew unusual praise last week. Opposition workplace relations spokesman, Eric Abetz, told the Senate:

"I commend the Australian trade union movement, which has taken a very proactive role in relation to dealing with the issues of the hazards of asbestos, and it would be fair to say that without their active campaigning things might not have progressed as far as they currently have."

That is undoubtedly true but it begs the question as to where the people of Australia would be in dealing with asbestos and other hazards if Senator Abetz and his colleagues had succeeded in driving unions out of the

workplace and effectively shutting them down. For our own safety, unions must be strengthened and defended.

It is sobering to consider the figures. Despite the awareness of the hazards of asbestos, over 820,000 Australian homes were built with some asbestos products in the years up until 1985. Government and corporate buildings also harbour material containing the deadly fibre. About 100 of the people who die of asbestos related diseases in the country every year are women who washed workers' overalls – workers like those at the Wittenoon asbestos mine in WA. Over the next 40 years, the National Health and Medical Research Council anticipates 25,000 Australians will die of the asbestos-related disease mesothelioma.

Virtually all this suffering is the consequence of corporate callousness and greed. The NBN asbestos scare is just one more reminder of the price we pay for leaving public assets and resources in wealthy private hands. ✖

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Crumbs for the low paid

Low paid workers have been sold short yet again. Last week's so-called Fair Work Australia Minimum Wage Panel's decision handed the lowest paid workers a miserly rise of 41 cents per hour or an extra \$15.80 per week for a 38-hour working week. The minimum wage will be \$16.37 per hour for adults and the weekly rate will rise by to \$622.20. While a few crumbs are better than nothing, the decision is a slap in the face for the 1.5 million low paid workers whose wages are based on the decision. The \$15.80 falls far short of recent increases in energy, water, transport, health, education and housing costs.

The ACTU had sought a very modest flat increase of \$30 per week for the lowest paid but the Panel listened to the employers and government, granting a 2.6 percent wage rise. "We are stunned that today the Commission has acknowledged that wage inequality is rising in Australia but it has done absolutely nothing about it. In fact, after this decision, it will only get worse," ACTU secretary Dave Oliver said. The percentage increase means those on higher incomes receive larger increases which widens the gap. Those most affected include unemployed workers and single parents being thrown off benefits, shop assistants, cleaners, hospitality workers, call centre staff, outworkers, process workers, apprentices, women, migrants and youth.

The employers called on the government to increase transfer payments (tax cuts and rebates and social security) for the low paid. (They sing a different tune at budget time, urging governments to cut payments and reduce expenditure so they can profit from tax cuts.) These payments are in effect an indirect subsidy to employers who pay poverty level wages to maximise profits.

"We acknowledge that both the relative living standards and the needs of those on lower award rates are assisted substantially by the tax-transfer system, but despite this assistance there is evidence of poverty and a rise in levels of financial stress among some low-paid families," the Panel correctly points out. It then makes the incredible claim "that increases in minimum wages are a blunt instrument for addressing the needs of the low paid." They are nothing of the sort. A decent wage rise could lift hundreds of thousands out of poverty – what the employers are covering up is that it would mean a cut in their profits.

Needless to say the Panel takes up the employer call, and suggests that the "tax-transfer system can provide more targeted assistance to low-income households and is a more efficient means of addressing poverty." In other words, employers can be let off the hook to exploit their workforces to the hilt with no responsibility to pay workers a living wage, let alone the full value of their labour. Taxpayers on the other hand – mainly workers on higher wages – can foot the bill to supplement higher rates of profit and starvation wages. This amounts to an indirect government subsidy to the private, for-profit sector. Talk about corporate welfare!

Workers were again cheated over productivity. The Panel's 2012 decision noted an increase in labour productivity during 2011-12 but failed to pass it on. The 2013 review notes an increase of 2.9 percent in labour productivity as measured by GDP per hour worked. "... the gross value added in the market sector per hour worked increased by 2.4 per cent ..." In other words there was a marked increase in the rate of exploitation but this will not be shared with the exploited underpaid workers. "If sustained, the recent improvement in labour productivity could provide the capacity to address the declining relative position of the low paid and for them to share in increasing community living standards." Don't hold your breath!

The Panel's decision further reduces low wages relative to average earnings and in doing so exerts downward pressures on the wages of other workers. It also has an impact on social security payments as the government attempts to widen the gap between the dole and minimum wage. Until such time as the trade union movement mounts a united, militant struggle including higher paid workers for a substantial increase in the minimum wage, the Panel and employers will continue to get away with offering the lowest paid a few crumbs once a year. Relying on sophisticated economic debates in a capitalist tribunal will never deliver workers the wages they deserve and need to live in dignity and provide for their families. The minimum wage campaign can only be won through action in the workplace and broader community.

PRESS FUND

A good example of doublespeak is the way conservative politicians use the word "jobs". If they're trying to reduce wages they say it will be "good for the economy" and will "create more jobs", even though people will have less money to spend, so the number of jobs will actually shrink. They even say it when they're trying to reduce government services and throw public servants out of work! Speaking of jobs, our job is to produce the *Guardian*, and to do that we need your contributions to the Press Fund, which helps us cover production costs. So please send us something for the next edition – and preferably on a regular basis thereafter, if you possibly can. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

Mark Mannion \$5, J Pyres \$50, "Round Figure" \$15, Bob Treasure \$50

This week's total: \$120 Progressive total: \$3,300

Statement on position of National Organiser

On behalf of the Central Committee Executive we wish to thank Denis Doherty for his service to the Party during his time as CPA National Organiser. Comrade Denis recently submitted his resignation which was accepted with regret.

Denis was elected to his position by the 11th Congress in 2009 and has promoted activity in the Party with great energy and enthusiasm. He travelled extensively helping Branches with their work and focused on raising funds for the Party. We wish him further success in his work in the Party, his activism in the community and in the peace movement.

In comradeship,

Vinnie Molina
National President

Bob Briton
Acting General Secretary



Denis Doherty.

Rally to save Swinburne's Lilydale Campus

A rally to save Swinburne's Lilydale Campus from being sold off to become council offices has been called by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) for 2 pm on June 14.

The campus is scheduled for closure on July 1 as a result of the Victorian government's \$300 million cut to TAFE funding last year. Josh Cullinan, NTEU industrial officer at Swinburne University of Technology, said that in the past week the NTEU had uncovered two startling discoveries in the campaign, Keep Our Campus Alive.

"At the Yarra Valley Educational Precinct meeting last week the Yarra Ranges Council CEO announced he had been secretly negotiating with Swinburne and local Liberal politicians to shut the campus," Cullinan said. "In an astounding admission, the Yarra Ranges Council Management

Executive had even started to seek planning permission from the Liberal Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy, to rezone the Swinburne University site away from education.

"To fund the purchase, it would appear Yarra Ranges Council intends to levy ratepayers. Council Executive Management proposes to pay Swinburne to take over the campus for Yarra Ranges Council's new offices."

Cullinan said that at Senate Estimates this week, the Commonwealth Department for Higher Education acknowledged that Swinburne had not received "prior written approval" to close the Lilydale campus.

"This means that Swinburne is potentially in breach of its federal funding agreement worth millions of dollars per year. The bureaucrats told the Senate Estimates

Committee that the Commonwealth 'has not raised any objections to this point in time'."

The NTEU has written to the Prime Minister seeking an unequivocal guarantee that the Commonwealth will not grant Swinburne written approval to close the campus.

"This will become the single biggest election issue Melbourne's outer east has ever seen. We are shocked that Tony Smith, the Federal Liberal MP for the region, has not been fighting for our campus in Canberra," Cullinan said.

"We are not just waiting for the Feds, however. We're calling for the whole community to join us in defending the Lilydale campus.

"We have found out the Swinburne Vice Chancellor is hosting Liberal politicians and Council management at a party to shut the campus. We're not going quietly so we encourage everyone from the community to come together and deliver a very clear message that our campus is not for sale!"

Save Swinburne Lilydale Campus Rally – 2pm Friday June 14, Jarlo Drive, Lilydale.

All welcome. Dress appropriate for the weather. ☺

Correction

In last week's *Guardian* contact details provided for the Newcastle Branch were incorrect. The correct contact details are newcastle@cpa.org.au. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.



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Ruthless corporate sharks cash in on temporary visa rorts

Peter Mac

Australian unions have fought a long battle against the misuse of temporary immigration visas to bypass Australian award wages and conditions. The rorts invariably involve the appalling maltreatment of overseas workers by employers, immigration agents and money lenders.

Temporary work visas are supposed to be used only where the Australian workforce cannot meet the requirements of the employer in terms of the number of positions and the level of skill required.

Section 457 visas are granted to workers from other countries to work in Australia on a temporary basis. Section 187 visas allow skilled workers to gain employment here, and to eventually get permanent residency, if they are sponsored by an Australian employer.

Supporters of the temporary visa scheme have argued that if it is used legitimately Australian workers will benefit because it will boost the local economy.

However, the reality is that ever since it was introduced the scheme has been used to supply employers with a labour force that will work for a tiny fraction of the prevailing wage rates and conditions as specified in awards or union negotiated enterprise agreements.

Some of the clearest evidence of rorting has been in the construction industry, where examples of the use of temporary workers despite the availability of Australian labour are commonplace.

This was demonstrated dramatically last February when a contractor brought a team of 457 visa workers to a Melbourne water treatment plant construction site in helicopters, over the heads of local tradespeople who were protesting at not being employed. The visa workers later said that the work they were doing was not complicated and could easily have been carried out by local workers.

The former Victorian Bailleau Liberal government applied pressure

to the owner of the site to make a complaint about the presence of members of the local community who were picketing the gates.

Picketing by unions is now illegal. The right-wing HR Nichols Society provided a secret recording device to a journalist who was going to interview a union leader, at the site, with the intention of getting him to say that the union was organising the picket, rather than the local community.

Overseas workers also ripped off

In addition to the examples of job losses for Australian workers there is now mounting evidence that hundreds of overseas workers have been tricked into working on poorly paid jobs after having been promised highly paid work – and often after they've paid up huge fees for the chance to work here.

A recent investigation revealed 200 cases where 457 visa workers have been placed under crippling debt burdens by unscrupulous employers and migration agents. That's undoubtedly just the tip of the iceberg.

Some of the work contracts state that the temporary workers would be sacked if they engaged in trade union activities or fell ill. A group of 29 Filipino workers has lodged an official complaint with their embassy that they have had to direct part of their wages to repay work agents for immigration loans at interest rates of up to 50 percent.

Another group of 100 Indian citizens, some with Masters degrees, were persuaded to pay up to \$40,000 to an Australian company Clinica Internationale, for help in obtaining Section 187 visas. But many of them were used as unskilled labourers.

The way forward

A case can certainly be made for granting some visas to overseas workers. The Chinese government is currently using a complete team of Chinese workers to build their new embassy in Canberra. They had one



built in 1995, using a local contractor, but they subsequently found out that the Australian government had planted listening devices all over it, and it had to be abandoned. You can hardly blame them now for being careful!

However, there's no way that the abuse of the temporary visa scheme can be justified. The secretary of the ACTU, Dave Oliver, described them as "a national shame ... where workers are becoming bonded labour". He commented: "The only thing you can call this is a racket involving migration agents, middlemen ... and loan sharks."

The corporate world sees the situation very differently. It offers businesses an opportunity to break the solidarity of local workers and their unions, and to set local and overseas workers against each other in a race to the bottom with regard to pay and conditions.

A Liberal/National Coalition government would certainly do its utmost to help them achieve that

effect. Moreover, in order to gain an electoral advantage, the coalition will undoubtedly encourage the image of overseas workers as the invaders, the "job stealers".

In contrast, the Gillard government allocated \$800,000 in the federal budget for the employment of 300 inspectors from the Fair Work ombudsman's office, to enforce the temporary visa rules. The government has also promised to "toughen up" the visa legislation, to include tougher tests to verify that skill shortages do exist.

That would be an excellent move. However, the wording has not been released to the public, and it has run into initial resistance from some MPs, including Kevin Rudd, Martin Ferguson and Nick Champion.

It's also possible that in formulating the legislation Labor will follow the Liberals' lead, and try to win electoral support by capitalising on the fear of Australian workers over possible job losses, rather than by devising a scheme to protect the

interests of both local and overseas workers.

After all, the punitive asylum seeker policies of both the two major parties are based on exploiting the public's fear of the invader, to gain political advantage.

Any racist, divisive depiction of overseas workers as "job stealers" must be defeated. The temporary visa workers are not the enemy of the Australian working class. The task the Australian trade union movement now faces is not to shut them out, but rather to welcome them as part of the international working class, and to fight to ensure they're paid the same wage rates and enjoy the same working conditions and other entitlements as local workers.

That's a monumentally difficult task, given the restrictions that have been placed on the unions with regard to access to employees, in particular overseas workers. But the union movement has done it before, very successfully, and it's still the right way to go. ✪

Pete's Corner



Sydney

Hands Off Syria

Hands Off Syria is holding a peaceful demonstration demanding "Hands Off Syria" will be held this **Saturday 15th June at 1pm.**

The rally will start at **Sydney Town Hall**, then march to Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr's office on Bligh St.

Please invite your friends and families and spread the word!

For more information go to:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/206751229472016/>

NSW govt to impose new pay and conditions on nurses and midwives

The NSW O'Farrell government is using its dictatorial industrial relations laws to try and sideline the debate about improved nurse staffing and safer patient care in NSW public hospitals and community health services, the NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) says.

At the NSWNMA's bimonthly Committee of Delegates meeting on May 21 workplace delegates from around the state rejected the government's inadequate offer for a new wages and conditions agreement.

Workplace delegates angered

They are angry that the O'Farrell government is:

refusing to extend mandated minimum nurse-to-patient ratios to seriously ill children, emergency departments, high dependency units and rural hospitals and multipurpose services and provide safer nursing and midwifery staffing arrangements in community health services;

and seeking to further discount the annual 2.5 percent payrise to absorb the scheduled 0.25 percent rise in compulsory employer superannuation from July 1, 2011.

Umpire not independent

The state government has in turn told the NSWNMA it will now get the NSW Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) to make a new pay and conditions award for nurses and midwives, based on this substandard offer.

Dictatorial industrial relations laws introduced by the O'Farrell government, since its election in March 2011, have significantly reduced the independence of the NSW IRC in these matters.

In response to this government threat, delegations of NSWNMA members, in up to 50 rural, regional and marginal electorates held by Liberal or National MPs, met outside the electorate offices of those MPs to protest against the government's

substandard offer and its refusal to continue improving the public hospital and health system through safer nurse-to-patient ratios.

NSWNMA general secretary, Brett Holmes, said the delegations told their local MPs that the government should not try to force a new award on nurses and midwives which does not include the extension of nurse-to-patient ratios to seriously ill children, emergency departments, high dependency units and rural hospitals and multipurpose services and provide safer nursing and midwifery staffing arrangements in community health services.

Treating communities with contempt

"Ramming a new pay and conditions award down the throats of nurses and midwives in this way is a violation of their rights at work and also treats the needs of most public hospitals and community health services with contempt," said Holmes.

"In particular, it is a slap in the face for regional and rural communities around the state, who are entitled to the same mandated-minimum nursing ratios as the big city hospitals.

"We are asking the O'Farrell government not to proceed in this dictatorial fashion. However, if it does, nurses and midwives will continue their Ratios put Patient Safety First campaign until we are satisfied safer nurse-to-patient ratios have been achieved."



Background

The NSWNMA's statewide Ratios put Patient Safety First campaign was launched in Sydney on March 19.

A record 214 NSWNMA branches, representing more than 30,000 public-sector nurses and midwives throughout NSW, have endorsed the NSWNMA's ratios and wages claim, which was then formally presented to the state government, through the Health Ministry, on March 11.

The current Public Health System Nurses & Midwives (State) Award expires on June 30 this year.

A key feature of the 2013 claim is guaranteed, safer nursing and midwifery levels for seriously ill children, emergency departments, high dependency units and rural hospitals and multipurpose services, and safer nursing and midwifery staffing arrangements in community health services.

The claim also includes two 2.5 percent per year payraises, which would provide the majority of experienced, full-time nurses and midwives with a pay rise of more than \$70.00 per week, or more than \$3,800 per year, by July 2014. ✪

NTEU welcomes Greens' "Uni Cuts Hurt" campaign

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has welcomed the announcement by the Australian Greens that they will campaign against the latest cuts to university funding and student support made by the Labor government and supported by the Coalition.

"We congratulate Christine Milne and the Greens for standing up for higher education with their 'uni cuts hurt' campaign," Jeannie Rea, NTEU national president, said.

Rea says that the NTEU is calling for the restoration of the latest \$2.3 billion cut from university budgets and student funding and is urging MPs to vote against the enabling legislation.

"The Coalition has already announced that it has no intention of restoring the money slashed from universities regardless of what happens to the Gonski reforms. MPs who constantly extol the virtues of higher education and how Australia needs to become a 'smart country' should have the courage of their convictions and vote against the enabling legislation when it comes before Federal Parliament."

Rea said that the recent \$2.3 billion cuts come on top of previous cuts of over \$2 billion over the past two years.

"These cuts will further increase student costs and debt, and make it harder for our university

staff to provide the high quality university education we believe Australians expect and deserve," said Ms Rea.

Federal government funding per student will fall over the next four years. It will result in more overcrowded classes, more casual lecturers and tutors, and less student support. Courses and staff are already being cut in advance of the legislation going through parliament.

More than 200 staff – or around 15 percent of the workforce – are likely to be cut from the University of Central Queensland with an undisclosed number to go from Southern Cross University. The University of Canberra is closing Chinese, Japanese and Spanish language programs while the Australian National University has a freeze on general staff recruitment, with cuts to come. Monash University has announced it wants to slash 80 jobs in IT.

"The cuts will cruel the chances for higher education of thousands of Australians, especially those in rural and regional areas who are half as likely to hold university degrees as their city cousins," Rea said.

"Politicians of all persuasions need to talk to their constituents about the issues the really matter to them and vote against the cuts." ✪

A TAFE Charter

1. TAFE is a vital educational institution

TAFE plays a key role in workforce development and planning, is responsive to individual and industry demand, allowing governments to respond to the projected needs of the economy and society and to plan for the short, medium and long term.

TAFE works in partnership with large and small business to assist them in workforce planning and development and meeting the need for innovation and technological development.

To ensure that TAFE continues to meet the growing and changing needs of industry and the economy more broadly:

- TAFE Institutes must receive guaranteed funding as educational institutions;
- TAFE institutes should be funded to develop new and innovative training solutions to meet the needs of future students, changing technologies and industry innovation;
- Uncapped, "demand" driven funding mechanisms will not allow government to respond to the projected needs of the economy and society. The system requires a planned model that ensures the needs of industry and community are met;
- Student support services, counselling (career and personal),

and disability support, libraries etc. should continue to be funded and well resourced.

2. TAFE plays a key role in community building

TAFE plays a key role in community building both economically and socially — most obviously in regional areas, but also in metropolitan areas. TAFE promotes social cohesion and economic development.

To ensure that both economic and social community building continues there should be:

- No increases to student fees and charges
- No course closures
- No campus closures.

3. TAFE plays a key role in second chance education

TAFE plays a key role in second chance education supporting individuals to enable them to access employment for the first time, to build pathways into further and higher education, to return to the workforce after raising families and to transition into other vocations when structural adjustment in the economy results in unemployment.

To ensure that TAFE continues to play a key role in second chance

education there should be:

- Access to government subsidised qualifications over their lifetime;
- No restriction on an individual's capacity to access government subsidised training.

4. TAFE nurtures vocations

TAFE plays a key role in building the capacity of vocational education teachers and developing innovative pedagogy and a high skilled teaching and administrative workforce. TAFE nurtures vocations, building vocational and academic knowledge, building research capacity in a public system that allows the benefits to be accessed by all.

To ensure that TAFE continues to play a key role in the vocational and academic knowledge base there should be:

- Adequate funding and support for research and professional development in TAFE;
- Adequate funding and support for initial and specialist vocational teaching qualifications;
- Access to professional development in specialist industry area, and support for return to industry programs;
- Decent working conditions, including security of employment.

Australian Education Union ✪

Perth rally for free speech and democracy in Turkey

Richard Titelius

The demonstrations in Turkey which began against the move by the Turkish government to demolish large parts of Gezi Park in Istanbul to make way for a shopping mall has entered its 11th day. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkey, TKP, says "...Turkey is witnessing a genuine popular movement. The actions and protests, which have started in Istanbul and spread all over Turkey, have a massive, legitimate and historic character. Most important of all is the striking change in the mood of people. Fear and apathy have been overcome and people have gained self-confidence." (See full statement page 7.)

On Saturday protests were also held around the world including in Sydney and Perth. In Perth a group

of around 100 people gathered peacefully to march from Kings Park to Parliament House in West Perth, to demand the resignation of the Erdogan government; and the end of demolition projects in Gezi Park and of the Ataturk Cultural Centre; for protesters taken in custody to be released immediately and all charges against them dropped.

The protest in Perth was in large part made up of members of the Turkish community.

A recent report from Turkey indicates Prime Minister Erdogan's government may now concede the shelving of plans for the shopping centre. The Turkish community in Perth mobilised themselves through the social networking site Facebook and a leaflet distributed at the rally can be downloaded from the site www.facebook.com/OccupyGezi.

The leaflet demanded an end to police brutality, a free media, open

democratic dialogue between citizens and those elected to public service, not the dictates of special interests and an investigation of the government's recent abuse of power, which has led to the loss of innocent lives.

The Turkish Communist Party has been prominent in organising protests and voicing the dissent felt by many in Turkey against the increasingly authoritarian rule of the government of Prime Minister Erdogan. Many citizens are concerned about the encroachment of religious dogma creeping into previously secular Turkish society.

The Communist Party of Australia joins with the Communist Party of Turkey in calling for the resignation of the Turkish government and the call for a democratic dialogue with all sectors of the Turkish society; an investigation into the abuse of power by police. Several images can be seen on the above Facebook site.



For more information on the Communist Party of Turkey's position on the events visit: www.solidnet.org/turkey-communist-party-of-turkey/4058-cp-of-turkey-declaration-of-the-central-committee-of-the-tkp-on-recent-developments-en

Morrison should stop the "terrorism" witch-hunt

A refugee advocate has called for the Opposition Immigration Minister, Scott Morrison, to end his "terrorism" witch-hunt, and for the government to investigate the leaking of information by the Australian Federal Police.

"Morrison is a victim of misinformation selectively released by the Australian Federal Police. But Scott Morrison is now guilty of peddling the same misinformation. In the process, he is victimising an innocent man; someone who has been framed by an Egyptian Mubarak-era military court," said Ian Rintoul, from the Refugee Action Coalition.

"The government should announce an immediate investigation into the AFP and the Immigration Department to determine which officers have been responsible for leaking

misinformation to the media and to Opposition politicians," said Rintoul.

"Claims that 'a convicted murderer' has been held in low security immigration facilities are simply not true. This asylum seeker has never been convicted of murder or any specific terrorism charges. That much is clear from transcripts of the original trial. The only charge that is still outstanding against him is that he was a member of a jihadist organisation, and that charge is the subject of appeal.

"Amnesty and other human rights organisations condemned the conduct of the trial when it occurred in 1999 and have continued to condemn it. Since the fall of the Mubarak dictatorship, many of those wrongly convicted in the 1999 trial have been acquitted," said Rintoul.

A 1999 statement from the office of Amnesty International expresses concerns at the conduct of trial. The statement is available at refugeeaction.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Sayed-Amnesty-1999.pdf. (Other documents, including recent statements from the Egyptian Military Prosecutor are available on request.)

Scott Morrison's vendetta against ASIO and the Labor government is leading to a "trial by media" of an Egyptian asylum seeker whose claims for protection have still not been considered by the Immigration Department. That is the real crime in this situation – and the Labor government should rectify that immediately. The Immigration Department has not ever considered community release for this asylum seeker. Yet, his claims for protection grow stronger by the day.

Rally in Sydney in support of people's uprising in Turkey

A rally was held at Town Hall Sydney, to show support and solidarity with the Turkish people rising up in protest against the Islamist-leaning Erdogan government, which has been a linchpin for US-NATO imperialist objectives in the region.

The rally in Sydney was representative of demonstrations that have broken out all around the world in the last week, showing support for the Turkish people in their struggle. The following is part of a statement released by Hands off Syria, which was represented at the Sydney rally:

The solidarity of the Turkish and Syrian people is the rock on which the whole US-NATO imperialist dream of reordering the Middle East could founder.

The geo-political and feudalist fantasies, especially those of the US, UK, France, Turkey and the autocratic Gulf states of Qatar and Saudi Arabia have not reckoned with the resistance of the Syrian people, nor the revolt of the Turkish people.

The solidarity between the Syrian people in their resistance and the Turkish people in their revolt can inspire the millions who have been stirred into action by the depredations of capitalism's global economic crisis, which the ruling oligarchies expect to be resolved at the expense of the working people of the world and through the destruction of the people's hard won gains that collectively make up a civil society.

In taking on imperialism

– whether imposed from outside as in Syria, or from the top as in Turkey – the Turkish and Syrian people can re-inspire the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring, which have stalled as the reactionary US-NATO-Gulf states have used all means to install Muslim Brotherhood regimes in client states, like Egypt and Tunisia, or unleashed Al-Qaeda gangs to trash the countries and bring about regime change, as in Libya and Syria.

Finally, the unexpected strength of resistance in Syria, and the strength of revolt in Turkey, which has been a key marshalling point in the assault on Syria, has shown how suddenly the fortunes and prospects of the imperialist counteroffensive can shift.



A Salvation Army report paints a grim picture of disadvantage among single parents forced onto Newstart. Compared with last year's survey, there was a 12 percent increase in people on Newstart seeking help from the Salvation Army. Seven percent of single parents were homeless, with 5 percent on Newstart, and 2 percent receiving parenting payments. Community and welfare groups are continuing their campaigns for an increase in Newstart. However the federal budget increased it by a meagre \$19, the amount unemployed people could earn before welfare payments were reduced. The report underlined the struggle to pay bills, with 58 percent delaying payments of utility bills and about a third delaying mortgage payments or rent. The report stressed that despite all the obstacles, people want to work and provide a more adequate standard of living for themselves and their children. As it stands at present however, among those seeking help 51 percent often go without meals so they can feed their children.

The Police Integrity Commission believes criminal charges should be laid against five officers involved in the fatal pursuit of Roberto Curti, a Brazilian student who died in March 2012. He was stunned by Tasers 14 times, blasted with capsicum spray, handcuffed and restrained by up to seven police at once. The charges being considered include assault, affray and perjury.

Local government in NSW is under serious attack. A Bill currently before parliament, the "Early Intervention Bill", makes Councils answerable to the state government. The Minister for Local Government would be able to suspend a Council without a public inquiry and for reasons not defined in the legislation. It could have severe repercussions for those councils that advocate on behalf of their communities on issues of excessive development, extended liquor licences, land use conflicts (including fracking), open spaces, etc. The recent proposal to create a series of mega Sydney councils is being driven by developer and other vested interest groups who would be the beneficiaries of such a move. Local communities will be the losers. You have a right to let the NSW government know about your feeling on the matter – so do it now, while you still have it.

Maintaining humanity's life support systems in the 21st Century

"Scientists' Consensus on Maintaining Humanity's Life Support" is the name of a statement launched on May 23, by participating scientists from around the world.

As of May 21, the statement had been signed by more than 520 prominent scientists from 44 countries that cover most of the world, including dozens of members of the US National Academy of Sciences and equivalent scientific bodies from other countries. The next goals are to deliver the statement to President Obama, all members of the US House of Representatives, the Senate, and all state governors, and ultimately to leaders throughout the world in both government and business.

The following are key points from the statement which offers information and policy advice for policy makers:

Earth is rapidly approaching a tipping point. Human impacts are causing alarming levels of harm to our planet. As scientists who study the interaction of people with the rest of the biosphere using a wide range of approaches, we agree that the evidence that humans are damaging their ecological life-support systems is overwhelming.

We further agree that, based on the best scientific information available, human quality of life will suffer substantial degradation by the year 2050 if we continue on our current path.

Science unequivocally demonstrates the human impacts of key concern:

Climate disruption – more, faster climate change than since humans first became a species.

Extinctions – not since the dinosaurs went extinct have so many species and populations died out so fast, both on land and in the oceans.

Wholesale loss of diverse ecosystems – we have ploughed, paved, or otherwise transformed more than 40 percent of Earth's ice-free land, and no place on land or in the sea is free of our direct or indirect influences.

Pollution – environmental contaminants in the air, water and land are at record levels and increasing, seriously harming people and wildlife in unforeseen ways.

Human population growth and consumption patterns – seven billion people alive today will likely grow to 9.5 billion by 2050, and the pressures of heavy material consumption among the middle class and wealthy may well intensify.

By the time today's children reach middle age, it is extremely likely that Earth's

life-support systems, critical for human prosperity and existence, will be irretrievably damaged by the magnitude, global extent, and combination of these human-caused environmental stressors, **unless we take concrete, immediate actions to ensure a sustainable, high-quality future.**

As members of the scientific community actively involved in assessing the biological and societal impacts of global change, we are sounding this alarm to the world. For humanity's continued health and prosperity, we all – individuals, businesses, political leaders, religious leaders, scientists, and people in every walk of life – must work hard to solve these five global problems, starting today:

1. Climate Disruption

Reduce effects of climate disruption by decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, and by implementing adaptation strategies to deal with the consequences of climate change already underway.

Viable approaches include accelerating development and deployment of carbon-neutral energy technologies to replace fossil fuels; making buildings, transportation, manufacturing systems, and settlement patterns more energy-efficient; and conserving forests and regulating land conversion to maximise carbon sequestration.

Adapting to the inevitable effects of climate change will be crucial for coastal areas threatened by sea-level rise; ensuring adequate water supplies to many major population centres;

maintaining agricultural productivity; and for managing biodiversity and ecosystem reserves.

2. Extinctions

Slow the very high extinction rates that are leading to a global loss of biodiversity.

Viable approaches include assigning economic valuation to the ways natural ecosystems contribute to human well-being; and managing all ecosystems, both in human-dominated regions and in regions far from direct human influence, to sustain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services. It will be critical to develop cross-jurisdictional cooperation to recognise and mitigate the interactions of global pressures (for example, climate change, ocean acidification) and local pressures (land transformation, overfishing, poaching endangered species, etc.).

3. Pollution

Curb the manufacture and release of toxic substances into the environment.

Viable approaches include using current science about the molecular mechanisms of toxicity and applying the precautionary principle (verification of no harmful effects) to guide regulation of existing chemicals and design of new ones. We have the knowledge and ability to develop a new generation of materials that are inherently far safer than what is available today.

4. Ecosystem Transformation

Minimise transformation of Earth's remaining natural ecosystems into farms, suburbs, and other human constructs.

Viable agricultural approaches include increasing efficiency in existing food-producing areas; improving food-distribution systems; and decreasing waste.

Viable development approaches include enhancing urban landscapes to accommodate growth rather than encouraging suburban sprawl; siting infrastructure to minimise impacts on natural ecosystems; and investing in vital "green infrastructure", such as through restoring wetlands, oyster reefs, and forests to secure water quality, flood control, and boost access to recreational benefits.



5. Population Growth and Consumption

Bring world population growth to an end as early as possible and begin a gradual decline.

An achievable target is no more than 8.5 billion people by 2050 and a peak population size of no more than 9 billion, which through natural demographic processes can decrease to less than 7 billion by 2100.

Viable approaches include ensuring that everyone has access to education, economic

The choice for the working class

Statement of Central Committee of Communist Party of Turkey

1. Turkey is witnessing a genuine popular movement. The actions and protests, which started in Istanbul and spread all over Turkey, have a massive, legitimate and historic character. Most important of all is the striking change in the mood of people. Fear and apathy have been overcome as people have gained self-confidence.

2. The Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) has been part of the popular movement from first day and has mobilised all its forces, tried to strengthen the proletarian and revolutionary character of the movement, encouraged a mature attitude of discipline, and organized numerous actions and demonstrations. In this process, police forces have assaulted our party headquarters in Ankara. All over Turkey, several party members have been injured and arrested and attempts made to abduct party cadres. These attempts at provocation against our party were defeated.

3. Our emphasis on TKP's role does not aim to underestimate the spontaneous nature of the movement or the contribution of other political actors. On the contrary, TKP stresses this movement has an aspect beyond impact of any political actor or any kind of political opportunism.

4. The call of the masses for the government to resign is an absolute demand of this movement. Though it is obvious a leftist alternative cannot be built "right now", this demand should be expressed loudly. This option for the working people can be generated only through the energy that comes from this historical moment. TKP will focus on this and expose the real meaning of alternatives like "formation of a national government", which will most likely be put forward to deceive the working masses into thinking the crisis can be overcome that way.

5. Holders of political power will try to calm people down, institute control and even try to use the situation to their advantage. They can have temporary achievements, but even then, the popular movement would not be wasted. TKP is ready for a time of stubborn but intense struggle.

6. In order to act in concert, different branches of the socialist movement sharing similar goals and concerns need to immediately evaluate the rise of this popular movement. TKP, without interrupting its daily missions and activities, is going to act responsibly regarding this issue and try to

create a common ground in line with the urgent demands below.

7. To nullify government plans to classify and divide the popular movement as legitimate and illegitimate, all forces need to avoid steps that might cause damage to the legitimacy of the movement. It is the political power that attacks. The people should defend themselves as well as their rightful action but never fall into the government trap of provocation.

8. While the masses chant "government, resign" the government pretends not to understand the old balance is upset fundamentally and cannot be restored. Everybody knows the popular movement is not a product of sympathy towards the trees in Gezi Park [threatened by developers]. The people's anger is over the urban transformation projects, the terror of the market, open direct interventions in different lifestyles, the Americanism and subordination to the USA, the reactionary policies, the enmity towards the Syrian people.

9. While rolling up our sleeves in order to create an alternative of the working people, the movement needs to put forward certain concrete demands. These demands are

valid in case of resignation of the Erdogan government:

a) The government must announce that projects that involve demolishing Gezi Park and Ataturk Cultural Centre are terminated.

b) Those taken into custody during the resistance must be released, and all charges against them dropped immediately.

c) All officials whose crimes against the people are proven by reports of the commissions formed by the Union of Bar Associations and local bar associations must be relieved of their duties.

d) Attempts to hinder the right of the people to get true news on developments must be stopped.

e) All prohibitions regarding meetings, demonstrations and marches must be repealed.

f) All de facto or de jure obstacles that lock out political participation of the people, including the 10 percent election threshold and anti-democratic articles of the "law on political parties," must be abolished.

g) All initiatives that attempt to impose a monolithic life style on all people must stop.

10. These urgent demands in no case affect our right and duty to continue

Support

Unremitting injustice in Palestine

Steven Katsineris

“The Israeli claim that the attack on the Dalou home was justified is unsupported by the facts. The onus is on Israel to explain why it bombed a home full of civilians killing 12 people.” Fred Abrahams, special advisor at Human Rights Watch.

In April 2013, Israeli military authorities announced that there would be no criminal inquiry into a missile strike that killed twelve Palestinian civilians in Gaza City during the eight days of war in November 2012. More than 160 Palestinians and six Israelis were killed and over 1,400 Palestinians were injured in the brief conflict. Most of the Palestinians killed were civilians, many of them women and children according to United Nations statistics.

During these attacks, the Israeli Airforce dropped a large bomb on the home of the Al-Dalou family on November 18, 2012, leaving ten members of the family and two neighbours dead. This dreadful incident resulted in the largest single loss of civilian deaths in the November war in Gaza. Among those killed was Mohamed Dalou, a police officer and nine other members of his family, including four children, aged between one and seven and five women. The two neighbours killed were a young man and an elderly woman. Nine other civilians in the area were wounded. One boy aged 16 years old survived the attack. The house was completely destroyed and there was extensive damage to surrounding homes.

After the bombing the Israeli military changed its stories several times about why the appalling attack happened. Initially, the Israeli Defence Force stated the strike was an attempt to target a senior militant, Yahia Abayah, described as the head of a Hamas rocket unit. Israel said he was supposed to be in the home, but in fact was not present. Yahia Abayah is a man that the surviving Dalou family members and others interviewed do not know of.

Then later, Israel shifted its account again, saying they had mistakenly bombed the wrong house. An Israeli spokeswoman later said that Israel had targeted a Hamas militant, but refused to say who the target was. Then later, the IDF said the target had been Mohamed Al-Dalou, the dead policeman, describing him as a Hamas “terror operative”. No information supporting this claim was given by Israel. Members of the Dalou family and neighbours said Mohamed Al-Dalou was just a civilian policeman in the Interior Ministry and not a member of any armed group.

Further research by Human Rights Watch could find no evidence of his alleged connection to any Palestinian militant groups. Human Rights Watch said of the contradictory Israeli claims, “Israel’s belated effort, once it could scour the list of victims, to defend the attack by naming a civilian police officer found among the dead suggests an after-the-fact attempt to justify the unjustifiable”.

Human rights groups described the incident as a war crime and called for criminal prosecutions. The attack was according to them

unlawful and disproportionate. Human Rights Watch said that even if an ordinary policeman was a legitimate military target, an attack on a house that killed a large number of civilians made it an unlawfully disproportionate act. The human rights organisations challenged Israel’s assertions that its air strikes were only surgical strikes on clear enemy targets.

After a detailed investigation Human Rights Watch released an important report into the Dalou bombing in December 2012, stating the attack on innocent civilians was a clear violation of the laws of war and was therefore a war crime. After the HRW Report, the Israeli military stated they would investigate the incident.

Repeated violations

“Israel’s legal system is used as a smoke-screen, to provide an illusion of investigative rigour, while in fact providing systematic cover for widespread violations of international law.” Statement by Palestinian Centre for Human Rights.

In their April announcement, Israel’s Military Advocate General (MAG) stated it “Did not find a basis for opening a criminal investigation,” and decided therefore to take no further action in the case saying, “The result, while regrettable, does not indicate a violation of the Laws of Armed Conflict.” Further the MAG in an internal report claimed that an initial investigation found that unspecified precautions had been taken to reduce the risk of “collateral damage to innocents during the execution of the military objective.” Surviving members of the Dalou family insisted there were no fighters in their home and didn’t know why they were targeted by Israel.

In response to the MAG Report, Human Rights Watch said that even if the attack was a mistake, this still did not mean it was lawful. HRW’s Bill Van Esveld stated, “In fact, ‘unintended damage’ and ‘mistakes’ that kill civilians can indeed be violations of the laws of war, if the attackers failed to...ensure their attacks would not cause disproportionate civilian harm.” The Gaza based organisation, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights also condemned the MAG’s decision to close the Dalou case. The UN Human Rights Council also said in its annual report that Israeli’s actions “were not in line with the law.”

“AI has previously raised concerns that Israel’s military investigations fail to meet international standards and result in near-total impunity for those responsible for unlawful killings.” Amnesty International, April 5, 2013.

The MAG examined 80 incidents stemming from that November 2012 Gaza conflict, which led to the deaths of many “uninvolved civilians”. In 65 of these cases the MAG “did not find a basis for opening a criminal investigation.” It did order further inspection of the remaining cases, but such criminal prosecutions are rare and findings adverse towards Israeli soldiers are even rarer. Past experience doesn’t leave much hope for any genuine investigation or justice for Palestinian victims and their grieving families.

In a September 2010 Report entitled, “Void of Responsibility: Israel Military Policy not to investigate Killings of Palestinians by Soldiers”, Israeli human rights group, B’Tselem said that the Israeli military failed to investigate the killings of hundreds of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories between 2006 and 2009. During those four years, not a single Israeli soldier was indicted for killing Palestinian civilians. The report further added that this meant that Israeli soldiers who killed Palestinian civilians are almost never held accountable for these actions.

B’Tselem said, during that period, Israeli troops killed at least 617 Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories. This figure did not include more than 1,400 Palestinians killed in the December 2008 to January 2009 war in Gaza. The human rights group filed 288 complaints, but only 23 cases were deemed justified for investigation. In none of the cases were charges brought against the soldiers involved. So despite killing and wounding thousands of Palestinian civilians during the course of the occupation Israel has only convicted three soldiers in that time.

And only one received a sentence. He got seven months for stealing a credit card. B’Tselem’s analysis shows that the Israeli military authority’s version of events is most often solely based on the statements of Israeli soldiers, while neglecting the contradictory evidence or eyewitness testimony of others. The human rights group’s spokesperson, Sarit Michaeli stated, “This policy permits soldiers and officers to act in violation of the law, creates a culture of impunity and shows a flagrant disregard for human life.”

Under International Humanitarian Law and the Laws of War, which includes the conflict in Gaza and the Israeli occupation in the West Bank, civilians are not to be the targets of attacks. Disproportionate attacks causing harm to civilians are serious violations of these laws, under which Israel has a duty to properly investigate and punish offenders. And anyone responsible for deliberately or recklessly committing a serious violation of these international laws should be persecuted for war crimes, as in the case of the slaughter of the Dalou family.

“Israel needs to explain why it bombed this house full of civilians. Anyone who has violated the law should be appropriately punished.” Fred Abrahams of Human Rights Watch said. The sad fact is that Israeli forces kill Palestinians indiscriminately and with complete impunity. And Israel is able to ignore International Humanitarian Law and other international laws because the USA and other dominant powers in the international community continue to allow Israel to neglect these laws and systematically abuse Palestinians.

It is blatant hypocrisy to enforce international laws on other countries and yet exempt Israel. This is morally wrong and the UN and rest of world community have a responsibility to compel Israel to uphold the principles of International Law and must act to stop war crimes committed by the Israeli military. ✪



opportunities, and health care, including family planning services, with a special focus on women’s rights.

Decrease per-capita resource use, particularly in developed countries

Viable approaches include improving efficiency in production, acquisition, trade, and use of goods and promoting environmentally-friendly changes in consumer behaviour. You can read the full report and add your name as an endorser of the report at mahb.stanford.edu ✪

opposition against the political power. The people’s reaction to the government must be reinforced and efforts concentrated to bring about a real alternative in the political scene.

11. The star and crescent Turkish flag that was intended to be used to provide a shield for reactionary and chauvinist attacks against labourers, leftists and Kurdish people after the fascist military coup of September 12, 1980, is now grasped by the people out of the hands of fascism, and given to the honourable hands of Deniz Gezmiş and his comrades, as a flag in the hands of patriotic people.

12. The people’s movement, since the beginning, has persistently put down the sinister strategy to play one community against another in Turkey. This attitude must be carefully maintained, leaving no room for chauvinism or vulgar nationalism.

13. Our citizens who have lost their lives at hands of the police force of the political power have sacrificed their lives in name of a just and historic struggle. The people will never forget their names, and those responsible for their deaths will pay the price before the law. ✪



Fahami sitting in the debris, in what used to be his room in the house next to Al-Dalou’s family building in Gaza City.

Kerry's plan – Palestinians to be cast as fall guys ... again

Jonathan Cook

Under heavy pressure from the US, the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has paid grudging lip service over the past four years to the goal of Palestinian statehood. But his real agenda was always transparent: not statehood, but what he termed “economic peace”.

Ordinary Palestinians, in Netanyahu's view, can be pacified with crumbs from the master's table: fewer checkpoints, extra jobs and trading opportunities, and a gradual, if limited, improvement in living standards. All of this buys time for Israel to expand the settlements, cementing its hold over the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

After 20 years of pursuing Palestinian statehood implied in the Oslo Accords, the US indicated this month it was switching horses. It appears to be adopting Netanyahu's model of “economic peace”.

US secretary of state John Kerry, flanked by the Israeli President, Shimon Peres, and the Palestinian Authority chairman, Mahmoud Abbas, at the World Economic Forum in Jordan, revealed an economic program for getting peace talks on track.

Some 300 Israeli and Palestinian business people were on board, he said, and would invest heavily in the Palestinian economy in a venture that was “bigger, bolder and more ambitious than anything since the Oslo Accords”.

No more details were forthcoming, except that it will be overseen by Tony Blair, Britain's former Prime Minister who has been the Quartet representative, the international community's “man in Jerusalem”, since 2007.

He is a strange choice indeed, given that the Palestinian leadership has publicly dismissed him as “Israel's defence attorney” and privately argued – as revealed in the Palestine Papers leaked in 2011 – that he advocates “an apartheid-like approach to dealing with the occupied West Bank”.

Kerry's claims for his program were grand yet vague. Some US\$4 billion in private investment over three



years would boost the Palestinian economy by 50 percent; agricultural production and tourism would triple; unemployment fall by two-thirds; wages rise by 40 percent; and 100,000 homes would be built.

But the proposal left few impressed, and for good reason.

Kerry is simply repackaging the task Blair was entrusted with six years ago. His job has been to develop the Palestinian economy and build up Palestinian institutions in preparation for eventual statehood, so far to little effect.

As David Horowitz, editor of the right-wing *Times of Israel* newspaper, scoffed: “If there was \$4 billion to be had in private investment in the Palestinian economy, you can rest assured that Tony Blair would have found it.”

Or seen another way, the Palestinian economy's problem is not a lack of investment; it is a lack of viable opportunities for investment. Palestinians have no control over their borders, airspace, radio frequencies, water and other natural resources, not even over the currency or internal movement of goods and people. Everything depends on Israel's good will. And few investors will be prepared to bet on that. Israel has repeatedly shown itself more than

ready to crush the PA's finances by, for example, withholding Palestinian tax revenues it collects and is mandated to pass on.

Blair's role has been heavily criticised because his narrow focus on economic development has not only failed to foster a climate conducive to talks but has served as cover for Israel and Washington's inaction on Palestinian statehood. Instead of rethinking Blair's failed mandate, Kerry appears set on perpetuating and expanding it.

Abdallah Abdallah, a senior Fatah official, summed up the Palestinian response: “We are not animals that only want food. We are a people struggling for freedom”.

Israel, meanwhile, is only too ready to push Kerry down this hopeless path.

From Israel's perspective, the US plan usefully distracts attention from the Arab Peace Initiative, the Arab states' renewed offer last month of full diplomatic relations with Israel in return for its withdrawal from most of the occupied territories.

Netanyahu, worried the offer might corner him into serious talks, has responded with stony silence. At the same time, Yair Lapid, the supposedly centrist Finance Minister who was originally promoted by

the West as a peacemaker, has squashed the idea of a deal with the Palestinians as unrealistic. He told the *New York Times* last month that he supported expanding the settlements.

Israel, it seems, hopes that the Palestinian Authority, now permanently mired in financial crisis, can be arm-twisted with promises of billions of dollars in sweeteners. According to Palestinian sources, Abbas is facing intense pressure from the US, with the Kerry plan intended to leverage him into dropping his condition that Israel freeze settlement growth before negotiations restart.

Israel is keen to win that concession. Despite reports that Netanyahu has quietly promised the Americans he will avoid embarrassing them for the next few weeks with announcements of settlement building, a rash of projects is in the pipeline.

Media reports have disclosed a plan for 300 new homes in East Jerusalem, while nearly 800 more are to be released for sale. Several settlement outposts established without authorisation from the Israeli government are expected to be made legal retrospectively, including hundreds of homes in Eli, near Ramallah.

Reuters reported last week that Kerry expects a decision on restarting

peace talks within two weeks – or, his officials say, he will walk away from the peace process. He told a meeting of the American Jewish Committee the same day: “If we do not succeed now, we may not get another chance.”

For Netanyahu, such threats are hollow. If the US absents itself from the conflict, Israel will simply be left with a freer hand to intensify its subjugation of the Palestinians and the theft of their land.

Even though much more is at stake for the Palestinians, the PA has so far been quietly dismissive of the Kerry plan. It has stated it will not make “political concessions in exchange for economic benefits” – a diplomatic way of saying it will not be bribed to sell out on statehood.

But the real danger for the Palestinians, as they remember only too well from the 2000 Camp David talks, is that they are being set up as the fall guy. Should they refuse to sign up to the latest version of economic peace, Israel and the US will be only too ready to blame them for their intransigence.

This is win-win for Netanyahu, and another moment of disastrous slippage in the diplomatic process for the Palestinians.

Mondoweiss ✪

Fighting for frack-free

Lorna Stephenson

At some point during June 2013 – no one knows exactly when – the quiet and beautiful West Sussex village of Balcombe will become the first major battleground of Britain's shale rush. Lord Browne, the chairman of Cuadrilla Resources, has said he'll do “whatever it takes” to ensure the success of plans to prove the viability of fracking gas and oil in Britain, a crusade mired in controversy since it began. Balcombe, where preparatory work for a 914 metre well has already been completed, is next in line.

Unluckily for Browne, he's not the only one using fighting talk. Balcombe residents are fiercely opposed to a well pad on their doorstep. Networking with activists nationally and internationally,

they've adopted tactics from the highly effective “Lock the Gate” campaigns in Australia, where communities determined to protect their lands from environmental catastrophe have gas companies running scared. Three companies have withdrawn from New South Wales this year to date.

A key tactic is surveying the locality to get the opinion of residents: “We're using the “frack free community strategy,” says local campaigner Anna Dart, who grew up in Balcombe. The results of their survey so far show that the small community of less than 2,000 is “nearly unanimous” in its opposition to the Cuadrilla project. In Australia this method has been far from symbolic, with the communities going on to get organised and to resist the invasion.

“If a gas company does come

and frack, it shows that firstly there is absolutely no social licence to do it, and shows the complete failure of any supposed democracy,” Dart explains. “Also, the bottom line of the strategy is that when certain people decide to take peaceful direct action, the whole community is united with those taking the action. It's a united community defending itself.”

Licences for unconventional gas extraction have been sold off in blocks in a wide swathe of countryside, which sits between the North and South Downs. The stakes in Balcombe are high for both camps. The village's role as the first target for the proliferation of gas drilling across the Weald area makes it crucial – for both fracking companies and those determined to stop them.

Cuadrilla's holding company AJ Lucas declared in a stakeholder

statement in May 2012 that they have 23,067 hectares in Sussex as assets for exploratory drilling. Meanwhile rival company Celtique Energy are boasting that there's 10 trillion cubic feet of gas in the Weald basin – an amount which, based on the average shale gas well production, would entail the drilling of over 6,000 wells. Should the gas industry get its way, the Weald area will undergo wholesale industrialisation with well pads, pipelines, compressor stations and processing plants littering the landscape.

The Balcombe site's geographical location means any leakages or pollution could have disastrous effects. It's less than a mile from the River Ouse and reservoirs, both of which provide drinking water for tens of thousands of homes. Pollution of water sources is both a likely and frightening prospect,

based on the experience of the US, Canada and Australia. It's also surrounded by the Lower Stumble Woods, a home for numerous protected species.

For now, villagers are cracking on with planning their resistance. The anti-fracking signs, being prepared for display in neighbourly unity outside Balcombe households, mirror those found across rural Australian communities. They're emblematic of an emerging social movement against unconventional gas which spans from the super-local to the global. “Everyone's starting to talk with each other across the world about this, which is really exciting, it's crossing political boundaries,” says Dart. “I suppose that's the silver lining of this really horrible cloud.”

New Internationalist ✪

Actions against Walmart coast to coast

John Wojcik

CHICAGO: A protest outside the West Loop Walmart store here by members of at least 12 different unions and community groups was only one of countless demonstrations that broke out last week across the country in support of striking workers at the world's biggest retail giant.

The actions took place as civil rights movement-style caravans of strikers from both the East and West coasts and from the nation's heartland descended on the Walmart shareholders' meeting in Bentonville, Arkansas. There they protested the company's practice of retaliating against workers who speak out for regular hours, a living wage, health care benefits and the right to form a union.

Marchers here and around the country backed those demands but often came to the protests with their own sets of complaints against Walmart. The coalitions that put together last week's actions represented a broad range of groups and concerns.

Norine Gutekanst, a teacher and a member of the Chicago Teachers' Union, said she was on the picket line in support of Walmart strikers because "these folks are the parents of the children we teach. There is a direct correlation between poverty and the ability of children to learn. I reject the idea that it is OK for the parents of the children I work with to be treated the way they are on their jobs."



Brandon Johnson, another teacher on the picket line outside the Walmart store, said it was "a shame that Walmart got US\$23 million in taxpayer funds to open up here in this city when at the same time the city says it has no money and is closing 50 of our schools."

Walmart workers were not shy about expressing their appreciation for the broad support they were getting.

Larry Bourne, a member of Our Walmart and a worker at the Crestwood, Illinois, Walmart, is on strike now while his wife, who also works at that store, is in Bentonville, Arkansas protesting at the shareholders' meeting.

As he picketed outside the Chicago Walmart he slammed what he

called Walmart's "predatory policies."

"They even terminate you just for taking a sick day to which you are supposed to be entitled," he said. "And the human resources people are really slick. They know that you can't live on what they pay you so they bring you in and show you how to game the social welfare system. They get you on food stamps or any other form of public assistance they can get you on. It's a disgrace that with a full time job you should have to go on food stamps."

Nevertheless, Bourne said the support of so many groups has helped the Walmart workers. "I'm active at my store. When they heard that we were going to have a picket line they urged me to take the day off because they are afraid of the organised workers. I attribute their failure to retaliate against me or to get rid of me to the wide support we are getting from everybody else," he said.

Bourne is among the Walmart workers who began the first "prolonged" strike in the 50-year history of the nation's largest employer. Last fall Walmart workers across the

country had staged a series of one-day strikes demanding a US\$13 per hour minimum wage, health care benefits, regular full-time hours and an end to retaliation against workers who try to organise.

As the demonstration showed, Walmart's "race to the bottom" practices hurt not just its workers but also a broad section of US taxpayers. A Walmart worker earning on average US\$8.81 per hour, is often dependent on food stamps, subsidised housing and childcare, Medicaid and other forms of public assistance.

People's World reporters entered the store and asked at the courtesy desk to speak with the manager about some of these issues. In a few moments a man who identified himself as Jack Williams, marketing director for Chicago Walmart, arrived at the counter and said that it was he, and not the store manager who was authorised to speak with the media. When asked about the demand by Walmart associates demonstrating outside that they be paid a living wage, he replied that all questions would have to be answered by "media

relations" in Bentonville and that he, the marketing manager, was busy because of the demonstration.

When a representative small group of striking and demonstrating employees had tried to enter the store a few moments earlier security personnel blocked their path, telling them only shoppers were allowed in.

"Walmart won't talk to its own workers, what a shame," declared Susan Hurlley, director of Chicago Jobs with Justice, when she came out after being barred from the store. Hurlley told the crowd outside about the shareholders' meeting in Bentonville and passed out green "voting cards" to people in the crowd. "We'll hold our own shareholders meeting here," she said to loud cheers.

The "shareholders" gathered on the street held up their cards to approve a number of resolutions including ones that called for full time scheduling and health care for workers and one that called for reimbursement to Illinois of the US\$24 million in taxpayer funds that Walmart has received.

People's World ✪

Police free besieged MPs from furious mothers

Police special forces formed a human cordon last week to free 1,500 MPs, civil servants and foreign guests from Bosnia's besieged parliament building. Nearly 3,000 people demanding action on a new ID law blockaded the building on Thursday with a human chain.

Parliament employees who tried to escape from windows were turned back with yells of "Go back to work." Sarajevo cab drivers supported the protest by blocking streets around the building.

The protesters demanded a new law on ID numbers after the old one lapsed in February, leaving babies born since without personal documents.

Protesters intended to prevent MPs they accuse of ethnic bickering from leaving until they passed new legislation but were persuaded to give in because of the foreigners trapped inside.

What had started as a small demonstration the day before grew into a blockade of the building, with more people joining every hour and the protest stretching into the night and the next morning.

Women with babies in buggies faced off with police special forces deployed to the scene. One pram was marked with a sign reading: "You will not leave the building until I get an ID number."

Sarajevo Mayor Ivo Komsic joined the protest, saying: "I am here on behalf of over 1,500 Sarajevo babies who can't get travel documents." Media reports about a three-month-old baby who can't get a passport for life-saving medical treatment abroad sparked the initial protest.

The government agreed to issue temporary ID numbers until a new law was passed, but protesters said that wasn't enough. Bosnia Herzegovina consists of two semi-autonomous mini-states, each with its own president, government and parliament.

Those are linked by a joint parliament, government and a three-member presidency. Ethnic squabbles have nearly ground many government services to a halt.

Morning Star ✪

The beginning of the end for austerity

Luke James

BRITAIN: The People's Assembly issued a landmark declaration last week launching the movement's plans for an unparalleled fightback against austerity. It sets out the stark choice facing Britain between accepting brutal cutbacks that don't work or taking action to build a future that's fair for all.

The founding statement sends a clear message that the People's Assembly will offer "action not words" in order to force the government to abandon austerity or elect one that will.

Thousands of supporters have rallied behind the movement at packed meetings across Britain ahead of the inaugural People's Assembly on June 22 in London. Three thousand will attend the historic demonstration of people power in two weeks' time to discuss opinions and policies popular across Britain but rarely heard in Parliament.

They will also launch an ambitious three-pronged attack on the government.

The action plan includes a national day of civil disobedience and direct action against austerity, a day of co-ordinated local demonstrations in the early autumn and a national demonstration alongside trade unions and campaign groups in November.

The declaration praises groups who have already taken on the government, including students, trade unions, local anti-cuts campaigns, environmental activists and the Occupy movement.

It goes on to back "every and all effective forms of action" and predicts that "our stand will require us to defend the people's right to protest." Despite issuing this strong statement of intent, organisers are determined to ensure everyone will be empowered to participate in discussions and play their part to build an inclusive movement.

Signatory John Rees is clear that the statement is not addressed

to existing left-wing activists. "It's a statement issued in the name of an assembly that is already broader than the existing left, aimed at hundreds of thousands of working people not in the left or the anti-austerity movement in any organised way. It seeks to draw them into action."

"The first People's Assembly cannot and should not decide everything. It is the start of a process of engagement and mobilisation, not the finished movement."

Speaking after launching the declaration, Peoples' Assembly secretary Sam Fairbairn told the *Morning Star* the event will kickstart a campaign that can "turn the tide on this rich man's government."

He said: "We can start to mobilise the millions of people who are affected by a government intent on making the poorest in society pay for the crisis while it's business as usual for the very people who created it."

Morning Star ✪

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Abbott wants to trash the environment

Tony Abbott's Coalition just tried to block the creation of marine parks which will protect our most precious ocean ecosystems – and came within a few votes of succeeding.

Marine protection is very close to my heart, I have been working on this issue for over 2 decades. That's why I'm so proud that the Greens voted to stop Abbott's attempt to trash hard won protection for our oceans.

The Greens voted to stop Abbott in the House, and we'll stop him in the Senate soon when he tries the same trick there.

From endangered blue whale feeding grounds off Perth, to the vast Coral Sea, Australia's oceans are

home to hundreds of species found nowhere else. They're a global treasure under threat from big companies that want to dredge, dump, and drill their way to a short-term profit.

We know that our oceans are too precious to lose – but does Tony Abbott? No. He and his party just tried to disallow the whole network of marine parks.

Unless the Greens stay strong in Parliament, Tony Abbott could get absolute control.

We're going to be outspent this election by the old parties and corporate vested interests. But you know what? We have never had the deep pockets the others have. But we do have something much more powerful: you.

**Rachel Siewert
The Greens**

Release Irish Republicans Interned Without Charge

I was delighted to hear the wonderful news of Marian Price's release after being interned for two years in prison in the north of Ireland without trial. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the diverse range of

people and organisations in Ireland and around the world that worked so hard to see this gross injustice ended. Otherwise, Marian would still be languishing, seriously ill in a British prison. Marian's internment without trial was a blatantly unjust denial of her rights.

My joy at Marian's freedom is tempered by the fact that other Irish Republicans are still being held in similar circumstances in prison for long periods without charge, trial or release date. The British state is employing the tactic of selective internment against some political activists merely for expressing critical political beliefs.

This policy is being used to suppress dissident political opposition to British rule. Martin Corey, aged 63, is one such political prisoner, who was arrested in April 2010. He has been unjustly interned since then, imprisoned for over three years without charge or trial. Another Republican political prisoner to be imprisoned under this repressive policy to silence those who dare to defy British policy is Stephen Murney, who has been in jail for over six months, since being arrested in November 2012.

Many other Irish Republican political prisoners are also in jail due to purported "secret evidence" from

Melbourne

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Salu-salu (Shared Food and Drinks) follows

British intelligence agencies, information that is withheld from the scrutiny and legal challenge of defence lawyers and the general public.

That both these procedures are deemed proper and permissible in a supposed legitimate legal system and democratic state should alarm and disturb anyone concerned with justice and human rights. In reality the tactics of selective internment and "secret evidence" is incompatible with a just and ethical legal system

and real democracy. The mistreatment of these political dissidents is in fact patently unfair and a gross denial of their human and civil rights. If the British authorities cannot produce any evidence or charges against these imprisoned Republicans or set a trial date then they should be immediately released.

**Steven Katsineris,
Vice-Chairman,
James Connolly Association,
Melbourne**

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Lies, damned lies, and propaganda



It was the Liberals under Bob Menzies who started selling off Australia's publicly owned assets.

You know there's a federal election in the offing when your local TV channels are full of ads featuring Clive Palmer spruiking his United Australia Party (UAP). As if to confirm what a right wing reactionary Palmer is, the UAP was the name of the conservative party in Australia back in the 1930s, before Menzies took it over and changed the name to the equally misleading Liberal Party.

And you know there's an election on the way when your letterbox begins to fill up with propaganda, propaganda so blatant that it only just avoids being labelled "lying propaganda". The Libs have sent out nationwide a glossy card emblazoned "Broken Promises: Labor's Dirty Dozen". You've probably seen it already.

It has cleverly been printed with a strip across the bottom that can be changed for each electorate, so that it appears to have been printed for *your* electorate exclusively. Now, before looking at this piece of reactionary propaganda in detail, it's worth noting that if ever the ALP deserved to lose an election it's this one. Labor's pundits have for decades been trying to convince the bosses of capital that the ALP would be a better manager of capitalism than the conservatives, better able to keep the workers docile and accepting of reactionary government policies, better able to head off or dampen down industrial unrest.

However, the ALP's success in this endeavour has inevitably led to an awakening on the part of the working class to the realisation that the Labor Party is no longer the party of the

labour movement. It may still hold the loyalty of many workers, but the interests it represents are nowadays those of business and commerce. In short, it serves the interests of employers, not employees.

So does Tony Abbott's mob, of course, and in their view probably with greater legitimacy. After all, aren't they descended in a straight line from Bob Menzies to John Howard to Tony Abbott? True, there were a few hiccoughs along the way when government inexplicably fell to the upstarts on the other side, but apart from the aberration of the period in office of the Whitlam government, the electorate would not have noted a great deal of difference between Labor and Liberal/National governments.

So what line is this first Liberal propaganda sheet for 2013 taking? Well, in this case it is attacking the government's record: "A bad government that keeps breaking its promises." Hang on – didn't John Howard get into a lot of strife when he tried to justify breaking *his* promises by claiming that they were only election promises, not *core* promises? The Libs' flyer evokes the ghost of John Howard where it suits them but conveniently forgets about him (and his record) when it doesn't.

The Libs blame the Labor government for increases in gas, electricity and childcare prices, although I suspect that the private companies gouging profits out of those industries would have something to do with it too, don't you think?

Many bourgeois economic pundits,

especially in the non-Murdoch papers, urged Australians to "embrace the deficit", arguing that it was economically a good thing. The leaflet ignores them in favour of bashing the government for "a huge budget deficit" with no other comment. It also claims that "under Howard, Australia had \$70 billion in net assets" but now is wallowing in debt. It naturally declines to mention that it was the Libs under Menzies who started selling off Australia's publicly owned assets, and every government since (other than Whitlam's) has sold off more. Remember all the privatisations under John Howard? While Labor undoubtedly contributed to the resultant sorry mess, it seems a wee tad unfair to try to blame Labor for what is essentially a basic tenet of Liberal Party policy.

The Lib brochure also blames the Gillard government for failing to roll out the NBN quickly enough. But the NBN is basically for businesses, not for ordinary folk. Why should the public purse have to shell out for this costly exercise at all? The brochure also blames the Gillard government for failing to deliver on an election promise of "500,000 new jobs within two years", and while there is unquestionably a lot more that Labor in office could have and should have done to create jobs, there is also no doubt that the Libs are conveniently blaming Labor for what is inherently a flaw in the capitalist system.

Finally, harping on their main peeve, the Libs say "Julia Gillard promised to protect our borders. Instead, border security has collapsed

with over 660 illegal boat arrivals carrying over 40,000 people." But all those people were stopped at the border, so how can they say "border security has collapsed". Apparently the Libs want the boats stopped before they even set out. Perhaps they are under the impression that these boats advertise their departures in the shipping news?

In any case, most of the so-called "boat people" are eventually cleared as legitimate refugees, and the Libs might like to note that refugees are *not* illegal. In fact it is not illegal to come to Australia by boat.

Some of the claims in the brochure are true: "Labor promised tax cuts for workers" – then scrapped the cuts. True, and largely indefensible. But the people behind the Liberal Party, the corporations and big business interests, cause much greater chaos and misery by closing factories and shipping jobs overseas. Entire communities are laid waste while key executives pocket millions in bonuses for successfully "downsizing" a large enterprise. They are in fact rewarded for de-industrialising Australia.

Howard did nothing about that, neither did Julia Gillard and neither will Abbott. We need a new type of government, sensitive to the needs of the people and prepared to defend their interests ahead of those of the transnational corporations, one that will conduct its business – *our* business – out in the open, away from secret boardroom deals, secure in its reliance on the people to keep its dealings honest and in the interest of the working people of Australia. ☺



Sunday 16 June –
Saturday 22 June

I am not a fan of the Dutch-born, Australian filmmaker Paul Cox. I find his self-consciously “European” filmmaking style just too pretentious for my taste. And regardless of the nominal subject of any of his films, they are all in fact about him personally. His films have the same narrow concerns as Patrick White’s novels.

I was brought up on Australian realism, much despised by admirers of Patrick White’s internalised anti-realism, and I find Cox’s films to be oddly adrift in space, regardless of where they are set. For all Cox’s inclusion of shots of Melbourne trams or whatever, his films could just as easily be set in Antwerp or Marseilles as in Melbourne or Sydney.

However, I found David Bradbury’s profile of Cox, *On Borrowed Time* screening in *Sunday Arts Up Late* (ABC1 Sunday June 16 at 9.30pm), to be fascinating. Bradbury is best known as the maker of documentaries about political or environmental issues. He has made films about Chile, East Timor, Cuba, depleted uranium weapons, nuclear power, and many related issues.

His portrait of Paul Cox however is not political. It is a sincere attempt to give Cox a sympathetic voice to speak about his work and his approach. It also allows many of his colleagues to add their comments too. The resulting portrait does

nothing to change my opinion of Cox’s films, but it is moving in its own right. When the film opens Cox acknowledges that he is dying. He has cancer of the liver. This adds an urgency and a melancholy to the film which then turns to drama when Cox is unexpectedly approved for a transplant should a suitable liver become available. The search for a donor then becomes paramount, while Cox muses on the meaning of life and death.

Snippets from Cox’s films are inserted at suitable moments throughout the film and their pretentious use of operatic interludes and pretty images turns Bradbury’s documentary into a sort of Cox hybrid.

In the dog-eat-dog world of commercial television, whenever anyone gets an idea for a program that subsequently proves popular, someone else will inevitably copy it for another channel. People who write books that are unoriginal imitations of other authors’ works are not usually held in high esteem. But people who rip off other people’s TV series get paid lots of money.

Such is life in the land of commercial TV production. Since 2009, angler and scientist Jeremy Wade has investigated – and fished for – fishy monsters reputed to lurk in the depths of rivers and lakes in all sorts of out-of-the-way places. In the process, he has debunked quite a few local myths and also identified some genuine monstrous freshwater fish.

Jeremy’s series of TV programs is called *River Monsters*, and is now in its fifth season. There is something awesome about bringing to light a 200 kilogram fish from the depths of a muddy river (and returning it to the water after identifying it, rather than having a fry-up for the camera crew!).

River Monsters was made by Icon Films of Bristol. It was not long however (2010 in fact) before a copy-cat program appeared on the *National Geographic* channel entitled *Fish Warrior* and featuring “conservationist and adventure angler” Jakob Vágner. Now it too is



This week’s *Funny As* series *Fiona O’Loughlin’s Greatest Hits* (ABC2 Saturday June 22 at 9.30pm).

running in Australia (SBS2 Tuesdays from June 18 at 9.35pm).

Now in its second season in the US, *Fish Warrior* is a straight rip-off of Wade’s series, but lacks Wade’s scientific concerns. I prefer the original.

Middle-class women in developed capitalist countries may take up many causes, from “save the whales” to “no GM foods”, but the cause they are most assiduously taught to worry about is themselves. It is a function of the way capitalism views people and women in particular.

In *On The Verge Of A Midlife Crisis* (ABC2 Wednesday June 19 at 8.30pm), British writer and comedian Sharon Horgan is facing her 40s in a state of panic. So she interviews other women in the same age group to find out how they have coped with this “crisis”.

One woman had been in the same job since she left school but in her late 30s thought: “Is this it?”

Being dissatisfied with what you have achieved in your life so far is not uncommon, but it is supposed to lead to a resolution to do something for humanity, or at least for your immediate friends and neighbours.

But in this program the likely reaction is to dump your partner, join the rockabilly scene, dye your hair orange and get ten vibrant tattoos. Once again, you see, it’s all about self. Another woman takes up toy boys 30 years her junior. Yet another one reinvented herself as a motivational speaker – on salesmanship! And yet another gave up her software consultancy business to take her family to live on a derelict narrowboat moored on one of the canals. It is so small it makes a caravan look spacious (you can stand in the middle of it and simultaneously touch both side walls with your outstretched hands).

All the women that Horgan interviews are caught up with such

big issues as whether they will ever have sex again. Working class women might be concerned about how they are going to feed and clothe their families, but sex is what chiefly concerns Horgan and her subjects.

The *Funny As* skein of stand-up comedy routines has provided some clever and amusing performances in what is a very difficult genre. One of the best is *Fiona O’Loughlin’s Greatest Hits* (ABC2 Saturday June 22 at 9.30pm). The mother of five comes from a large Irish Catholic family in Alice Springs, and in her act she talks about her kids, her husband, Alice Springs (and what happened to her husband during a Royal Visit to the Alice) and other small personal occurrences.

Some of her humour reminds me of Linus in the comic strip *Peanuts*, such as the despairing comment from her four-year-old, “I never go anywhere except the shops.

“I’ve never even seen Paris!” ☘



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June 14

GENOCIDE IN SRI LANKA: WHY NO RESPONSE FROM AUSTRALIA?

Gordon Weiss, former UN spokesperson on Sri Lanka, author of *The Cage: The Fight for Sri Lanka* and *The Last Days of the Tamil Tigers*;
Sam Pari, Dr, Spokesperson for Australian Tamil Congress;

June 21

REMEMBERING RACHEL CORRIE

Rihab Charida, Daughter of Palestinian Refugees and Film Maker;
Vivienne Porzolt, Spokesperson for Jews Against the Occupation, Sydney;

Lisa Arnold, Apheda Project Officer, Middle East;

June 28

THE DISGRACEFUL SHORTFALLS IN THE NSW HEALTH SYSTEM

John Kaye, MLC, NSW Greens;
Tad Tieze, Dr, Psychiatrist and campaigner;

July 5

CRISIS OF AUSTRALIAN MANUFACTURING – WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Tim Ayres, State Secretary, AMWU;
Phillip Toner, Senior Research Fellow, Sydney University;

July 12

TAFE – PRIVATISING THE FUTURE AND CUTTING OUR THROATS

Pat Forward, Federal TAFE Secretary of the Australian Education Union (AEU);

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Two great CDs

Paul Robeson

Paul Robeson is one of the outstanding figures of the 20th century. His father was a run-away slave and his mother came from an abolitionist Quaker family. He was a staunch fighter against racism and used his deep bass-baritone voice around the world in the cause of peace and freedom, in support of trade union struggles and against fascism. He also worked tirelessly for friendship and peace between the US and the former Soviet Union. Robeson also excelled in a range of sports and was twice named to the All-American football team. He was also a great linguist and a qualified lawyer. He earned international acclaim for his role as *Othello* in Shakespeare's stage play in London and as Joe in *Showboat*.

During his visit to the Soviet Union he was deeply impressed with the lack of racism, saying that for "the first time I felt like a full human being."

With his support for socialism and political activism, it is not surprising that he fell foul of the House Un-American Activities Committee which accused him of being a communist during the McCarthyist years. He was blacklisted by major concert halls, radio and television. In 1949, two of his inter-racial concerts in Peekskill were attacked by racist mobs while the police stood by.

"I'm going to sing wherever the people want me to sing ... and I won't be frightened by crosses burning in Peekskill or anywhere else," Robeson declared. He certainly lived up to that statement. He steadfastly refused requests to remove politics from his singing.

The FBI considered him to be "dangerous". His US passport was revoked in 1950, preventing the singer from travelling overseas to perform. But during the eight years of struggle to regain his passport there were a number of memorable international concerts.

In 1952, the Mine, Mill and Smelters Workers' Union of British Columbia in Canada issued an invitation to Robeson to their annual Convention which he accepted. As Americans did not need a passport to travel to Canada, Robeson did not expect any problems attending the convention. But the US authorities, under an order from President Truman, refused to let him leave the country.

Undeterred, Robeson addressed the Convention with a special telephone hook-up put together illegally by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

A special concert under the Peace Arch on the border between the two nations was organised. Letters were sent to all unions in the region, asking them to "seize the opportunity to register their protest against the United States government".

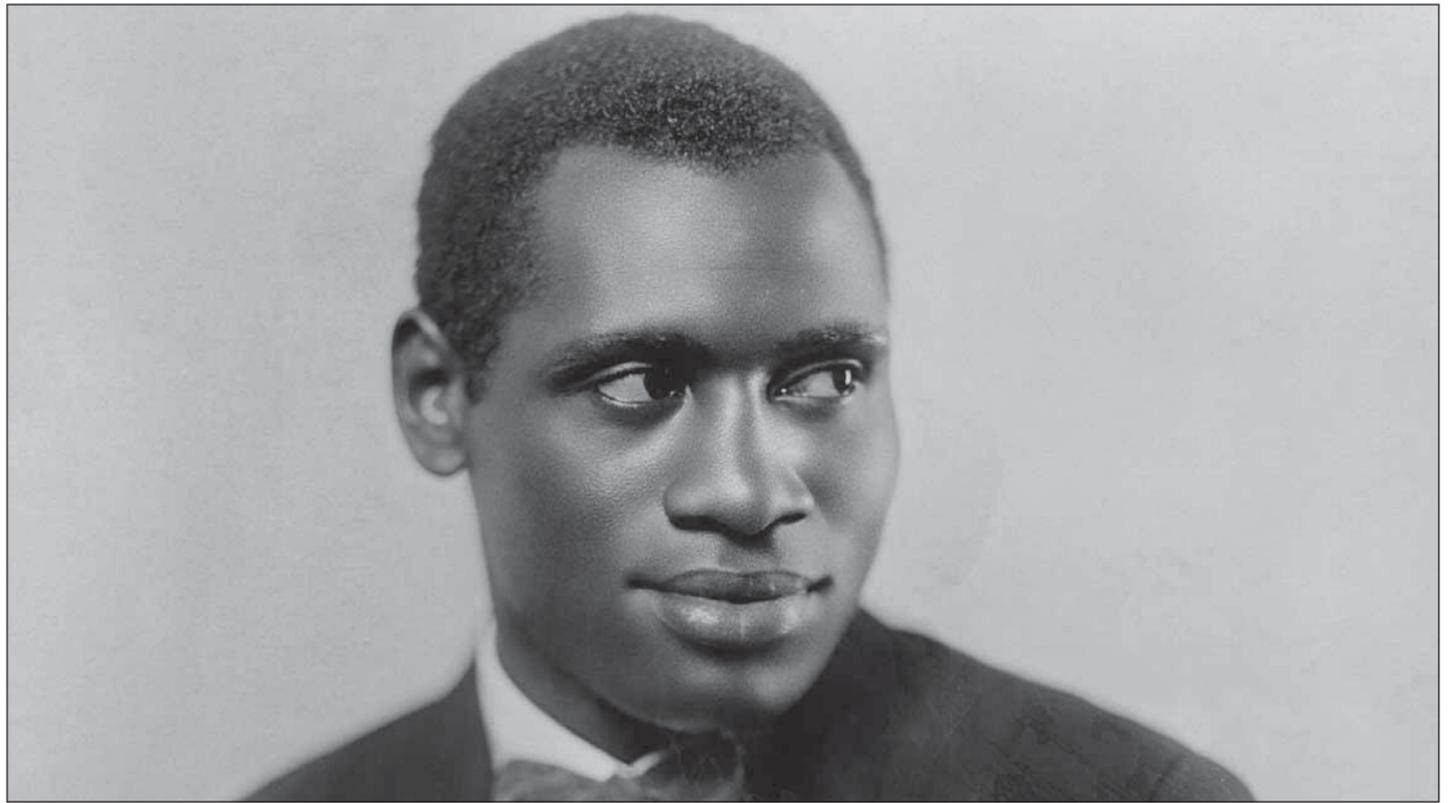
Inside the US the planned concert at the Peace Arch became the centrepiece of a two-month tour. "I want to sing to and for my people and the workers. No tickets over a dollar."

On May 18, 1952, Robeson addressed and sang to from a flat-bed truck, just one foot from the border on the US side. Thousands of people came from miles around on both sides of the border for this historic concert for peace and the freedom of the Negro people (the term used in those days, since replaced by Black American).

The union recorded the concert which was released as a 78rpm vinyl record.

A second concert, in May 1953 under the Peace Arch drew another large crowd. This concert was also taped. In this concert he gave an extended speech. In it he offered a bright future:

"I know there is one humanity – that there is no basic difference of race or colour, no basic difference of culture, but that all human beings



Paul Robeson.

can live in friendship and in peace. I know it from experience. I have seen the people. I have learned their languages. I sing their songs!"

Robeson returned again for two more concerts in the following years.

The recordings of the first two concerts have been remastered by Folk Era and reproduced on a CD, *The Peace Arch Concerts*.

The CD includes the Opening remarks by Robeson and Harvey Murphy, a union delegate from Vancouver who had proposed the first concert at the Peace Arch. Harvey Murphy also introduces the Joe Hill song.

The CD contains many old favourites including *Ol' Man River*, *Love Will Find a Way*, *Loch Lommond*, *Without Thee*, *Scandaliz' My Name*. In all there are 18 musical items as well as the speeches from Paul Robeson and Harvey Murphy.

The CD comes with a small 22-page booklet outlining the background of the concerts and a brief biography of Robeson. Considering the primitive equipment used to record the concerts the quality is surprisingly good.

The second CD, *Freedom Train and the Welsh Transatlantic Concert*, is another recording of an equally historic concert.

Robeson had appeared in the film *Proud Valley* which was filmed in the Rhondda Valley in Wales. He became very close to the coal miners in the Valley, living there and learning their culture during the making of the film in 1938-39.

"I went down into the mines with the workers, and they explained to me that 'Paul, you may be successful here in England but your people suffer like ours. We are poor people, and you belong to us. You don't belong to the bigwigs here in this country,'" Robeson is quoted as saying in the eight-page set of notes accompanying the CD.

In 1947, the right-wing American Heritage foundation announced a plan for the original text of the Declaration of Independence and other historical national documents to tour the US on a special red, white and blue train called the Freedom Train.

The name "Freedom Train" has special

meaning for Black Americans, whose parents or grandparents as slaves had escaped to freedom on the symbolic freedom train of the underground railroad.

But the authorities refused to guarantee that the exhibition would not be segregated. The poet and play-write Langston Hughes, who had a similar political outlook as Robeson at the time, composed a poem called "Freedom Train". Robeson concluded many concerts from that time on with a reading of the poem, which sent a powerful political message:

I hope their ain't no Jim Crow on the Freedom Train,
No back door entrance to the Freedom Train,
No sign FOR COLORED on the Freedom Train,
No WHITE FOLKS ONLY on the Freedom Train.

The poem concludes with the well known call for:

A Freedom Train,
That's yours and mine.

Robeson had been invited by the South Wales Miners to their annual Eisteddfod in 1953, 1956 and 1957. Still denied a passport and blacklisted by the FBI, Robeson, sent taped messages to the first two Eisteddfods. For the third invitation in 1957, with the laying of Transatlantic telephone cable, he was able to speak to the South Wales miners in Treorchy by phone from the US.

The growing anti-American sentiment, surrounding this concert in particular, saw the US officials restore his passport. In speaking to the miners he noted that his right to travel had just been restored. He made the 1958 Eisteddfod one of his first overseas engagements when the ban on travel was lifted.

Folk Era have remastered the recording of the concert, including Robeson's greetings and an introduction from Wil Paynter who was instrumental in organising the participation of Robeson.

The CD starts with Robeson reading Langston Hughes poem. The songs include *All Men Are Brothers*, *Slumberland*, *Wales*, *Y Deln Aur (The Golden Harp)*, *This Little Light Of Mine*, and *Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel*.

There is also a wonderful rendition of *We'll Keep A Welcome In The Hillside*, performed by the Treorchy Male voice Choir.

The two CDs are historic records of two highly significant political events in the history of the freedom struggle in the US. As musical items, the voice of Robeson cannot be beaten, nor can the political message.

Folk Era have many more CDs of folk and other music. Visit: rediscoversmusic.com
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