



SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY the Beacon

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EDITORIAL

*And thus I clothe my naked villainy...
And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.*

William Shakespeare (King Richard 111)

Although the politics and practice of imperial power has essentially not changed since Shakespearean times – its scope and power has changed and expanded enormously with capitalist development.

Those who dare oppose war as defined in the USA and NATO's 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) are branded terrorists or Russian stooges. The so-called 'liberal' or 'centre left' media, and those who claim to be progressive, brand those who oppose R2P as apologists for Assad, Gaddafi, etc. However, it's not too difficult to determine that R2P could more aptly be called the 'Right to Plunder'. It's all about the drive for profit, control of resources and, when needed, the destruction of governments or countries that stand in the way.

The mainstream media (MSM) is in lockstep about military intervention to the extent that realities are turned upside down and the lie becomes the truth.

Remember that the invasion of Afghanistan (supposedly about destroying terrorism) had the support of organisations such as Amnesty International, based on the terrible treatment of women under ISIS. How military invasion, the creation of millions of refugees and civilian deaths have advanced that cause is not explained.

Remember the 'weapons of mass destruction' claim that led to the invasion of Iraq? The 'shock and awe' destruction of that country resulted in the death toll of hundreds of thousands. As we now know, the weapons didn't exist. The now infamous UN speech of Colin Powell was written by his Chief of Staff, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, whose later reflections are eye-opening (he was conned).

The propaganda used in the case of Syria is a little more sophisticated, given past propaganda efforts. We now have gas attacks, supposedly used by the Syrian government, which evidently 'cross the line' of acceptable behaviour in war; one would assume that depleted uranium, agent orange, atomic bombs, etc., are okay. These gas attacks occur, miraculously, as the 'good guy' terrorists are losing areas to Syrian government forces. The end result is that the US and its NATO allies attack Syrian military and civilian infrastructure. And where does the intelligence about gas attacks come from? The two major sources are the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and a civilian rescue group called the White Helmets. What could possibly be wrong with that?

Where do we start? The observatory title sounds impressive, particularly for a one-man operation working out of his home in Coventry, England. The gentleman is Rami Abdulrahman (sometimes referred to as Rami Abdul Rahman), a former Syrian official who, we are told, meets regularly with the Foreign Secretary (the British one).

The 'White Helmets', the almost-winners of the Nobel Peace prize and the subject of a Netflix movie, are funded by the UK and US governments and have been described as a 'propaganda construct' by John Pilger. The staged videos we see of gas attacks, valiant rescue attempts, etc., are mostly the work of this group. It was founded by James Le Mesurier, a UK security specialist and former British intelligence officer. It works only in areas controlled by ISIS and Al Qaeda and, of course our mythical rebadged 'good guy' terrorists. Its recent video of people being hosed down after the alleged gas attack in Douma was the pretext for the NATO attacks previously mentioned. The handful of journalists on the ground in Douma who reported that no gas attack had occurred were immediately

branded as Russian stooges by the MSM, including the 'progressive' *Guardian*. However the *Guardian* had a problem: one of the journalists in Douma was Robert Fisk, the multi-award winning investigative journalist. He reported that the video itself was real but the hosing down was staged to claim a chemical attack rather than the result of dust inhalation from a bombing attack. The Syrian government invited the

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to visit Douma to investigate the chemical attack claim. Coincidentally, the inspection was delayed because of the US NATO attack. We are not sure of OPCW impartiality, but the timing does raise further questions!

"Hell is empty and all the Devils are here."
—William Shakespeare 🕯

BY KAREN BATT

VICTORIAN SECRETARY, COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC SECTOR UNION



THE REAL COST OF SELLING LAND TITLES

Imagine buying a new home and finding out at settlement that your house was going to be demolished to make way for a freeway due to a compulsory acquisition. Don't think it could happen? Think again. Last year in NSW 200 families unknowingly purchased property in the path of a future freeway. The error was made due to a reduction in staff in preparation for the NSW Land Titles Office (LTO) to be privatised.

We can accept this as normal practice across all states that privatise their LTOs. And Victoria is no exception. The State Government's 2017 budget proposal to sell off Victoria's precious Land Titles Office (LTO) will create a short-term gain at the cost of longer-term pain.

In June 2017, with support from CPSU members, we launched our Real Cost Campaign to protect the unique and valuable title system and its dedicated workers.

For 155 years the LTO has tirelessly scrutinised every survey, mortgage and transaction on Victoria's four million-odd properties, perfecting this priceless public asset. They even provide a free guarantee against fraud or error to every title-holder.

This is a one-off sugar hit for the government that will see millions of public funds stripped from future budgets. In the 2016/17 financial year the LTO brought in \$382 million in revenue. If the titles office is sold that funding will line the pockets of private providers, not hardworking Victorians.

The annual revenue from land titles helps fund other public services like schools, hospitals and roads. It's nonsensical to remove that constant and valuable source of public revenue. Removing the titles office from public hands is a tragedy.

Through our campaign we are challenging all Labor MPs to stand up for public services and reject

Treasury's push to privatise a valuable state asset. This is a straightforward test of whether they're Labor or neo-Liberals.

There is a far greater cost of selling the titles office and that is the cost to everyday Victorians. It will mean increased conveyancing and insurance costs, and a possible loss of the title guarantee.

This move also goes against Labor's push for housing affordability. When fees are increased under a private provider, you can bet that developers will pass that cost onto home buyers, making it even more difficult for people, especially first homeowners, to buy property.

We know that privatisation in general doesn't work, just look at the price of electricity in this state, which increased again on 1 July 2017, with profits going overseas to international owners.

In December last year the government announced it was narrowing its focus in relation to privatisation. It announced that some land titles services would remain in public hands including the Valuer-General Victoria, Surveyor-General Victoria, Land Information and Spatial Services, Government Land Advice and Coordination, and the Victorian Government Land Monitor. This is a step in the right direction; however, our ultimate goal is to have the entire process shelved.

We have continued discussions with state MPs and cabinet ministers, with many not supportive of Treasury's privatisation plans. We've pointed out that privatisation of the LTO won't just affect everyday homeowners, it could cause chaos for the government. The LTO has played a massive role in ensuring big infrastructure projects run smoothly. This includes acquiring land for major arterial roads (e.g. Westgate Freeway) and ensuring every bend is



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correct and recorded in the register. It also develops complex subdivision plans for major infrastructure projects like Southern Cross Station and Etihad Stadium.

Currently the legislation driving the \$6 billion Metro Tunnel and the mechanics on how to lodge it so it can be formally recorded on the register, are being reviewed by LTO experts in Crown Land. Crown Land is slated to be privatised. Privatisation risks job losses of dedicated experts. Can you put a price on the loss of expert knowledge? How will taxpayers respond if planning for the Metro Tunnel fails?

It's worth noting that only a few weeks ago in January, following mass blackouts in Victoria to 90,000 homes, Premier Daniel Andrews stated the reason behind the electricity failure was because of privatisation. He said 'the Liberals never should have privatised this essential service'. It beggars belief that our Premier would support the privatisation of another essential service, considering he knows it's a failed option. Imagine if the private data of 90,000 homeowners was lost, hacked, or leaked. It would be a far worse outcome than a temporary power loss.

In November last year we met with Planning Minister, Richard Wynne, along with two members who work at

the LTO, to deliver our petition to the Government. At that time we had collected just over 2,400 signatures. Despite delivering the petition we are still collecting signatures to continue building momentum; at the time of writing this article we have 2,862 signatures. We've also had 1,109 letters sent to Victorian MPs through our website (www.therealcost.org.au).

Last year we also surveyed our members at the LTO to find out how they were feeling about the potential privatisation. Unsurprisingly 100 per cent said they did not want it to go ahead. The LTO workforce has a high proportion of workers aged above 55 years, and many survey respondents said they were concerned about not finding suitable employment should they be made redundant. Many have specialised skills specific to the LTO that wouldn't be transferrable to another role.

Workers are also concerned that a loss of knowledgeable staff would have severe impacts on the operation of the LTO. Victoria's LTO is the only one in the country that's 'whole of job'. LTO staff are trained to handle a given case from beginning to end, which accounts for its efficiency over the other state LTOs.

It's why LTO staff have been able to deliver on industry promises such as the 5 days from lodgement to registration for any subdivision with 10 or more lots – because any one person has the training to examine the entire case.

They are an efficient, whole-of-job outfit who innovates for the benefit of every person in the community. If they were to be sold off – even parts of the LTO – all of the 'whole of job', efficiency, and community benefit becomes complex, double-handled and stripped back for maximum profit for shareholders. Take any part away and the whole structure is compromised.

Findings from the People's Inquiry into Privatisation (a collaborative project between CPSU, other public sector unions) echoed the concerns from our members and the broader Victorian public around privatisation. The independent inquiry, chaired by David Hetherington of think tank Per Capita, collected hundreds of written submissions and travelled to capital cities and regional centres around Australia in 2016 to speak directly with people about the impact of privatisation in their lives. The stories heard by the inquiry panel were powerful, and highlighted the detrimental impact of privatisation on service quality, cost, accountability, and accessibility.

One of the 12 recommendations from the inquiry called for a moratorium on privatisation until greater regulatory mechanisms and proper policy frameworks are implemented around the delivery of public services. We support this call and will continue working with our members and the government to achieve this result.

We are urging the wider Victorian community to visit our website www.realcost.org.au to sign our petition and let MPs know that this sale isn't on. Because once it's gone, it's gone for good. 🇺🇦

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Jeremy Corbyn is an anti-Racist, not an anti-Semite

Joseph Finlay is the former Deputy Editor of the Jewish Quarterly and cofounded a range of grassroots Jewish organisations.

I love stories. They're wonderful things, helping us to understand the world around us, navigate our way through life and deal with the challenges that it throws up.

Stories don't only exist in the pages of books; we also use them to understand real life. When there are so many facts competing for our attention we use stories, or narratives, to explain what is really going on. When new facts come along we slot them into our pre-existing narrative, saving us from having to examine them too closely. If the story is good enough, with real drama and plausible heroes and villains, it may well continue long after the facts cease to convince.

One of the most popular and well-covered stories of recent years is that Labour is an anti-semitic party. Like all the best stories it started with small details, of lowly Labour members who had posted stupid and offensive things on Facebook. There was a dark guilt-by-association sub-plot – as prominent Labour figures were criticised for having had fleeting encounters with people who had said offensive things. But this weekend has been the denouement of the story – the grand finale that we should have seen coming all along. It is no longer just that the leadership of the Labour Party has been soft on anti-semitism – Jeremy Corbyn himself is, drumroll, an anti-semite! Now the villain of the tale has finally been unmasked, the coda is inevitable – Jeremy Corbyn will be forced out, the Blairites will return to great fanfare, and everyone will live happily ever after in a centrist Eden.

This story is now out of control. It is distorting rather than helping us understand reality.

Most real-life stories have at least a grain of truth in them and this one is no different. There have been a small number of Labour members that posted anti-semitic items online, mostly some form of conspiracy theory, or crude and offensive language describing Israel. The Party has rightly taken action against these people. But these true aspects have emboldened the storytellers to make ever-more outlandish claims to the point where I now see Jewish friends saying

'It could happen here' – with the 'it' implying that we are inching towards Nazism in the UK. This is madness. Small incidents do not add up to this kind of metanarrative. However good the story (and scary stories are the most compelling), it has been cast adrift from the real world. We need to take a step back.

Firstly we need to restore some perspective. The Labour Party has thousands of Jewish members, many Jewish councillors, a number of prominent Jewish MPs and several Jewish members of its ruling council. Many people at the heart of the Corbyn team, such as Jon Lansman, James Schneider and Rhea Wolfson are also Jewish. Ed Miliband, the previous party leader, was Jewish (and suffered anti-semitism at the hands of the press and the Conservatives). I have been a member for five years and, as a Jew, have had only positive experiences.

So what say those enraptured by the tale. That counts for nothing – the leader is an anti-semite!

This, too, is nonsense. Jeremy Corbyn has been MP for Islington North since 1983 – a constituency with a significant Jewish population. Given that he has regularly polled over 60% of the vote (73% in 2017), it seems likely that a sizeable number of Jewish constituents voted for him. As a constituency MP he regularly visited synagogues and has appeared at many Jewish religious and cultural events. He is close friends with the leaders of the Jewish Socialist Group, from whom he has gained a rich knowledge of the history of the Jewish Labour Bund, and he has named the defeat of Mosley's Fascists at the Battle of Cable as a key historical moment for him. His 2017 Holocaust Memorial Day statement talked about Shmuel Zygielboym, the Polish Bund leader exiled to London who committed suicide in an attempt to awaken the world to the Nazi genocide. How many British politicians have that level of knowledge of modern Jewish history?

There's more. Jeremy Corbyn is one of the leading anti-racists in Parliament – I would go so far as to say that he is one of the least racist MPs we have. So naturally Corbyn signed numerous Early Day motions in Parliament condemning anti-semitism, years before he became leader and backed the campaign to stop Neo-Nazis from meeting in Golders Green in 2015.

Because all racism is interlinked, it is worth examining Corbyn's wider anti-racist record. Corbyn was being arrested for protesting against apartheid while the Thatcher government defended white majority rule and branded Nelson Mandela a terrorist. Corbyn was a strong supporter of Labour Black Sections – championing the right of Black and Asian people to organise independently in the Labour Party while the press demonised them as extremists. He has long been one of the leaders of the campaign to allow the indigenous people of the Chagos Islands to return after they were forcibly evicted by Britain in the 1960s to make way for an American military base. Whenever there has been a protest against racism, the two people you can always guarantee will be there are Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. Who do you put your trust in – the people who hate anti-semitism because they hate all racism or the people (be they in the Conservative Party or the press) who praise Jews whilst engaging in Islamophobia and anti-black racism? The right-wing proponents of the Labour anti-semitism narrative seek to divide us into 'good' and 'bad' minorities – they do not have the wellbeing of Jews at heart.

Let's return the story to the facts. Anti-semitism is always beyond the pale. Labour, now a party of over half-a-million members, has a small minority of anti-semites in its ranks, and it suspends them whenever it discovers them. I expect nothing less from an anti-racist party and an anti-racist leader. If the Conservatives took the same approach to racism they would have to suspend their own foreign secretary, who has described Africans as 'piccaninnies' and described Barack Obama as 'The part-Kenyan President [with an] ancestral dislike of the British Empire'. From the Monday Club, linked to the National Front, to MP Aidan Burley dressing up as a Nazi, to Lynton Crosby's dog-whistle portrayal of Ed Miliband as a nasal North London intellectual, it is the Conservative Party that is deeply tainted by racism and anti-semitism.



WHENEVER THERE HAS BEEN A PROTEST AGAINST RACISM, THE TWO PEOPLE YOU CAN ALWAYS GUARANTEE WILL BE THERE ARE JEREMY CORBYN AND JOHN MCDONNELL.

There are many threats to Jews – and we are right to be vigilant. These threats come primarily from resurgent nationalism, anti-immigrant sentiment and a Brexit narrative that seeks to restore Britain to a mythical age of ethnic purity. The idea that Britain's leading anti-racist politician is the key problem the Jewish community faces is an absurdity, a distraction, and a massive error. Worst of all, it's a bad story that we've been telling for far too long. Let's start to tell a better one. 🕯

Source: *Jewish News Online*

DID YOU KNOW?

Beacon Press is an American non-profit book publisher. Founded in 1854 by the American Unitarian Association, it is currently a department of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

In 1971, it published the 'Senator Gravel edition' of *The Pentagon Papers* for the first time in book form, when no other publisher was willing to risk publishing such controversial material. Robert West, then-president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, approved the decision to publish *The Pentagon Papers*, which West claims resulted in two-and-a-half years of harassment and intimidation by the Nixon administration. In *Gravel v United States*, the Supreme Court decided that the Constitution's 'Speech or Debate Clause' protected Gravel and some acts of his aide, but not Beacon Press.

Beacon Press seeks to publish works that 'affirm and promote' several principles:

the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity and compassion in human relations; acceptance of one another; a free and responsible search for truth and meaning; the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process in society; the goal of the world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; respect for the interdependent web of all existence; and the importance of literature and the arts in democratic life.

Wikipedia (extract)



The British government is talking war with Russia over a mysterious incident that is claimed to have taken place on Sunday March 4, just a few kilometres from the secrecy shrouded British biological and chemical warfare research and development facility at Porton Down in Wiltshire. I say claimed since we have very little information confirming what exactly took place outside of government statements and we have seen no photographs of the alleged victims in their hospital beds to convince us that the alleged victims did fall ill and are being treated. However, let us assume that the incident as described did take place.

The mystery consists in the fact that the victims, former Russian colonel of military intelligence, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter, were not under any known threat from Russia. Skripal was charged and convicted in Russia in 2006 of being an asset of the British Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, and handing over secret information to the British. He was jailed, but in a spy swap in 2010 was pardoned and allowed to leave Russia for Vienna, then Britain, where he has been living ever since. Why he was pardoned is difficult to determine, unless it was necessary legally to effect the swap with the British. In any event, the Russians had washed their hands of him but it seems the British had other uses for him, as their expendable man for a provocation against Russia.

The facts as the British government states them are that Skripal and his daughter, visiting from Russia, met for lunch in Salisbury, the town outside of which Porton Down is located. The purpose of the daughter's visit is not known. According to ever-changing media accounts, witnesses in a restaurant reported that Skripal appeared to be agitated and angry and left in that state with his daughter following. Agitated and angry about what we do not know.

Half an hour later it is said that the two of them were found slumped over on a public bench. Some early media accounts state that it was thought they had taken too much fentanyl and were vomiting and that their illness may have been self-induced. But very quickly the British government claimed

that they had been poisoned by some chemical or nerve agent and immediately cast the blame on Russia though the investigation had just begun. The incident was immediately taken out of the hands of the local police and handed over to the Counter-Terrorism Police, formerly known as Special Branch, though the government refused to call it a terrorist incident. A meeting of the British government high-level emergency committee, Cobra, was called. Why this was done for what appears to be an assault or attempted murder or a self-induced accident is a good question. But the answer lies in the immediate propaganda campaign mounted in the British press against Russia.

On Thursday 8 March the British government claimed that they had identified a 'nerve agent' as the substance used. Yet the BBC quotes on the same day a woman physician who attended at the scene saying that she found Ms Skripal slumped unconscious on a bench vomiting and fitting. She had lost control of her bodily functions. The physician, who asked not to be named, told the BBC she moved the daughter into the recovery position and opened her airways as others tended to her father. The doctor stated that she treated her for almost 30 minutes, saying there was no sign of any chemical agent on her face or body and that though she had been worried she would be affected by a nerve agent, so far she 'feels fine'.

Yet the British media published on Thursday a photograph of a police officer who they say attended the scene and who they claim was made ill and placed in intensive care but is now stable and recovering. The two stories do not add up, as it would seem the doctor was in closer physical contact with the two victims than the police officer yet the doctor has suffered no symptoms at all.

The Guardian quoted Andrei Lugovoi, another former Russian agent, accused of Litvinenko's murder by the British as stating that Skripal had been pardoned in Russia so no one from there is after him. 'I don't rule out that this is another provocation by the British. Whatever happens on British territory, they start yelling:

"He was killed, he was hung, he was poisoned!" and that Russia is to blame for everything. This is to their advantage.' Igor Sutyagin, yet another Russian traitor flown to Russia in 2010 in an exchange of spies also said, 'I don't think that Mr Skripal would be targeted, because he was pardoned'.

To add to the mystery the British government refuses to name the alleged nerve agent. To create more drama the British Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, stated that it was not Sarin or VX but something 'very rare'.

I think we can expect that they will choose the right dramatic moment to name something and state that only Russian labs can make it. That is their modus operandi. They certainly do not want to state that VX was involved since VX was developed in 1952 at Porton Down near the sight of the incident; for that would lead to necessary investigations into security at that facility and whether personnel there were involved. However, despite the fact that Porton Down is in the business of manufacturing chemical warfare agents including nerve agents and that logic would dictate that the Porton Down authorities would be barred from bringing investigators into a case in which they could be involved, the British government immediately assigned Porton Down to identify the substance that might have been used.

That the Russians may be correct that this incident is another NATO arranged provocation must be seriously considered. Despite the fact there is no evidence whatsoever that Russia had anything to do with this incident, the British government was quick to label Russia as the villain of the piece and the mass media dutifully acted in lock step and put out the word. Boris Johnson called Russia a 'malign and disruptive force' and made threats about pulling the UK out of the World Cup to be held in Russia this year. The attempts by the NATO alliance to throw Russia out of the Olympics on trumped up doping charges were largely successful and now we see another attempt to disrupt a sports event that is important to world football fans and to Russia. Johnson added that Britain would act 'robustly' if Moscow is found to be involved.

The Russian embassy in London stated the allegations of Russian involvement are untrue and that the 'script of yet another anti-Russian campaign has already been written'. It seems so and the script has some pages to run yet. One has to wonder what the role of the British intelligence services is in this for the BBC also reports that Skripal still kept the company of British intelligence agents. So one has to ask, for what reason? What was his continuing role as an asset of MI6? What was their role on that day?

But that line of inquiry will not be followed. All the British media are linking this incident to the case of Alexander Litvinenko, another Russian who was supposedly poisoned with radioactive tea. Evidence that cronies of his were involved were ignored in favour of the line that Russia was behind it though no evidence has ever been put forward to support that claim. They are also making the claim that this 'very rare' substance must be from a state military stockpile, so the statements to come from the British government can be predicted.

This incident has echoes of the case of Georgi Markov, the Bulgarian dissident killed in London in 1978 by a ricin pellet injected into his leg by means of an umbrella, it was said, though it was no doubt done with an air pistol. That murder was quickly blamed on the KGB and Bulgarian government agents but there is evidence that in fact the murder was arranged by MI6 as was the murder of media magnate Robert Maxwell in 1991, who had documents relating to the Markov murder in his possession, according to sources such as Richard Cottrell in his book *Gladjo* and accounts by former British intelligence agent Gordon Logan.

The Skripal incident also brings to mind the death of Dr David Kelly in 2003, whose mysterious death in woods near his home was officially attributed to 'suicide'. He is thought by many to have been assassinated by the British secret services and CIA to keep him from revealing secrets about the war in Iraq. He worked at Porton Down as head of microbiology.

He in turn is connected to other scientists at Porton Down who have died under questionable circumstances; for instance, Dr Richard Holmes, whose body was found in the same woods as Dr Kelly, in 2012, two days after going for a walk, and one month after resigning from Porton Down; and to Vladimir Pasechnik's death in November 2001, another Russian defector, who allegedly died of a stroke. His death was not announced until a month later and by British intelligence. Dr Kelly had been involved in his debriefing when he left Russia.

Sir Edward Leigh, a member of the Parliamentary Defence Committee in the British Parliament stated, 'the circumstantial evidence against Russia is very strong. Who else would have the motive and the means?' The answer to that of course is that the British government has the motive and the means. What would Russia benefit from harming a has-been like Skripal and causing all this fuss? None. What benefit does Britain have and NATO? The answer again is provided by Sir Richard who went on to state, 'The only way to preserve peace is through strength', carefully echoing Trump's foreign policy. He continued, 'and if Russia is behind this, this is a brazen act of war, of humiliating our country and defence is the first duty and spending 2% of the budget on defence is not enough'. There is the motive right there. To justify an increase on defence spending and to hit Russia yet again with propaganda warfare to justify NATO's continuing aggression against Russia.

Russia has volunteered to cooperate in the 'investigation' but to what end? The script is already written, the drama will unfold, the consequences will flow and they will lead not to peace and cooperation but to more hostility and war.

*Christopher Black is an international criminal lawyer based in Toronto. He is known for a number of high profile war crimes cases and recently published his novel **Beneath the Clouds**. He writes essays on international law, politics and world events, especially for the online magazine **New Eastern Outlook**. ☞*

Source: <https://journal-neo.org/2018/03/09/the-skripal-incident-another-anti-russian-provocation/>



My name is Annett Finger. I'm a marine ecologist and I represent the Boomerang Alliance in Victoria. The Boomerang Alliance is, as the name says, an alliance group. We have 47 environmental groups under our banner. We develop policies, investigate and campaign on waste issues – from mattress and tyre recycling to waste to energy and container refund schemes – our focus is on plastic pollution and one of our strategy objectives is to achieve a 70% reduction of Australia's contribution to plastic pollution entering the oceans by 2020. That is certainly ambitious, but let me paint you a picture about plastics in our oceans. There are 5,25 trillion pieces of plastic floating on the surface of our oceans alone. It's impossible to wrap our heads around that figure. But next time you go to the beach, have a look and see what plastics you can find. Read the papers: plastic pellets being released on Warrnambool beaches. Millions of polystyrene pieces got cleaned up from the reed beds of the Yarra last week. Plastic production is booming. We are using more plastic for less time. Waste infrastructure is lagging behind and overwhelmed. The amount of mismanaged plastic waste entering our oceans – if we do nothing differently from now on – is set to triple from 2015 to 2025 (from 50 million MT to 150)! This should scare us. This is why I do what I do. And, briefly, my job is to campaign for a container deposit scheme in Victoria – a scheme that decreases litter, increases recycling rates and bears a potential \$50 million AUD in income to community and charity groups. I have just come back from the Big Bottle tour – where we towed an oversized Coke bottle around regional Victoria to tell the story of Victoria missing out while all other mainland states are moving on container refund schemes. It's been a massive hit with people but also with councils.

I've been invited to speak about the China-invoked recycling crisis. So, what has China done and what is happening in Victoria and Australia? China announced in July last year that from 1st of January this year, they

will not accept any more 'dirty' recycling materials. With dirty they mean actual contamination, but also contamination of one material with another. Our kerbside recycling is collected as co-mingled waste and gets sorted and bailed in MRFs – material recovery facilities. They still take recycling materials, they just don't want the lower quality bails that require them to sort through and clean.

The effect this ban has had on Australia is more severe in Victoria. Most councils here sell their kerbside recyclates to a recycling company like Visy, who process it in an MRF and then sell-on the bails to onshore or offshore places. How much has been going offshore has been hard to track. Recently the CEO of Sustainability Victoria penned an article stating 'only 7% of recycling has been going overseas'. So why do we have a crisis? Because he's included building waste in that calculation and most likely went by weight. Plastic is light. A lot of our plastic recycling has been going overseas and, likely, most of that is not going there anymore. Visy lost a lot of their buyers and in Victoria, where they could, they pulled out of contracts with councils. In NSW, Visy gets paid to take recycling waste. Also, they now have a container deposit scheme, which diverts drink containers from kerbside and produces a cleaner, pre-sorted recycling stream that can still be sold to Chinese and other Asian markets. Victorian councils have been frantically looking for new ways to get rid of their recycling, and whichever way you look at it, are set to incur higher costs to deal with residents' waste.

So, what's BA's position? In a nutshell, we see this as a great opportunity to build a long-term viable onshore recycling industry, coupled with incentives and mandatory requirements leading to a circular waste economy. And, as we have always done, we work with all stakeholders. If I may read from a media release from 3 days ago, in the lead-up to the Meeting of Environment Ministers.

MEDIA RELEASE

Industry and Green Groups call for Recycling Leadership at Friday's Ministerial Council Meeting

25 April 2018: In a clear demonstration of the importance of recycling – green groups and the waste and recycling industry have united to advocate for systemic change within Australia by calling on Environment Ministers meeting this Friday to act urgently to implement an Australian Circular Economy & Recycling Action Plan with clear targets, enforceable policy and funding assistance.

While individual groups have been calling for a new direction to decouple the Australian recycling and resource recovery industry from global markets – this is the first time the waste industry recycling businesses and environment groups have joined together to recognise not only the economic benefits but also the environmental gains of moving to a circular economy.

'The waste and resource recovery sector is a \$15.5 billion industry that employs 50,000 people nationally delivering a cleaner environment and saving resources. We are all acutely aware that the industry must grow and not move backwards to the days of dumping and incineration. We call on Environment Ministers to work together to deliver what we know the public wants – more and better recycling and major domestic market development,' said Jeff Angel, Director of the Boomerang Alliance of 47 national, state and local groups.

'There can be nothing but a negative outcome if the states and federal governments do not come together at this point,' said Ms Gayle Sloan, CEO of WMAA. 'What we have seen in Ipswich cannot be repeated, the community will not accept it, the industry does not want it, we need Government to come together on Friday and act – not talk.'

WMAA, ACOR and Boomerang all agree that the Circular Economy and Recycling Action Plan is needed to build on respective state governments' shorter-term actions to date to maintain the community's confidence in recycling services under the current unprecedented circumstances precipitated by China's National Sword legislation.

ACOR CEO, Peter Shmigel: 'We need to stop seeing the items that go into the bins as just waste and see them for what they are – commodities. Year on year we have seen a 2% drop in employment in the manufacturing industry. Seeing Australia transform from a linear economy (manufacture – use – dispose) to a circular economy (design – manufacture – use – recycle – reuse) will not only see us protect Australian jobs, it will see protection of our economy. We know we can create almost one job for every tonne recycled in Australia.'

The three groups called for, at a minimum, Ministers to agree to action supporting:

1. a national circular economy plan
2. a national mandated green public procurement
3. mandated recycled content in packaging
4. new funding assistance

What has been the federal response? Cricket noise. In Victoria, where more councils have been hit than any other state, the Minister for the Environment, Lily D'Ambrosio, reacted by establishing a recycling taskforce. BA is a member and our director attended one meeting. So far, environmental and community groups met separately from industry groups. I have only been briefed very briefly, so I can't say too much about it, but I would very much hope to see a mix of stakeholders discussing possible solutions in the very near future. What I have noticed on my recent tour is the renewed, increased noise and appetite about waste to energy. BA has provided input into discussion papers in NSW and VIC. To sum it up, here is the most recent 'Waste to Energy' comment from our director, Jeff Angel: 'Key Commonwealth and state environment ministers must embed higher resource recovery in the economy. Incineration diverts recyclables from genuine recycling – and uses mixed waste which poses serious

toxic pollution threats. There may be plans for new recycling industries, but by the time they eventuate as actual projects they will find the rush to incineration has locked up their resources.'

To wrap up and tie in nicely with my campaign: what can you do as a caring community? Join our campaign to bring a container deposit scheme to Victoria. It is an environmental scheme but also a social one: it produces a real trickle-down effect. On my travels with the Big Bottle, I have heard many stories ... One lady said she wouldn't have had a bike growing up if it wasn't for the scheme in SA. Another gentleman said he had been homeless in Adelaide a while back and would get up each morning collecting cans and bottles. He made \$40 to \$50 a day and knew he didn't have to steal to feed himself. He gave me the biggest hug. So please spread the word and thank you so much for your time!

How to support the container deposit scheme campaign individually:

<https://www.boomerangalliance.org.au/vic>

How to support the container deposit scheme campaign as a group/organisation:

https://www.boomerangalliance.org.au/cds_vic_org_statement_of_support

Please join over 80 groups/organisations in the fight to stem marine plastic pollution in Victoria:

Join us on Facebook: @PlasticfreeVictoriaAlliance

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ABOUT WMAA

The Waste Management Association of Australia (WMAA) is the peak body for both the waste and resource recovery industry. WMAA supports its members to provide sustainable waste management and resource management in Australia. The WMAA is the voice for the waste management industry across Australia and covers the key areas of landfill, resource and energy recovery, carbon management and biohazard waste.

www.wmaa.asn.au

ABOUT BOOMERANG ALLIANCE

Established in 2004, the Alliance of environment groups has grown from 10 groups to 47 and has worked on campaigns for container deposits, plastic bag bans, used tyre recycling and economic incentives for recycling. It recently produced Australia's first Threat Abatement Plan on plastic pollution and is working with local communities and businesses to end single-use plastics.

www.boomerangalliance.org.au

ABOUT ACOR

ACOR, established in 1983, is a peak national industry association representing some 70 businesses in the recycling and resource recovery industry of Australia. Our core business is:

- advocating on behalf of our members to influence governments' decision-making in support of the recycling and resource recovery industry representing businesses in the supply and value chain of recycling and resource recovery
- raising the calibre of resource recovery and recycling debate to achieve commercial solutions for our members
- managing sovereign risks for our members.

ACOR works closely with governments to develop policies and programs that improve recycling and resource recovery, and support investment in and growth of the Australian recycling industry.

<http://www.acor.org.au/> ♻️

from our readers



DEAR DONNA

Ann Jurriens here. Please note my new email address as I love getting your reports.

First of all I wanted to write to you last month to praise you for finding the transcript for the speech Henry Reynolds gave for Peace Day at St John's Cathedral Brisbane. I had been looking for it and now thanks to *Beacon* I don't have to download it. Henry has written some amazing books that I would recommend to *Beacon* readers. Some are available in the public libraries, mostly on the taking over of the Australian continent, which even at that time was against international law. Up to the present time, there has been no treaty and no land has been purchased.

To me, Henry Reynold's *Unnecessary Wars* is a real eye-opener. I had no idea that we had virtually been at war or brewing for war since 1885, when the NSW government sent 700 men to the Sudan. Yes, that's before Federation! Many of these soldiers on their return said all that the people of the Sudan were asking for was their freedom. Of course by then we had been fighting the 'Forgotten War' against the rightful owners of our land and virtually obliterating their race. Henry has written many books on that subject.

Henry Reynold quotes two writers before his introduction in *Unnecessary Wars*. As he has quoted them, I'm sure he won't mind me sending them on:

1. 'And yet I doubt if there be a more reprehensible human act than to lead a nation into an unnecessary war ... said Richard Cobden to John Bright, 8 August 1855

Ref: from J Morley, *The Life of John Cobden*, 13th edition. T Fisher Unwin, London 1906. p. 638.

2. Whoever knows what war really is, whoever will reflect upon its terrible effects and disastrous consequences, will readily agree that it should not be undertaken without the most urgent reasons for doing so. Humanity revolts against a sovereign who, without necessity or without pressing reasons, wastes the blood of his most faithful subjects and exposes his people to the calamities of war, when he could have kept them in enjoyment of an honourable and salutary peace. When to this inconsiderateness, this want of love for his people, he adds the injustice towards those whom he attacks, of what crime, or rather of what dreadful series of crimes does he not render himself guilty? Answerable to all the evils which he inflicts upon innocent people – the bloodshed, the pillaging of towns, the ruin of provinces – such are his crimes. Not a man is killed nor a hut burned but he is responsible before God and answerable to humanity for them.

Emmerich de Vattel, 'The Law of the Nations', 1758

Ref: E de Vattel, 'The Law of the Nations or the Principles of Natural Law: Applied to the Conduct and in the Affairs of Nations and of Sovereigns, translated by Charles G Fenwick, vol 3. Oceans Publications, New York, 1964 [first published 1758], p. 243.

Then to your latest issue of the *Beacon* – John Endacott's article on Public Housing/Private Enterprise reminds me of the above quote but this time one considers the sadness and struggle so many Australians have today. Both my daughter and granddaughter cannot conceive buying their own home as they are in debt for their university 'Hex fees'. My daughter, who works part time, has both her children living at home, the eldest 21 has a job but is very reluctant to give her mother board, the son 19 gets work from time to time but because he is not trained in a specific trade, is like so many young men finding life a lot tougher than our generation, when apprenticeships were offered. Sadness and aimlessness are not a good mix.

My son has his own small business but he too struggles to make ends meet, mostly because of government red tape, etc.

I thought the past Dickensian Victorian struggles were long gone but they are back and with a vengeance.

That's enough for today. Thanks, *Beacon*, at least in your small but very precious magazine I can remember that some people here in Australia do have an alternative view to war, war, war. We are not all brainwashed by the Western media.

Great work all of you.

Ann Jurrjens, Qld

DEAR DONNA

Thank you for your good work.

J McGarvin, Vic

DEAR DONNA

Please find enclosed my cheque for \$40 being a gift subscription and a donation for your wonderful work. I truly appreciate all you do.

Yours

J Woodman, NSW

DEAR BEACON

Love your mag. Sorry I'm late. Here's my subs and gift.

Everyone must read Ellen Brown's book *The Public Bank Solution*. It supersedes all others on economics.

Ellen shows marvellous research. Suggestion – Prof. Brian Cox (Mr Popularity) should be invited to read and digest it.

Three days later, he could take us to a new world of affordability, decency and respect. We can save this winter's homeless deaths, eh? The conceived can be achieved – having said that we must opt for voluntary simplicity and numbers control to preserve the web of life.

A Nettleton, NSW

DEAR EDITOR

I look forward to the *Beacon* every month. The articles are wonderful. It gives me hope for the future. Thank you all very much ... a small amount donation.

Kind regards

J Fleming, Vic

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