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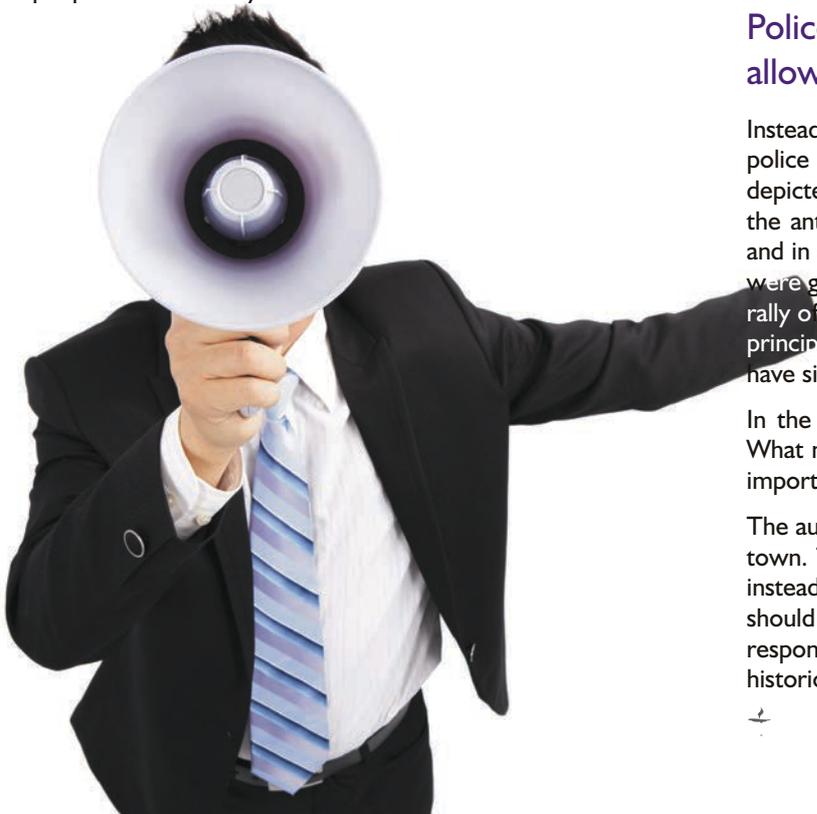
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SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

THE BIG LIE

The recent anti-racist rally in Coburg, Victoria, which was depicted by our sensationalist media and indeed some sections of government as 'violent', needs to be viewed in a proper perspective, because it is essential to the future of this country that we recognise the emergence of racism before it grows uncontrollable. Racism is a tool that seeks a scapegoat, promotes it as the enemy, and diverts community hostility away from government policies. Scapegoats are not new: they have been used by governments historically and are always an easily exploited source, be it Muslims, Jews, unionists, Aboriginals or asylum seekers.

Vilifying a particular group is not difficult ... you just tell lies about them. So 'Aboriginals are lazy', 'Jews are rich', 'Muslims are taking over the country', 'asylum seekers are taking our jobs and our housing'. These lies are noisily taken up by the ignorant that feed from the dangerously insidious propaganda from politicians and the media, the former because it suits their purposes and the latter because it sells papers. Scapegoating has long worked successfully; it was perfected by Marshall Goebbels, Nazi minister for propaganda in Hitler's Germany who once said, 'And if you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.'



Therefore it becomes ever more essential for the socially aware to counter this pervasive, ignorant, fostered racism. Unchallenged, it will destroy any semblance of democracy left in our society.

To challenge it, a peaceful rally of citizens from over 60 organisations was planned recently in Coburg, Victoria. It sought to highlight three racist issues: the forced closure of Aboriginal communities, Islamophobia, and our shameful treatment of asylum seekers.

Freedom of assembly is one of our basic rights. It is an important and effective way to promote issues that will improve our society and we should applaud those who care enough about a better world who are prepared to come out and defend democracy. And when a group of racist bigots decide to oppose these people, we should all be outraged.

In a genuine democracy, headlines in our newspapers should have read, 'A peaceful anti racist rally was deliberately targeted by violent, racist extremists in Coburg today. Police quickly moved the extremists away to allow the rally to proceed.'

Instead we were told that the groups clashed violently with police battling to keep them apart. The media and the police depicted it as a left wing/right wing clash ... another lie. Although the anti racist rally had been carefully planned for some time, and in cooperation with police, when it was learned that racists were going to oppose it, the organisers were advised to call the rally off. Quite rightly they refused. There were very important principles involved. To call off such an important rally would have signalled that racism is acceptable and it is not.

In the scheme of things, nationally, this was not a large rally. What needs to be recognised from it however are some vitally important principles that should concern us all.

The authorities should have kept the racists at the other end of town. They didn't. The media should have reported accurately instead of sensationally. They didn't. The state government should have supported the peaceful rally of decent, caring, responsible citizens. They didn't. This is a dangerous and historically duplicated series of events that should concern us all.

EDITORIAL

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN POLICE STATE:

Anti-big money,
anti-war,
pro-constitution,
freedom-loving
candidates need
not apply

BY **JOHN W WHITEHEAD** 23 MAY 2016

‘THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR PRESIDENT SEEM TO BE THAT ONE IS WILLING TO COMMIT MASS MURDER ONE MINUTE AND HAND PRESIDENTIAL MEDALS OF FREEDOM TO OTHER WAR CRIMINALS IN THE NEXT. ONE NEED ONLY APPLY IF ONE HAS VERY LOOSE, FLEXIBLE, OR NON-EXISTENT MORALITY.’

AUTHOR AND ACTIVIST CINDY SHEEHAN

Long gone are the days when the path to the White House was open to anyone who met the constitution’s bare minimum requirements of being a natural-born citizen, a resident of the United States for 14 years, and 35 years of age or older.

Today’s presidential hopefuls must jump through a series of hoops aimed at selecting the candidates best suited to serve the interests of the American police state. Candidates who are anti-war, anti-militarisation, anti-big money, pro-constitution, pro-individual freedom and unabashed advocates for the citizenry need not apply.

The carefully crafted spectacle of the presidential election with its nail-biting primaries, mud-slinging debates, caucuses, super-delegates, popular votes and electoral colleges has become a fool-proof exercise in how to persuade a gullible citizenry into believing that their votes matter.

Yet no matter how many Americans go to the polls on November 8, ‘we the people’ will not be selecting the nation’s next president.

While voters might care about where a candidate stands on healthcare, social security, abortion and immigration – hot-button issues that are guaranteed to stir up the masses, secure campaign contributions and turn any election into a circus free-for-all – those aren’t the issues that will decide the outcome of this presidential election.

What decides elections are money and power.

We’ve been hoodwinked into believing that our votes count, that we live in a democracy, that elections make a difference, that it matters whether we vote Republican or Democrat, and that our elected officials are looking out for our best interests. Truth be told, we live in an oligarchy, and

politicians represent only the profit motives of the corporate state, whose leaders know all too well that there is no discernible difference between red and blue politics, because there is only one colour that matters in politics – green.

As much as the Republicans and Democrats like to act as if there’s a huge difference between them and their policies, they are part of the same big, brawling, noisy, semi-incestuous clan. Watch them interact at social events – hugging and kissing and nudging and joking and hobnobbing with each other – and it quickly becomes clear that they are not sworn enemies but partners in crime, united in a common goal, which is to maintain the status quo.

The powers-that-be will not allow anyone to be elected to the White House who does not answer to them.

Who are the powers-that-be, you might ask?

As I point out in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, the powers-that-be are the individuals and corporations who profit from America’s endless wars abroad and make their fortunes many times over by turning America’s homeland into a war zone. They are the agents and employees of the military-industrial complex, the security-industrial complex, and the surveillance-industrial complex. They are the fat cats on Wall Street who view the American citizenry as economic units to be bought, sold and traded on a moment’s notice. They are the monied elite from the defense and technology sectors, Hollywood, and Corporate America who believe their money makes them better suited to decide the nation’s future. They are the foreign nationals to whom America is trillions of dollars in debt.

One thing is for certain: the powers-that-be are not you and me.

In this way, the presidential race is just an exaggerated farce of political theatre intended to dazzle, distract and divide us, all the while the police state marches steadily forward.

It's a straight-forward equation: the candidate who wins the White House will be the one who can do the best job of ensuring that the powers-that-be keep raking in the money and acquiring ever greater powers. In other words, for any viable presidential candidate to get elected today that person must be willing to kill, lie, cheat, steal, be bought and sold and made to dance to the tune of his or her corporate overlords.

The following are just some of the necessary qualifications for anyone hoping to be appointed president of the American police state. Candidates must:

Help grow the military-industrial complex – Fifty-five years after President Dwight D Eisenhower warned about the growth of the 'military-industrial complex' in his farewell address, the partnership between the government, the military and private corporations has resulted in the permanent militarisation of America. From militarised police and the explosive growth of SWAT teams to endless wars abroad, the expansion of private sector contractors, and never-ending blowback from our foreign occupations, we have become a nation permanently at war. As the *New York Times* pointed out, 'the military is the true "third rail" of American politics'. The military-industrial complex understands the value of buying the presidency, and has profited from the incessant warmongering of Obama and his predecessors. If money is any indicator of who the defense industry expects to win this November, thus far, Hillary Clinton is winning the money race, having collected more campaign contributions from employees with the 50 largest military contractors.

Police the rest of the world using US troops – The US military empire's determination to police the rest of the world has resulted in more than 1.3 million US troops being stationed at roughly 1000 military bases in over 150 countries around the world, including 48,000 in Japan, 37,000 in Germany, 27,000 in South Korea and 9800 in Afghanistan. That doesn't include the number of private contractors pulling in hefty salaries at taxpayer expense. In Afghanistan, for example, private contractors outnumber US troops three to one. Now comes the news that the US is preparing to send troops to Libya on a long-term mission to fight ISIS.

Sow seeds of discord and foment wars among other nations under the guise of democracy – It's not enough for the commander-in-chief to lead the United States into endless wars abroad. Any successful presidential candidate also needs to be adept at stirring up strife within other nations under the guise of spreading democracy. The real motive, of course, is creating new markets for the nation's #1 export: weapons. In this way, the US is constantly arming so-called 'allies' with deadly weapons, only to later wage war against these same nations for possessing weapons of mass destruction. It happened in Iraq when the US sold Saddam Hussein weapons to build his war machine. It happened in Syria when the US provided rebel fighters with military equipment and munitions, only to have them seized by ISIS and used against us. Now comes the news that President Obama has agreed to sell weapons to Vietnam, lifting a decades-long embargo against the nation whose civil war claimed the lives of more than 90,000 Americans.

Speak of peace while slaughtering innocent civilians:

Barack Obama's campaign and subsequent presidency illustrates this principle perfectly. The first black American to become president, Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize long before he had done anything to truly deserve it. He has rewarded the Nobel committee's faith in him by becoming one of the most hawkish war presidents to lead the nation, overseeing a targeted-killing drone campaign that has resulted in thousands of civilian casualties and deaths. Ironically, while Obama has made no significant effort to de-escalate government-inflicted violence or de-weaponise militarised police, he has gone to great lengths to denounce and derail private gun ownership by American citizens.

Prioritise surveillance in the name of security over privacy:

Since 9/11, the Surveillance State has undergone a dramatic boom, thanks largely to the passage of the USA Patriot Act and so-called 'secret' interpretations of the mammoth law allowing the NSA and other government agencies to spy on Americans' electronic communications. What began as a government-driven program under George W Bush has grown under Obama into a mass surveillance private sector that makes its money by spying on American citizens. As *Fortune* reports, 'In response to security concerns after 9/11, Americans witnessed the growth of a massive domestic security apparatus, fueled by federal largesse.' That profit-incentive has opened up a multi-billion dollar video surveillance industry that is blanketing the country with surveillance cameras – both governmental and private – which can be accessed by law enforcement at a moment's notice.

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Promote the interests of corporate America and big money over the rights of the citizenry:

Almost every major government program hailed as benefiting Americans – affordable healthcare, the war on terror, airport security, police-worn body cameras – has proven to be a trojan horse aimed at enriching corporate America while leaving Americans poorer, less secure and less free. For instance, the so-called 'affordable' health care mandated by Congress has become yet another costly line item in already strained household budgets for millions of Americans.

Expand the powers of the imperial president while repeatedly undermining the rule of law:

George W Bush assumed near-absolute power soon after the 11



As we near the end of Obama's two terms in office, that fantasy has proven to be just that: a fantasy. Indeed, President Obama has not only carried on the Bush legacy, but has taken it to its logical conclusion.

September 2001 attacks. Unfettered by Congress or the constitution, Bush led the 'war on terror' abroad and championed both the USA Patriot Act and Homeland Security Department domestically. This, of course, led to the Bush Administration's demand that presidential wartime powers permit the President to assume complete control over any and all aspects of an international war on terrorism. Such control included establishing military tribunals and eliminating basic rights long recognised under American law.

When Barack Obama ascended to the presidency in 2008, there was a sense, at least among those who voted for him, that the country might change for the better. Those who watched in awe as President Bush chipped away at our civil liberties over the course of his two terms as president thought that perhaps the young, charismatic senator from Illinois would reverse course and put an end to some of the Bush administration's worst transgressions – the indefinite detention of suspected terrorists, the torture, the black site prisons, and the never-ending wars that have drained our resources, to name just a few. As we near the end of Obama's two terms in office, that fantasy has proven to be just that: a fantasy. Indeed, President Obama has not only carried on the Bush legacy, but has taken it to its logical conclusion. Obama has gone beyond Guantanamo Bay, gone beyond spying on Americans' emails and phone calls, and gone beyond bombing countries without Congressional authorisation. As journalist Amy Goodman warned, 'the recent excesses of U.S. presidential power are not transient aberrations, but the creation of a frightening new normal, where drone strikes, warrantless surveillance, assassination and indefinite detention are conducted with arrogance and impunity, shielded by secrecy and beyond the reach of law.'

Act as if the work of the presidency is a hardship while enjoying all the perks: The race for the White House is an expensive, gruelling horse race: candidates must have at a minimum \$200 or \$300 million or more just to get to the starting line. The total cost for this year's election is estimated to exceed \$5 billion and could go as high as \$10 billion. However, for the winner, life in the White House is an endless series of star-studded dinner parties, lavish vacations and perks the likes of which the average American will never enjoy. The grand prize winner will rake in a \$400,000 annual salary (not including \$100,000 a year for travel expenses, \$19,000 for entertaining, \$50,000 for 'general' expenses and last but not least, \$1,000,000 for 'unanticipated' expenses), live rent-free in a deluxe, 6-storey, 55,000 square foot mansion that comes complete with its own movie theatre and bowling alley, round-the-clock staff, florists, valets and butlers. Upon leaving the White House, presidents are gifted with hefty pensions, paid staff and office space, travel allowances and lifetime medical care. Ex-presidents can also expand upon their largesse by writing books and giving speeches (Bill Clinton was given a \$15 million advance for his memoir and routinely makes upwards of \$100,000 per speech).

Clearly, it doesn't matter where a candidate *claims* to stand on an issue as long as he or she is prepared to obey the dictates of the architects, movers and shakers, and shareholders of the police state once in office.

So here we are once again, preparing to embark upon yet another delusional, reassurance ritual of voting in order to sustain the illusion that we have a democratic republic when, in fact, what we have is a dictatorship without tears. Once again, we are left feeling helpless in the face of a well-funded, heavily armed propaganda machine that is busily spinning political webs with which the candidates can lure voters. And once again we are being urged to vote for the lesser of two evils.

Railing against a political choice that offers no real choice, gonzo journalist Hunter S Thompson snarled, 'How many more of these stinking, double-downer sideshows will we have to go through before we can get ourselves straight enough to put together some kind of national election that will give me and the at least 20 million people I tend to agree with a chance to vote for something, instead of always being faced with that old familiar choice between the lesser of two evils?'

Remember, the lesser of two evils is still evil.

Source: Rutherford Institute

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THE COST OF ARMAMENTS

BY VAL YULE



A series of before-and-after pictures shows the cost to a city that is bombed. A recent example is the UNESCO-listed sites in the Syrian city of Aleppo. After bombing, these sites were all rubble.

But armaments are a cost to everybody, whether they are victims of bombing or not. Military expenditure in the world can be worked out per head. In 2008:

USA	\$835 billion spent, population 285 million = \$3,000 expenditure per head per annum
Saudi Arabia	\$46 bn, pop. 26 m = \$1,600 per head
UK	\$95 bn, pop. 60 m = \$1500 per head
France	\$79 bn, pop. 59 m = \$1300 per head
Australia	\$24 bn, pop. 20 m = \$1200 per head
Japan	\$58 bn, pop. 126 m = \$460 per head
Russia	\$44 bn, pop. 146 m = \$300 per head
China	\$70 bn, pop. 1,270 m = \$55 per head

What could have been spent on life-giving policies instead! Public concern for the reverence for life is unbalanced.

A major issue of pro-life morality must be not only the saving of the lives of infants, but also the costs and profits of armaments.

Research, production and sales of armaments link with climate change, financial melt-downs, peak oil, war crimes trials, culture clashes, scientific ethics and pro-life activists. Armaments should be an urgent public issue and election focus, instead of rarely being mentioned in political discussions. A terrifying *New Scientist* article, 27 September 2008, p. 26, was aptly titled 'You thought cluster bombs were scary'.

War research and sales have consequences:

- Inevitably they are used by your enemies, terrorists and rogue states. You have done the work for them.
- Inevitably their design and use creates more enemies and hatred.
- Inevitably the 'world leaders' who produce and sell them set moral examples to the rest of the world – which copies and will soon surpass. Who dares to call USA or Britain truly peace-making or 'Christian'?
- Inevitably armaments destroy and maim, in addition to the many natural disasters and diseases that already destroy and maim.
- Inevitably they waste resources and brains. The enormous financial costs are hardly offset by the enormous sales to create more havoc and oppression elsewhere. Sure, great discoveries for good can result from military research; they should be made instead by research redirected to peace.
- Such research inevitably harms the moral values of inventors and workers.
- Inevitably it ignores the constant lessons that modern conflicts are not won by 'shock and awe'.

We need self-defence – but not mighty missiles and million-dollar types of armaments that prove ineffective against the increasing menaces of terrorists, fanatics, pirates and blackmailers.

Inevitably military invention, computer war games and horror films interact psychologically to warp attitudes and also behaviour – as we have seen.

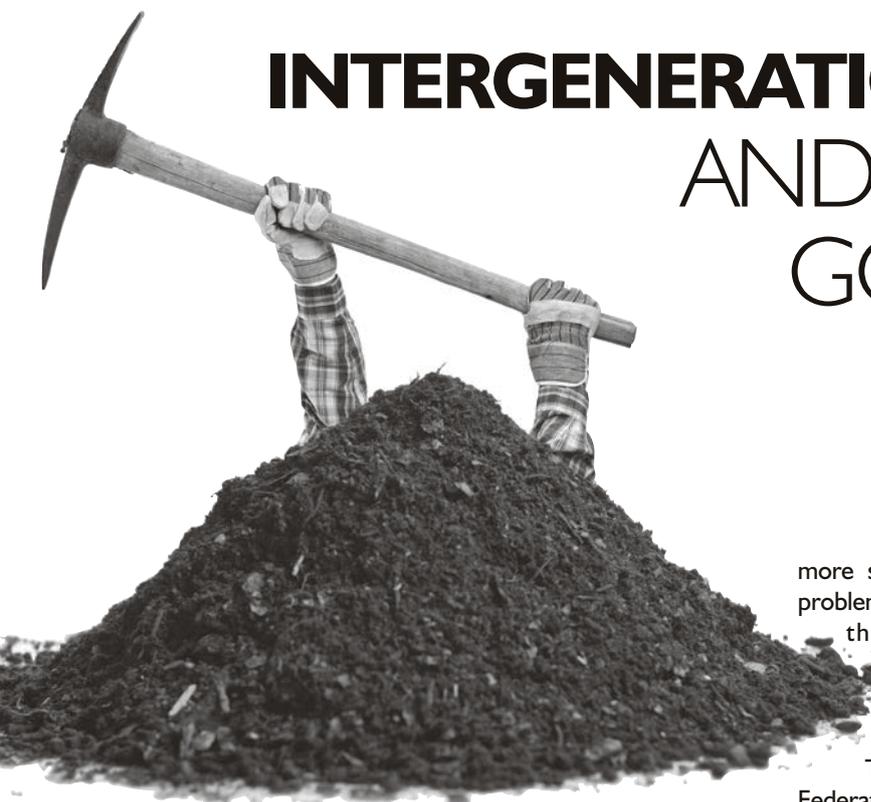
Inventing and producing means to kill and torture are not justified by the argument of 'making jobs and profits'. It is not inevitable that military inventions, computer war games and horror films should interact psychologically to warp attitudes and also behaviour.

Global cooperation is needed for humankind to face the enormous shared environmental and economic threats, rather than expecting more and worse wars with death and destruction. We need technology to make all nations prosperous. We also need the psychology of peace-making, entertainment and the arts, to raise visions of how peace could be won, not self-fulfilling depiction of still more future horrors.

Continued page 10

INTERGENERATIONAL EQUITY AND THE LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

PART ONE



more slowly. That made it easier to focus on solving problems, on making sure that people didn't fall through the cracks. But I want to talk about the Australian settlement, the economic and social model that we developed in the lead up to and following the years of Federation.

The dominant political debate at the time of Federation was the argument over free trade versus protection. Many of the arguments of the time sound familiar to our ears and ring true today. Bob Birrell writes in his book *A Nation of Our Own* that free trade was seen as the policy of the pastoralists. That is still true. It is the agribusinesses that push hardest, by a mile, in favour of the free trade agreements that Australia has entered into in recent years.

And back then, as now, the protectionists were people who wanted to promote a diverse industrial base. Protection was also seen as crucial to the wellbeing of the working class. In 1901 the great Liberal Alfred Deakin – who the modern Liberal Party reveres in name while implementing policies that he was absolutely opposed to – declared that 'If federal protection increases the manufacturers' profits, state laws must provide that the employee shall secure his share, perhaps by means of special boards for wages and hours, according to the plan partly adopted by Victoria'.

The view of many protectionists and particularly the social democrats among them was that Australia should learn from the mistakes of the 'old world' and become a 'new world', free of both the social divisions and the strong class boundaries of the United Kingdom, and the slavery which had blighted the United States. We were to do our own dirty work rather than expect someone else to do it. Australia was not to be like America, where competition reigned supreme at the expense of workers' long-term wellbeing. This outlook was egalitarian, and helped give the Australia of the Federation era a democratic culture – that Jack is as good as his master, and down with 'tall poppies', or at least those who give themselves airs.

Bob Birrell concludes that the Federation era and the 'Australian settlement' offers ideals directly relevant to our present dilemmas, and that it is a shame that it has been disparaged by Australia's cultural gatekeepers. It has been fashionable for years to deride the Australian economic and political institutions and culture of the Federation era, often referred to as the Australian settlement. And the

For the past thirty years Australia has been undergoing an experiment. We have not been alone. Quite a few other countries have travelled the same path. Free market liberalism. Its hallmarks have been globalisation, privatisation, deregulation, free movement of goods and free movement of people. Its advocates said that it would strengthen the Australian economy, and make us more resilient to external shocks.

But far from making our economy more diverse and resilient, we have become narrow and vulnerable. We have much higher levels of unemployment than we did thirty years ago. We have much higher levels of youth unemployment, much worse long-term unemployment, and serious problems of underemployment. We have much larger foreign debt and much larger budget deficits. The distribution of wealth between rich and poor is becoming less equal. And the social problems generated by frustrated ambition – drugs, crime, mental health problems, homelessness – are on the rise too.

But the people who dug us into this hole are unrepentant. They want us to keep digging. They talk about the need for economic reform, which is code for more privatisation, more deregulation, and freer movement of goods and people. They talk about leadership, which is code for demanding that politicians do what they want, rather than what the voters want.

That is why I am so concerned that we are failing future generations, and why I have started talking a lot about intergenerational equity. I believe we have an obligation to pass on to our children and our grandchildren a world in as good a condition as the one our parents and grandparents gave to us, and I fear that we are failing in that task.

If our parents and grandparents did a better job than we are doing, how did they do it? Well, in the first place Australia's population was much smaller, and growing

settlement itself was effectively torn up several decades ago. But I believe that many of the things done at that time served Australia well and indeed are key reasons why we developed a more egalitarian, more prosperous, fairer society than many other countries were able to accomplish.

Alfred Deakin expressly set out to make Australia a more diverse and self-reliant industrialised economy. He and his supporters were worried that Australia could become, in his words of 1905, an economy of 'hewers of wood, drawers of water, shearers of wool, and growers of wheat'. In addition the Deakin government linked receipt of tariff protection to the payment of fair wages, establishing the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, which incorporated the principle of a living wage into its determination of industrial awards. Australia developed a reputation as a workingman's paradise.

Australia was hit hard by the Depression, but the Australian settlement and the Federation-era institutions survived the test. There was little social unrest, and after the Second World War Australia's manufacturing exports expanded and we enjoyed a golden age of prosperity.

The prospects for today's young people are nowhere near as rosy. We have fitted them up with an axis of financial evil – job insecurity, housing unaffordability and student debt. How did this happen? We saw the rise of the economists and the theory of neoliberalism.

Economists have always argued against measures to protect or advance economic equality on the grounds that reducing inequality is at the expense of economic efficiency and leads to slower economic growth. The assumption that fairness and efficiency are in conflict has been convenient for the wealthy, convenient for the big end of town, but the latest research simply doesn't support it.

In 2014 the International Monetary Fund published research showing that income inequality between households adversely affects economic growth. And in 2015 the IMF found that there is an inverse relationship between the size of the income share going to the rich and the speed at which the economy grows.

The hallmarks of neoliberalism are many but include tax cuts for the well off and for corporations, something we saw in the recent Liberal Federal Budget.

The government will reduce the small business tax rate. At first glance this seems reasonable but the devil is in the detail. The government will extend this cut to all companies by 2024–25, and cut the company tax rate for all companies to 25% in 2026–27. So this is not a small business tax cut at all; it is a company tax cut dressed up as a small business cut.

Treasury officials have revealed the Government's plan to cut the company tax rate to 25 per cent will cost \$48 billion over 10 years, and this at a time when under the Liberal government of the last 2 years we have seen the Budget deficit triple while overall debt is going up.

And how are these tax cuts justified? With euphemisms like: to promote 'jobs and growth', and come from the same flawed economic dogma of neoliberalism where we are told that 'a rising tide lifts all boats', but as the International Monetary Fund has cautioned, 'When a handful of yachts become ocean liners while the rest remain lowly canoes, something is seriously amiss.'

Malcolm Turnbull promised new economic leadership but this Budget is from the same thinking that drove Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey. It delivers tax cuts for the banks and multinationals at the expense of Australian families.

When asked why the income tax cuts in the budget will only go to the rich the Government says, 'We want to grow the economy, we want to create more jobs.'

This is more of the theory of 'trickle down' economics. It is the central economic foundation of the great 'liberal' experiment that has dominated Western economies since Ronald Reagan took office in 1981. But as the Howard government's own 'Review of Business Taxation' found, there is no compelling case that accelerated depreciation actually benefits the economy through higher business investment and, in turn, more jobs.

Economists and captains of industry like to argue the world is becoming a better place courtesy of globalisation, but what I see is ever growing inequality, and tax avoidance exacerbates this. This is not about class warfare and tearing down wealth creation, but about ensuring that everyone is paying their fair share in tax.

Financial data from 76 of Australia's largest multinationals revealed an average effective tax rate of 16.2% – almost half the statutory 30% tax rate for companies in Australia. Contrast this with 24%, the average tax rate of a worker in the construction industry or a public hospital nurse.

One of the main ways tax evasion occurs is through 'transfer pricing'. This is when goods and services are sold between subsidiaries of the same parent company. These goods and services include things like intellectual property rights, management services, branding and insurance. The sales take place within the same multinational company.

As long as the subsidiaries of the company charge each other a fair market price – known as an 'arm's length' price – such transactions are perfectly legitimate. Tax is paid where it should be, in the place where the business is actually taking place. However by artificially altering the price, the company can increase its costs in a location with high taxes and transfer revenue to a location with low taxes, often a tax haven. This is known as 'transfer mispricing'.

With 60% of world trade now taking place within, rather than between, multinational corporations, there are substantial opportunities to manipulate transactions to reduce tax.

The issue of multinational profit shifting is about fairly sharing the revenue burden. When a handful of big businesses ship their profits offshore it hits the federal budget's bottom line. When a small number of big firms do the wrong thing, it is the great majority of businesses, large and small, the self-employed and the PAYG taxpayers who end up paying more than they should.

We do not need that kind of economic activity because it is harmful to economic activity – it encourages firms to focus their energies on getting their accountants to play with loopholes – loopholes that might allow debt shifting within organisations not in order to improve the productive capacity of the economy but in order to find the next loophole in the tax system.

END PART ONE

REFUGEES FROM 'ENDLESS' WAR

POLICYMAKERS IN OFFICIAL WASHINGTON TALK PIOUSLY ABOUT WAGING 'HUMANITARIAN' WARS, BUT THE REAL-LIFE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE INTERVENTIONS PLAY OUT IN SQUALID REFUGEE CAMPS FAR FROM U.S. SHORES, AS **ANN WRIGHT** WITNESSED.

'If you don't like refugees coming to your country, stop voting for politicians who love to bomb the shit out of them.' Our delegation from CODEPINK: Women for Peace saw this written on a tent at the Idomeni refugee camp on the Greek-Macedonian border.

As we well know, neither the Greek nor Macedonian governments have bombed people, but they are having to deal with the huge numbers of refugees caused by the decisions of government far away. However, in a US presidential election year, it is a message that American voters should heed.

Refugees from Mideast wars camped along rail lines in Greece

The Obama administration, which inherited the chaos from the 2003 Iraq war from the Bush administration but which has been bombing ISIS in urban areas in Iraq and Syria, has resettled only 1,736 Syrian refugees over the last seven months – despite President Obama's pledge to resettle at least 10,000 Syrians by September 2016.

In contrast, Canada has resettled more than 26,000 Syrian refugees since late 2015, while Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have together taken in millions of Syrian refugees since the conflict began five years ago.

In early May, we had flown from Athens to Thessaloniki, Greece's second largest city, and then had driven one hour north to the Greek border with Macedonia. The name of the tiny hamlet of Idomeni has become synonymous with the largest refugee camp in Greece.

As we arrived, a tremendous thunder, lightning and hailstorm hit the area ripping down tents, making mud pools and deluging tents and the clothing and bedding inside. We saw the worst conditions (except cold and snow) that the 13,000 refugees must endure in five camps within four miles of the Macedonian border.

All five are 'informal, unofficial' camps and refugees can come and go at will. They have refused any attempt to put them into the formal 'detention' camps that place them in isolated areas and restrict their movement within Greece.

As a result, the services provided are not particularly well organised although all have limited porta-potties, showers and faucets for washing clothes. All have basic

food provided primarily by volunteers, non-governmental organisations and the Greek military (in only one camp).

The first camp one comes upon on Highway 75 heading north from Thessaloniki is at the gasoline station and rest stop called EKO. Over 2,000 persons are camping in the large parking lot, grocery store and car wash.

Save the Children provides rice porridge and oranges daily for children under 11 years of age and estimates there are over 1,000 children. We helped hand out the porridge by going tent by tent and asking how many children of that age group were in the household (tenthold).

Save the Children coordinators told us that they liked having the daily contact with people in their living space rather than having people stand in another long line. We were greeted with a warm smile and a thank you by every mother to whom we delivered the porridge.

International efforts

The Boat Refugee Foundation of the Netherlands has a number of volunteers that help with the porridge delivery, young women and men from the Netherlands, Ireland, Sweden and the UK.

At EKO camp, we met a distinguished man who told us he was a mathematics teacher in a small village outside of Damascus, Syria. He and his 13-year-old daughter made the trip from Syria, through Turkey, by boat to Samos, ferry boat to Piraeus, train from Athens to Thessaloniki and taxi to EKO camp. He had been at the camp for one month and three weeks. He left his wife and 17-year-old daughter behind in Syria.

Leaving EKO camp, we stopped at the Park Hotel on the outskirts of the village of Polikastro where the volunteer headquarters is located. Each night at 8 pm, experienced volunteers provide an orientation for new volunteers and update everyone with the day's happenings.

A rain-soaked camp for mideast war refugees near the Greek-Macedonian border

In the back of the Park Hotel is the kitchen of Hot Food Idomeni, a group of volunteers that cook basic meals of staples such as rice, beans and curry in large vats for 5,000 persons each day. Paul of the United Kingdom heads up the volunteer force of 45 persons.

Two shifts of 15 people prepare the meals and two groups of another 15 load up the food, drive the food to the camps and distribute it. Paul said that they are spending about \$2,000 per day for food and transporting the food for 5,000.

The Greek military feeds one of the other camps and has called on Hot Food Idomeni to help them when their food ran out. Hot Food Idomeni is a remarkable place to work as a volunteer and it's a great organisation to send donations as their work is definitely keeping people alive.

After the Park Hotel, we stopped at the 500-person camp called Lidl, named for a nearby merchandise store. Most persons live in white tents provided by the Greek military. The tents are in long military precision lines next to a small runway. The military does not let new volunteers into the camp, only those affiliated with organisations.

Next we visited the Hara camp, named for a gasoline rest stop and nearby hotel. Five hundred persons are camped around the gasoline station area. Norway's Northern Lights Aid group is nominally 'in charge' of the camp and

provided tents, coordinates clothes distribution and has a sundry item purchase for refugees.

Charlie and Henry formed Northern Lights after they worked for months on Lesvos and when volunteers were displaced by the detention centre staff, they came to the Macedonian border to help with refugees there. Hara, a much smaller camp, has a much different atmosphere because of the attention given by Northern Lights volunteers, including four from Poland and the Czech Republic when we were there. They had much to do with a more positive environment.

A sprawling camp

Idomeni is a sprawling camp within 500 metres of the Macedonian border and has around 10,000 persons. One Doctors without Borders (MSF) staff told us that no one knows the exact number as refugees are coming and leaving at will.

The camp has been open as a stop for refugees who were able to cross into Macedonia prior to March 22 and go into Europe. Now those in the camp are stuck. They must remain in the camp until a decision is made on their individual cases. Some have been in the camp for nine weeks.

Greek police have two large buses that block the railroad tracks between the camp and the border. Many of the refugees have placed their tents on the railway line. Others have their tents in the fields that became mud pits with the heavy rain that we witnessed on the day we arrived. Parents were cleaning out the tents of mud and rain that had poured in, hanging up clothes, blankets, and sleeping bags on the fences along the railroad track.

Not everyone is sleeping in small tents. Two large UNHCR temporary tent buildings have approximately 100 bunks in them arranged much like the overcrowded prisons in the US. People make privacy areas from the blankets hanging down from the upper bunks.

Four dinner lines began forming in the late afternoon. The four feeding locations had hundreds of people lined up for simple meals of beans and rice, and a couscous type meal.

As with any refugee camp, industrious sellers have begun. Some had small amounts of coffee, powdered milk, crackers, eggs for sale. Those who had purchased food were cooking it over wood fires from trees they were chopping down, not an enduring move to local residents in the area.

Millions of refugees await their fate and future in Greece, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan as the international community slowly decides how to handle the flood of people fleeing chaos in their countries caused by military operations. Millions of others hope that their arrival in Europe will provide them an opportunity for a life without conflict until they can return home.

Ann Wright served 29 years in the US Army/Army Reserves and retired as a colonel. She served as a US diplomat for 16 years in US embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia. She resigned from the US government in March 2003 in opposition to President Bush's war on Iraq. She is the co-author of Dissent: Voices of Conscience.

The bailouts were for the banks: study confirms rescue loans didn't serve Greeks

'THE ONLY REASON WHY THEY EFFECTED THIS SO-CALLED BAILOUT OF GREECE WAS TO SAVE THEIR OWN BANKS AND TO PRESENT THIS AS SOLIDARITY WITH GREECE'

**BY ANDREA GERMANOS,
STAFF WRITER**

A new study offers more confirmation that the so-called bailout packages the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) delivered to Greece primarily served European banks rather than the Greek people.

The study released Wednesday by the Berlin-based European School of Management and Technology (ESMT) analysed where funds from the two aid bailout deals – received on the condition of imposing harsh austerity measures – since 2010 went.

'Contrary to widely held beliefs', ESMT states, of the €15.9 billion (roughly \$246 billion), less than 5 per cent went to the Greek fiscal budget. The other 95 per cent of the funds 'disbursed to Greece since the start of the financial



crisis as loans from the bailout mechanism has been directed toward saving the European banks', *Ekathimerini* reports.

Reporting by the German business newspaper *Handelsblatt* adds, 'The aid programs were badly designed by Greece's lenders, the European Central Bank, the Europe Union and the International Monetary Fund. Their priority, the report says,

was to save not the Greek people, but its banks and private creditors.'

'Most of the money was used to actually transfer risks from private creditors to public creditors', ESMT President Jörg Rocholl told DW Wednesday. 'This means money was used to repay the private creditors by taking on more debts that were taken by private creditors.'

The report's findings echo the charge levied by other economists including Nobel Prize-winner Joseph Stiglitz and former Greek finance minister for the anti-austerity Syriza party, Yanis Varoufakis.

Speaking to *Democracy Now!* last week, Varoufakis said, 'We had the largest loan in human history. The question is, what happened to that money? It wasn't money for Greece. It was money for the banks.'

'And the Greek people took on the largest loan in human history on behalf of German and French bankers, under conditions that guaranteed that their income, our income in Greece, would shrink by one-third. That is *Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck material. One-third of national income, poof, disappeared. So it was impossible to repay that money. And they knew that, in the first place. So the only reason why they effected this so-called bailout of Greece was to save their own banks and to present this as solidarity with Greece,' he said.

Asked by host Amy Goodman, 'Ninety-one per cent of the bailout went to German and French banks?'

'Well, the first bailout,' Varoufakis replied. 'The second bailout, 100 per cent. And the third bailout, which I didn't sign, Amy, it was \$85 billion. Of that, precisely zero will go to Greece. So, these are just typical extend-and-pretend loans.'

Varoufakis, who said he was 'elected to say no to the creditors [...] no to the extending and pretending, to the continuation of the depression,' added:

'What happened was very simple. In 2010, the Greek state went bankrupt, because it was part of a common currency area, a monetary union, that was simply not fit to the purpose of sustaining the great financial collapse of Wall Street, the city of London, the Frankfurt banks, the French banks, etc., and the Greek banks, and so on and so forth. So, there was a cynical transfer of private

sector, private bank losses onto the shoulders of the weakest of taxpayers, the Greeks, knowing that those shoulders were weak, so weak that they wouldn't be able to sustain that burden, and that burden would then be transferred to the shoulders of the German, the Slavic, the French taxpayers. And once they did this, it's like Shakespeare, it's like Macbeth: You commit one crime, then you have to commit a second crime to hide the fact that you committed the first one, and then a third one, and then a fourth one. And the second crime, of course, was the second bailout, because once the first bailout makes whole the bankers, then, within a few months, it becomes abundantly clear that the Greek state cannot sustain that loan. So, a second predatory loan is enforced upon the Greek government in order to pretend that it is making its payments for the first loan, and then a third one, and then a fourth one. And the worst aspect of it is that these loans, which were not loans to Greece, were given, extended, on condition of stringent austerity that shrunk our incomes. So we entered a debt deflationary cycle, a great depression, with no end in sight, and a great depression which sees – has absolutely no chance of a New Deal kind of solution like we had here in the United States in the 1930s, as long as the powers that be in Berlin – we heard the White House spokesman siding himself completely with Berlin – insist that this extending and pretending shall continue.'

The anti-neoliberal globalisation organisation Attac Austria also released a report in 2013 that found that over three-fourths of bailout funds went to save banks.

'The goal of the political elites is not the rescue of the Greek population but the rescue of the financial sector,' Lisa Mittendrein of ATTAC said at the time. 'They used hundreds of billions of public money to save banks and other financial players – and especially their owners – from the financial crisis they caused.'

www.commondreams.org

THE COST OF ARMAMENTS from page 12

Every public discussion of life-and-death issues such as abortion should include also the life-and-death issue of armaments. The US maintains 5,000 nuclear weapons. Only one is sufficient to destroy a nation. Our reverence for life is unbalanced. Why is the nature and costs of recent scary military research not a major issue of morality in US Presidential elections?

Beverley Nicholls wrote *Cry Havoc* in 1933 about the armaments industry. Hardly a word needs changing.

Someone should compare what the defence budgets and military research of the big spenders are spent on, with what the big items such as sophisticated weapon systems and aircraft carriers can achieve against the biggest dangers to world peace today, including in major areas of armed conflict. Pirates, terrorists, insurgents, religious and political fanatics, social disruption, sabotage – what are the military means to counter these – and what alternative routes are there?

The revelations of what is going on in military research and the gung-ho exhibitions at arms fairs seem out of kilter with dealing with these dangers. In the face of enormous shared environmental threats, the prophecies now are of more

and worse wars and arms races to make the destruction worse, not more cooperation.

The International Red Cross is reported as attempting to have landmines banned under international law, like chemical weapons. Good. A more effective complementary action is to campaign to have the making or selling of landmines chargeable under international law as a war crime, so that these profiteers could be put in the dock, publicly.

It seems ridiculous to be spending millions of dollars trying to identify war criminals of fifty or more years ago, when more criminals are flourishing and active at this very time. The makers and sellers of landmines are more easily identified than the producers of chemical weapons research. It would not be possible to arrest and prosecute the lot, unfortunately, but examples could be made, sufficient to reduce the mass production, and help make the military, even guerrillas, more aware of what they are doing.

Val Yule is a psychologist and long-time member of the Humanist Society of Victoria.

Source: Australian Humanist (Publication of the Council of Australian Humanist Societies May–July 2016)

from our readers



Beacon Editorial Board

Hi

Like always, the *Beacon* never ceases to enthral me with the information that is contained within. The editorial in the May issue is no exception. Having said that, would it be possible to obtain that page, as depicted, in electronic format? If it is possible, I would love to post it (with permission, of course) on various social media sites.

I would like to take the opportunity in thanking the Board for finding space in placing 'THE AUSTRALIAN FLAG: What does it mean to you?' article in the *Beacon* (page 4). Similar to my request above, would this also be possible in getting same in electronic format as depicted?

Thanking you in anticipation.

Klaus Kaulfuss, Vic

Dear Donna

Please find enclosed my \$10 subscription to the *Beacon* which I find gives such a balanced perspective on world affairs and federal politics, rather than the right-wing rubbish peddled by the Murdoch-controlled press.

Kindest regard.

L Dalrympe, Vic

To the Editor

I look forward to the *Beacon*. It reaffirms my convictions.

Thank you.

J Fleming, Vic

To the Editor

Apologies for lateness. Also apologies for not attending on Sundays. I have had health issues, plus volunteer work on Sunday mornings. Thanks for the *Beacon* and Saturday morning replays on 3CR. I hope to be able to attend later in the year.

With the new subscription, if possible, send some old copies of the *Beacon* dealing with climate change issues.

Thanks and regards.

T Inglese, Vic

Dear Donna

Privatisation document

Thank you for sending this brilliant analysis of a poorly understood topic. It should be widely distributed in print form. Workers, unionists, political parties, university students, pensioners (amongst others) would all benefit from this information.

You have created a document of clearly expressed facts that needs to be widely disseminated in the public interest.

Its promotion as a nicely presented, easily readable document would be a labour of pride, conviction and job satisfaction.

I hope I have made that point.

In solidarity.

AL

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