

Telstra playing with workers' lives

Mike Newman

Telstra are throwing hundreds of IT workers out of their jobs and are trying to pass the blame on to their suppliers. However, the facts are clear – Telstra have actively manoeuvred to achieve millions of dollars in cost savings and have put in place a strategy of transferring IT development and support jobs from Australia to the city of Bangalore in India.

The recent reports of Telstra having clean hands when their IT supplier IBM decided to shift jobs to India are false to the core. What is not coming across in media reports is the fact that most of the job losses will fall on long-term Telstra employees who were transferred to IBM in 1997. This is a classic outsourcing operation – loyal workers shunted from what should have been a secure job in the public sector, first to a multinational services firm and then onto the scrap heap.

Having sold their workforce like serfs to IBM, Telstra are now complicit in getting IBM to sack them. Telstra like to paint themselves out of the picture – it is just up to their suppliers how they choose to staff or respond to contract requests. But just check back some months and we find Telstra actively courting Indian IT supplier Infosys.

In September 2003, they awarded Infosys a US\$50 million contract for systems maintenance threatening up to 180 outsourced IT jobs at IBM. At this time Infosys boasted that they expected more contracts to come there way. More recently, Infosys bought up the Australian company Expert Information Services for \$31 million, just when Expert is in the middle of negotiations to renew a contract with Telstra for maintenance of its Customer Relationship Management systems. What a coincidence!

Telstra pressure drives contractors offshore

The Infosys web-site is pretty proud in showing off Telstra's Chief Information Officer Jeff Smith's role in helping promote Infosys in Australia. Telstra management are using Infosys and other offshore IT outfits as a means of destroying hard won working conditions, smashing wage rates, and keeping the union out.

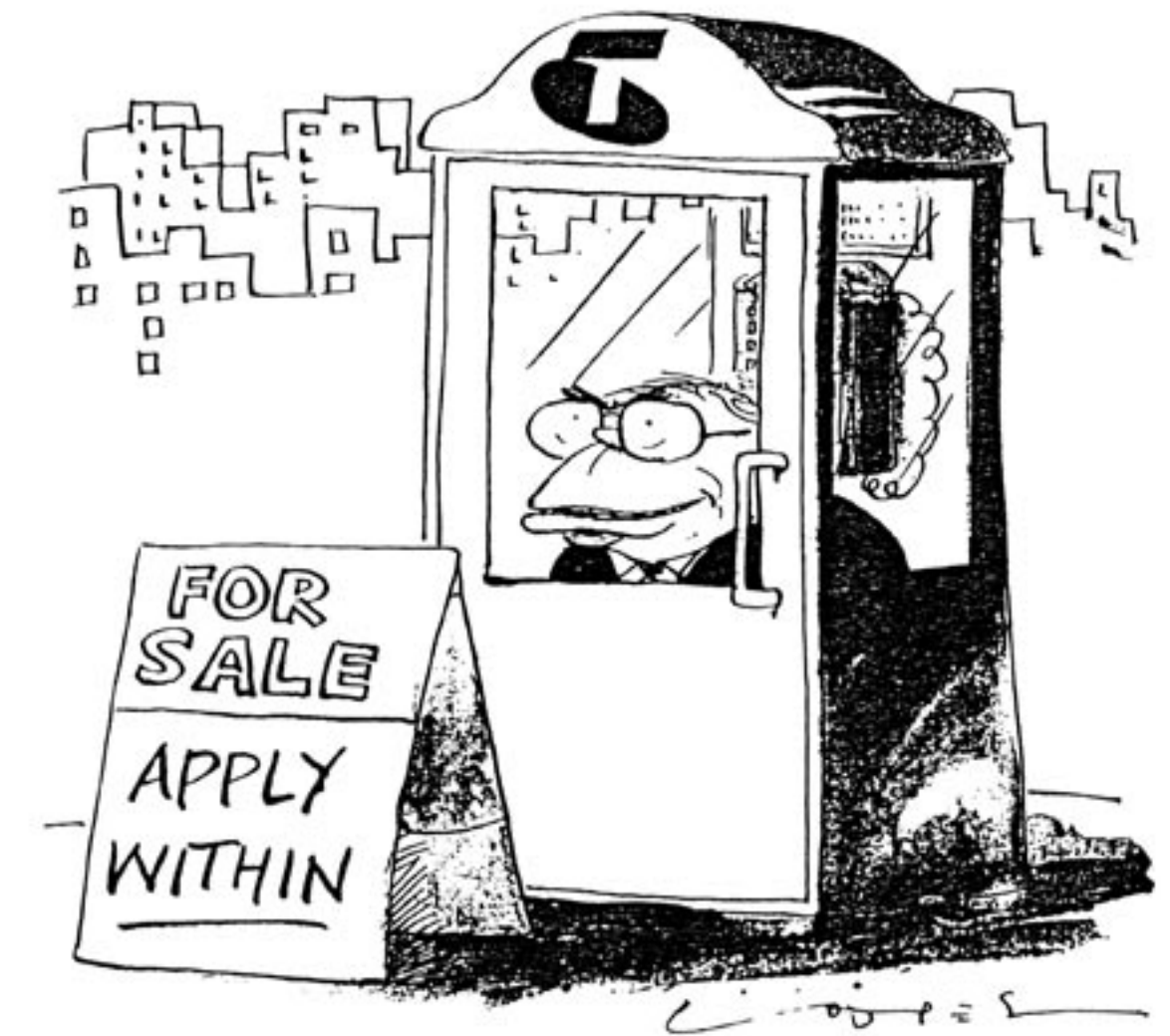
At the same time it divides workers, pitting Australian workers against workers in India in an attempt to drive down the wages and conditions of Australian workers.

Infosys is a massive global player with over 20,000 employees, up from almost 14,000 at the beginning of 2002. Profits and growth are frankly incredible – a phenomenal profit of US\$246 million on revenue of US\$1 billion and year-on-year revenue growth of almost 40 percent.

This compares to an established international consulting services company Accenture, with 83,000 employees, reports two percent revenue growth and only US\$550 million profit on US\$13 billion of sales.

By forcing down wages and conditions, Infosys is growing 20 times faster with a profit rate at 25 percent or three times greater than a traditional and representative competitor. This a job-wrecking juggernaut on the path of super-exploitation and super-profits with Telstra forcing the pace.

It is clear that Telstra has been the key player in putting IBM and IT service providers under pressure, any attempts to look like an independent customer being offered a bargain is hypocrisy in the extreme – if anything they have forced the pace by courting, even advertising, Infosys, and forcing suppliers to



search off-shore for cheaper labour if they want any chance of competing for a Telstra contract.

This is Telstra's reward to highly qualified and dedicated IT staff who have served the company for years.

But the plot thickens even more! On January 21 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that Telstra had set up a joint venture with Satyam – yet another India-based IT supplier, this time to move the development and support of Telstra's data warehousing (reporting and analytical functions) to, you've guessed it, Bangalore.

This time hundreds more locally based jobs, currently performed by consulting group Deloitte, will come under the axe.

Manufacturing workers in the rich and industrialised world are used to seeing their jobs transferred offshore. Public sector workers, particularly in unskilled local government jobs, have seen their jobs contracted out cost-slashing transnationals determined on making a profit by attacking workers' wages and working conditions.

No worker safe

But this attack on a sector of skilled professional office workers will send a chill through millions of relatively well-paid and highly qualified workers. On January 20 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that "According to some

industry analysts, up to two million highly skilled IT jobs in the US will be outsourced to low-cost countries over the next decade."

Even Howard's government is stuck for a response – Costello gets on ABC radio to beg Telstra to reconsider, while Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Daryl Williams flatly contradicts him. Williams's spokesperson thought outsourcing a grand idea. She was reported as saying, "Australia has much to gain from selective outsourcing of ICT services overseas, both from enhanced productivity and as a provider of high-end services".

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The Guardian

No 1169

February 4, 2004

Let's build the real alternative to Labor and Liberal

The election of Mark Latham as the leader of the Labor Party, his personal performance last week at the ALP national conference along with the adoption of some fine sounding policies would appear to have improved Labor's electoral prospects.

The emergence of a younger Party leader who is skilled in rhetoric has seen the expectations and hopes of the Party membership running hot. At least that is the perception arising from the ALP National Conference. It remains to be seen how this is reflected among the Australian people.

The defeat of the Howard Government is imperative and would be a significant development. It would represent a defeat for the extremely conservative social and economic policies of the Howard Government and its role as US "deputy sheriff". It would signal the rejection of the Government's support for the Iraq war and US missile defence, Howard's lies about weapons of mass destruction and the attacks on public health, education and social welfare.

Mark Latham's policy speech to the ALP National Conference and the policy resolutions have to be seen on the background of the mass movements against US wars, in defence of Medicare and public education, in support of refugee rights, for Aboriginal demands, for Australian independence and on other issues.

Labor has not changed

This does not mean that the ALP has significantly changed its policies or basic position. It has not. It will not implement genuine, alternative progressive policies, at best pursuing moderate reforms entirely within the scope of the capitalist system and economic rationalist policies.

It should not be forgotten that the Labor Governments of Hawke and Keating started the process of privatising public enterprises and implemented a whole gamut of economic rationalist policies. Labor started the process of dismantling the award system and based its foreign policies on the US alliance. Hawke and Keating introduced university fees and failed to increase payment of rebates to doctors thereby undermining bulk-billing.

The ALP remains an out and out parliamentary party, meaning that it focuses on winning government and concentrates its activity on winning votes. It does not encourage its members and supporters to demonstrate on the streets or go on strike in support of its policies when in opposition or in government.

At this point in time the defeat of the Howard coalition government means the election of a Labor or Labor-led government with all its limitations. This does not rule out the important step of electing more people with consistent and progressive policies to both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

There is already a "balance of power" in the Senate which has to some extent restrained the objectives of the Howard Government. The Senate, for example, refused to be brow-beaten on the complete sale of Telstra, took a strong stand on Medicare and on some aspects of industrial legislation.

There is already one Green Member of the House of Representatives. If this could be enlarged by the election of other left and progressive MPs, it would be a step towards the break up of the cozy two-party system that has held back the development of Australia's political life for so long.

More progressive candidates could also be elected to the Senate acting not only as a break on the right-wing excesses of either a Liberal or a Labor government but also using the Senate platform from which to put real alternative policies to the Australian people.

These would be really significant steps towards the formation of a government made up of all the left and progressive forces in the community. Only then will we have a dependable government defending and implementing policies in the interests of the working people as a matter of principle.

A mere change from Liberal to Labor will not meet the needs or hopes of the people of Australia.

PRESS FUND

They do say it's either a feast or a famine. We had a wonderful finish to the 2003 Press Fund, with lots of contributions received over the holiday break. However, this week the Press Fund contributions have fallen considerably. Come on comrades and supporters! In order to meet our annual target of \$14,000 we need an average of \$308 (minimum) each publication week for the rest of the year. So let's bend to the oars, and send those contributions rolling in for the next issue! Our sincere thanks to this week's contributors, namely:

B Appleton \$20, Paula Bloch \$50.

This week's total: \$70. Progressive total: \$440

No War campaigners receive jail sentences

The two protestors who painted "NO WAR" on the tallest sail of the Opera House last March have been sentenced to nine months of periodic jail detention.

The NO WAR action by David Burgess and Will Saunders was one of the most starkly visual protests against the invasion of Iraq and made news headlines around the world.

"Whether it was caused by an irresponsible drunken man or one making a serious political point it makes little difference", said

NSW District Court Judge Anthony Blackmore.

Along with their nine-month weekend detention sentence for "malicious damage" the pair were ordered to pay the remainder of the Sydney Opera House Trust's \$151,000 clean-up bill.

A cheque for \$40,000 has already been handed over.

The malicious damage charge was heard before the District Court jury in early September. They were found guilty after Judge Blackmore stubbornly refused to allow Will or

Dave to present a case which would justify their actions.

Both Will and Dave had prepared extensive arguments, part of which was based on Section 418 of the NSW Crimes Act. The Act states that you are not guilty of a crime if it was committed with the aim of preventing injury or death, damage to property, deprivation of liberty or criminal trespass.

It is now clear that the illegal war in Iraq has resulted in all of these things happening.

Dave Burgess is a filmmaker and long term campaigner for the environment and human rights. He has just finished a stint as The Wilderness Society Forests Campaigner in NSW, which helped lead to the protection of virtually all old-growth forest in Northern NSW at the last NSW election.

Will Saunders is a professional astronomer and a UK citizen. He has worked for the Anglo-Australian Observatory for the last three years.

Dr Saunders has been ordered to hand in his passport and his immigration status will now come under review.

Acknowledgement to Opera House "No War" Campaign



Obituary

Chris Kempster

24th September 1933-2004

Brenda Kellaway

Chris Kempster was a major contributor to Social Justice and the Australian Cultural Heritage. Through his music, which was Chris's passion, he reflected the struggles of the working class particularly via the promotion of world peace, social justice, a sustainable environment and the preservation of the Australian working class Cultural Heritage.

In 1948 Chris joined the Eureka Youth League and was subsequently inspired to begin singing at a concert held in the Workers Club. In 1949 at only 16 years of age Chris wrote music to the Lawson poem "Reedy River" which was part of the inspiration for, and became the title song of, the very first Australian Musical *Reedy River*. *Reedy River* is a musical about the Shearers Strike in 1891 and this musical ran in both Melbourne and Sydney for a couple of years. *Reedy River* is still performed occasionally across Australia. Chris also had a role singing and playing music in the initial Sydney Production.

Chris was a member of the first recorded bush band, the Original Bushhackers Band, in the 1950s along with other members including; Jack Barry, Brian Loughlan, Harry Kay, Alan Scott, John Meredith and Alex Hood. He was a foundation member of the Bush Music Club 50 years ago and helped to introduce Australian Folk Songs to the National Fitness Council in the 1960s.

Chris was always more than prepared to perform when invited at



Union, Peace or other working class protests or functions, the invitations being too numerous to mention here. He also performed for the then Socialist Party on several occasions including the *Guardian* Festival and according to his sister Enid he "never lost faith" in the Communist cause.

In 1989, Chris published a book of tunes that he and other people had written to Henry Lawson poems. Chris was well known for being "inclusive", as people stated at the commemoration of his life. He would always attempt to involve as many people as possible in performing and he particularly encouraged people in music that also had social/political meaning.

As well as being known for his support and encouragement of other performers in Australian Folk Music, he was also known for his role in the revival of Folk Music in general. Chris also helped to organise performers from overseas to visit Australia such as Pete Seeger's Australian Tour.

His active encouragement of other musicians was mentioned by almost every speaker at his commemoration including other well known performers such as Alex Hood, Keith Mc Kenry and Bob Fagan.

Chris's encouragement and caring consideration of other people was always a feature of his personal life as well. Many of the people in attendance at his commemoration mentioned the fact that he was always a good listener, being genuinely interested in other people's problems even when at times he himself was experiencing difficulties in his own personal life.

Chris will be remembered for his wonderful sense of humour, his liveliness, his enthusiasm, his optimism, his sensitivity, his encouragement of others, his ability to involve others along with his musical talent. He'll be sorely missed by all who knew him well and by all who were touched by his life.

Correction

On page 3 of last week's *Guardian*, the article on hospital funding referred to Carl Scully as a former NSW Health Minister, in error. The former Health Minister was Craig Knowles.

Carr tries forcing Port Botany expansion

On January 28 the NSW Carr Labor Government released the Environmental Impact Statement into expanding the Port Botany container terminal, leaving just two days for public submissions to a parliamentary inquiry into the proposal. Peter Mac

The proposal has major implications for Botany Bay. Like the horrific proposal to establish a waste handling facility at Auburn, the Port Botany plan has been fully backed by the Carr Government, despite objections from local residents, councils and environmental groups.

The plan involves reclaiming 60 hectares of Botany Bay, to provide five new berths and container areas between the existing terminal and Sydney Airport's parallel runways.

The massive additional facilities would generate significantly more noise, and major traffic problems. Docking in the berths would be hazardous because of the runways' close proximity.

A new parking facility would bisect the last original beach between the runways and the terminal. The beach's south-east end would become a short, stagnant canal, with the beach remnant on one side and the new container facilities on the other. Migratory birds that have nested there since time immemorial would probably be forced out by the expanded terminal operations – and who in their right mind would want to swim there?

The entire original beach would be adversely affected by loss of tidal flow. As "compensation", improvements would be made to the beach's north-west end, but these should have been made anyway, for the public benefit. Like the Howard Government, the Carr Government is making environmental improvement dependent on public acceptance of particularly nasty government proposals.

It has been suggested that Botany Bay should be entered on the World Heritage List. Glowing reports by botanist Sir Joseph Banks regarding the area's flora and fauna were the crucial factor in the British Government's decision to establish a penal colony in NSW in 1788, rather than at two alternative sites in Africa.

Botany Bay therefore has a unique significance in Australia's 40,000 year-long history of human occupation, because of its key role in the occupation of the continent by Europeans, which in turn led to the development of Australia as a modern industrial capitalist state.

In a striking way, the Bay has come to epitomise the problems



Botany Bay has a unique significance in Australia's 40,000 year history

this development has entailed. And nowhere are these problems more evident than in the conflicting interests of industrial capital versus local residents, workers and concerned citizens, over conservation of the area's natural and cultural values.

The Bay's eastern side now hosts Australia's busiest airport, alongside major petrochemical storage and cargo handling facilities – a catastrophe waiting to happen. On

the western side are residential suburbs, the Kurnell oil refinery and the relatively untouched natural areas, which harbour unique species of wildlife, including many noted by Banks. Further industrial expansion will inevitably encroach on the non-industrial areas and destroy their unique values, as well as ruining the bay itself.

Successive governments have failed to take action to relocate the airport and industrial facilities, despite the terrible hazard that both constitute, as exemplified by explosions at Melbourne's Coode Island refinery and the Port Kembla ethanol storage depot.

Greens MP Lee Rhiannon condemned the impossible deadline for

public submissions to the inquiry. She commented: "... the Greens will be fighting (the Port Botany expansion) in conjunction with supporting Port Kembla and Newcastle ports.

"Filling in 60 hectares of Port Botany is early twentieth century engineering that has enormous social and environmental implications for ... Sydney residents.

"Sydney streets can't cope with the traffic that this proposal would create ... The community must be allowed to fully participate in the Inquiry process and the Greens will be calling for the deadline to be extended accordingly." ✪

The Bay's eastern side now hosts Australia's busiest airport, alongside major petrochemical storage and cargo handling facilities – a catastrophe waiting to happen.

Coming soon - GloboBank

Anna Pha

When cracks appeared in one of the "Four Pillars" of banking last month, the other three looked on anxiously. The NAB's estimate of its likely foreign exchange losses has already risen from \$185 million to \$360 million, and could even go higher. The NAB – the biggest of Australia's four major banks – is now in damage control mode, trying to unwind what it says are dealings in unauthorised foreign currency options.

It appears that four NAB traders, since suspended, took out large currency options (a form of speculation or betting on future currency prices) that relied on the Australian and New Zealand dollars weakening against the US dollar. Unfortunately for them, the US dollar fell in price.

Accusations are flying about whether or not management knew, how long traders had been taking such risks and whether risk management protocols have been breached.

Regardless of the detail, the massive losses raise a number of serious questions about the finance sector:

Transformation of banks – Traditionally the source of bank income was from interest. The banks lent money at a higher interest rate than they paid on people's saving deposits. The gap between the two interest rates covered the costs of providing a service (staff, branch offices, etc) and the rest was profit.

While banks still hold savings and lend money, in many instances interest is only 30-40 percent of the

source of their income. A similar percentage is raised through fees, such as for services over the counter, the issuing of statements, and advisory services.

Some banks are making as much as 30 percent of their income from what is best described as gambling in currencies (as did the NAB) and other products (eg derivatives on what are known as futures markets).

Many banks specialise in types of services offered and have investment and other types of subsidiaries providing customers with potentially higher returns on their savings – but at a higher risk. The bank itself does not take responsibility if the savings are lost. Some manage workers' superannuation and post-retirement savings.

Privatisation – State and Commonwealth banks have been privatised. As a result their prime purpose has shifted from providing a service to the public (people, business and government) to one of making the largest profits possible for their private shareholders, regardless of consequences. Hence the branch closures, sackings of thousands of bank workers, attacks on bank workers' wages and conditions, and the multitude of fees as well as decline in service for many smaller customers. Privatisation brought an end to government guarantees.

Lack of accountability – *The Australian Financial Review* highlighted the problems for investors attempting to assess the levels of risk being taken by banks: "Their financial reports, while conform-

ing to accounting standards, are virtually meaningless to outsiders." (Chanticleer, 21-01-04)

Monopolisation – Banks cooperate with each other where necessary to defend their common interests (eg lobbying politicians for deregulation). There is also fierce competition which results in takeovers, mergers, crashes and financial crises. This process has been facilitated by deregulation and privatisation. In Australia, the "Four Pillars" (NAB, Westpac, ANZ and the Commonwealth) with St George dominate the industry.

Up to now Australian governments have, in the name of competition policy, resisted pressure to remove all restrictions on foreign ownership, mergers and takeovers involving these banks. It is only a matter of time before the government adjusts its thinking in terms of the above banks – from competition between Australian banks to counting competition between transnational banks operating in Australia.

Monopolisation is taking place globally, with the biggest getting bigger every day, squeezing out more and more smaller banks.

Citigroup, the world's largest bank, made \$6.2 billion in profits in the final quarter of 2003. It is prowling the globe, loaded with cash, in search of take-over targets.

JP Morgan Chase and Bank One are about to merge to form a US based bank with US\$1.1 trillion in assets. They have announced a wage freeze and a minimum of 10,000 job losses.

This follows on from Bank of



America's takeover of FleetBoston Financial last October.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Citigroup, Bank of America and JP Morgan account for 81 percent of loans arranged for investment-grade companies in the US.

Power of banks – The struggle taking place between banks (and also other financial institutions – particularly insurance monopolies) is for absolute power and global dominance. It is about control over hundreds of billions of dollars. These banks (and the big insurance companies) exert considerable con-

trol over other businesses – through loans, positions on corporate boards, the advice they give, manipulating money markets, trading on stockmarkets, and so on. These financial institutions are the most powerful centres of capital.

It is not clear how the NAB saga will unfold or if any other banks are in a similar position. If the NAB's position deteriorates, this might give the Government the excuse it wants to take the next deregulatory step and allow Citigroup or one of the other GloboBanks to "bail it out", i.e. begin the process of foreign takeovers. ✪

Call for gas explosion inquiry

Tom Pearson

A disaster of massive proportions was prevented by NSW firefighters last week after an ethanol tank on the state's south coast exploded, creating a huge fuel fire. It was plain luck that no one was killed in the explosion, which happened near the Port Kembla steelworks on January 28. The Australian Workers' Union (AWU) has raised deep concerns about safety at the facility.

The fire burned for three days as it consumed seven million litres of ethanol (ethyl alcohol) adjacent to the Bluescope Steel Coke Ovens. More than 125 firefighters from the Illawarra and Sydney fought the blaze and prevented it from spreading to nearby marine fuel and crude oil storage tanks.

Hundreds of workers were evacuated from nearby businesses and the steelworks. Five people working on the tank suffered minor burns.

The AWU, which represents workers at the plant, said that while there were no fatalities from the incident an inquiry was needed to find out how such a facility could explode. AWU Port Kembla Branch Secretary Andy Gillespie was 350 metres from the tank when it exploded.

"We were extremely lucky today that no one was killed", said Mr Gillespie. "However, how is it in this day and age that a high risk

facility such as an ethanol storage tank can explode?"

The union points to other such incidents, such as the recent Santos gas explosion at Moomba in South Australia, and the 1998 explosion at Esso's Longford plant in Victoria, in which workers were killed and severely injured. The AWU is demanding that the Carr Labor Government immediately initiate an inquiry.

The tank was rented by the Manildra company which owned the ethanol, valued at around \$5.6 million. The owners of the tank may face prosecution. The Department of Environment and Conservation is conducting an investigation into the blaze.

Manildra has been forced to store increasing amounts of ethanol after federal legislation reduced the permitted level of ethanol in blended fuels from 20 percent to 10 percent. The Manildra Group had snapped up the licence to supply ethanol for petrol in November 2001 from BHP Billiton, seeing it as a huge profit opportunity.

Ethanol is a low cost fuel produced mainly from sugar cane and wheat starch. The ten percent reduction cut Manildra's market – and profit – in half. It now has ethanol stored in various facilities around Australia. The company stressed that the Port Kembla facility was fully insured. ☺



Ethanol tank at Port Kembla – It was plain luck that no one was killed in the explosion

Stockmarket cheers as Kodak announces sackings

Global film giant Kodak has announced plans to sack up to 15,000 workers – 23 percent of its world-wide staff – over the next three years. The announcement has prompted grave concerns for the jobs of Kodak's 400 Australian employees, including a major film manufacturing plant in Coburg, Victoria.

"There's been concern for a couple of months now as Kodak has made a couple of announcements to shareholder briefings that have indicated that the structure of their film-making plants is going to change dramatically", said Brian Daley of the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU).

"As a film producing plant, Coburg is at least one of the plants that may be subjected to closure."

The LHMU has been liaising with members since announcements about the international company's long-term future began and says morale is low.

"Our people are very concerned about what will happen to their jobs. Management has not sought to reassure them that they have got any longer term future."



The LHMU has jumped quickly into negotiations with Kodak and the Victorian Government in a bid to prevent the factory's closure.

"LHMU delegates will meet at the Coburg facility – where 250 people are employed – and hold talks with members about how we can create new opportunities to secure these jobs."

"The LHMU is optimistic about our ability to put the best case for maintaining jobs in Australia", said Mr Daley.

Meanwhile Kodak has proved unrepentant on the announcement, not surprising given the big cheer

the company got from the stock market.

Kodak's share price instantly jumped \$3.61 on the US stock market, or 13 per cent. This was on top of recent gains of 14 per cent made in anticipation of a restructure.

Kodak, which produced the world's first mass-market camera in 1888, has been struggling with the speed of the shift from film to digital photography.

Digital cameras already make up the majority of new cameras sold in the US, Australia and many European countries. In response Kodak announced earlier in January it would withdraw their film-based cameras from those markets completely by the end of this year.

Overall, Kodak is placed only fifth in the international digital camera market.

However, the Kodak outlook is not quite as "mass-sackings or perish" as its workers might be led to believe.

For the fourth quarter of 2003 Kodak had net income of US\$19 million – or seven cents a share. Though it is still turning a profit, if you compare that figure with the same period last year – US\$131 million or 39 cents a share – the result looks disastrous.

If you remove "one-off" expense items, however, then you get a startling result of \$199 million, 70 cents a share. This was way beyond market analysts' expectation of 52 cents.

And despite stiff competition in the digital industry Kodak's overall sales still rose 10 percent in during the year. ☺

LABOUR NOTES

The Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU) is calling for community support to improve sick leave entitlements for child care workers in Queensland. "Working with children you are always exposed to illnesses. Eight days per year is not sufficient to cover the time off needed to prevent staff from returning to work without bringing illnesses back into the centre", said Kristy Jones, LHMU Child Care Organiser. The union is also promoting a Charter of Rights for Quality Child Care to lobby the Federal Government for higher wages and increased funding. Parents and the community are being asked to support the campaign by signing the Charter. For details on how you can become involved contact the LHMU Child Care Co-ordinator on 0408 787 791.

Construction crews working on a gas pipeline in the Pilbara are undergoing medical tests after striking a hidden asbestos dump. The discovery came as they were digging a trench for the \$114 million gas pipeline from Port Hedland to Newcrest in Western Australia. The Australian Workers Union (AWU) suspects the asbestos was dumped from the former Goldsworthy mine. AWU National Secretary Bill Shorten has called on the mining industry and state and federal Governments to come together with unions to identify locations of hidden toxic waste sites in light of the discovery.

More than 450 workers at the Pasminco smelter in Hobart have begun indefinite strike action in support of a four percent pay rise, while the transnational is planning to refloat the company on the stock exchange. Workers throughout the smelter are working to rule and stop work for four hours every night. Pasminco opposes the workers' claim for a collective bargaining agreement despite awarding management bonuses of between \$3000 and \$16,000 in November last year.

A newly released analysis of a survey undertaken by the Office of the Employment Advocate has found that workers are worse off under Australian Workplace Agreements (individual work contracts – AWAs). Associate Professor David Peetz at Griffith University found that AWA employees were significantly more unaware of their entitlements such as maternity leave and other working conditions. He also found that ordinary workers were less satisfied with their pay and working conditions than managerial employees.

Australia Post picketed

Over 300 Australia Post workers in Melbourne held a 24-hour stoppage last week to protest against Australia Post's attack on workers' rights and conditions.

Australia Post is relocating operations from three Port Melbourne sites – the State Mail Centre, the State Parcel Centre and the Melbourne Transport Centre – to the Melbourne Parcel Centre in Ardeer and stripping workers of their current conditions and entitlements in the process.

All 250 workers affected participated in the walk-out and picket.

Simon Miller, spokesperson for the Communications Electrical and Plumbing Union, said the central issue in the dispute was that a large number of permanent jobs were under threat.

"Many of our members are uncertain about whether they will have a job under the proposed changes."

Australia Post has also proposed to cut penalty rates by 15 to 30 percent. Part-time workers would lose their EBA entitlement to be guaranteed permanent minimum hours after 12 months of service. There is also a plan to scrap long-term higher duty status.

"In addition the management is refusing to supply basic services such as a canteen at the new centre in Ardeer. Our members are expected to buy 'Lean Cuisine' meals from vending machines".

Mr Miller said the union and workers were calling the new centre "Oh Dear" and the "Ardeer Detention Centre", as the facility is surrounded by razor wire. ☺

One part fact, 99 parts fiction

Tom Pearson

When cricketer David Hookes died last month, PM John Howard stated that "all Australians" were shocked and saddened. Howard is constantly making statements that are all inclusive, giving the impression he has discovered things that are immutably and exclusively attributable to us as a people. What these unique characteristics are he never articulates beyond terms such as "mateship" and "a fair go".

He even included "mateship" in the draft preamble to the constitution he and Les Murray wrote for the 1999 Republic referendum.

The aim is to promote the idea that we are all equal, all "mates". Based on this proposition Howard says he wants to "unite Australians", predicated on the meaningless bromide, "fundamental Australian values".

The Government will sway some people by the sheer weight of the public relations machine it has at its disposal (the Howard Government spends more taxpayers' money on advertising than any previous government).

But the contradiction is obvious: the actions and policies of the Howard Government are the major cause of social disunity and division. From the demonising of asylum seekers, to attacks on trade unions, the ruthless offensive against Indigenous rights, growing unemployment and wholesale cuts to government funding for social services, the engine of this govern-

ment has been fuelled by increasing inequality and growing social disharmony.

As Aboriginal leader Patrick Dodson put it on January 26, Australia Day: "What do Indigenous Australians have to reflect on this long weekend? For one thing, we remain the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in the nation."

Referring to the third world health conditions faced by Indigenous Australians that especially threaten the kids, he said that a "wealthy First World nation enjoying unprecedented economic prosperity cannot be proud while continuing to ignore the plight of their most vulnerable and disadvantaged children."

Faced with such a huge divide, the question is: what does Howard want to unite us around? The answer is war. Howard is playing the nationalism game and there is no level to which he would not stoop in order to cultivate the perception that there is a state of war requiring all patriotic citizens to rally around the government because we are "all Australians" who believe in a "fair go".

At the same time Howard is trying to hide the sharpening class contradictions in Australia. His and his Government's mates are the exploiters of labour and the money market gamblers who use working people's lives as collateral.

The attempt to manipulate public sentiment based nationalism is an old psychological ploy that

plays on prevailing beliefs, concepts, modes of thought, habits and customs, i.e. the spirit of the times.

Class-based

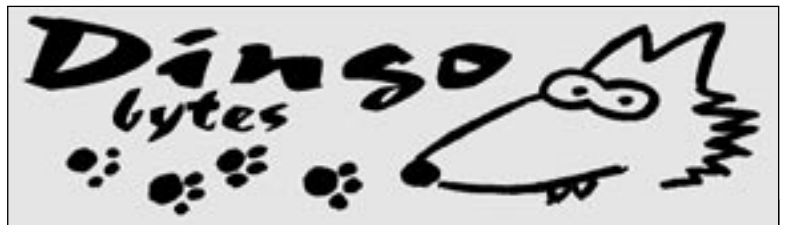
The "spirit of the times" is class-based and corresponds with the prevailing sentiments of the classes which set the tone of social relations.

Howard is thus trying to concoct a "spirit of the times" by creating an atmosphere of external and internal threats, and by conjuring up a "national character" that is at best one part fact and 99 parts fiction.

(This shows in his war propaganda where, like others on the extreme right, he presents an idealised version of the Anzac diggers of WW1 who were recruited to fight and die for Mother England, but leaves out crucial historical facts about WW2 because the victor was not to his liking.)

Because ideologically his Government despises diversity, Howard's "national character" does not and cannot reflect the reality of Australia today, with its multicultural make up and its living history of Indigenous struggles.

This manifests itself in a number of ways, including in the current "history wars", where those academics aligned with the Government's agenda are rewriting the nation's history, denigrating and belittling the Aboriginal resistance to Britain's colonial occupation and genocide, and in some cases claiming they never even happened. ☹



Telstra playing with workers' lives

continued from page 1

Which section of the Australian workforce that Williams thought would benefit from losing their livelihood wasn't made clear however! Of course even Costello is forgetting that he had been fully briefed by Telstra on the Sanyan joint venture. He obviously felt it politically expedient to forget this while ticking Telstra off on the radio.

And after IT, what else could follow – incredibly, call centres have already started to relocate, and apparently with some sophistication. Call Centre workers in low-wage economies are often trained to speak and sound like they are from the client country – some even begin their shifts with a discussion on the news in the place they are meant to be working.

Union members will know of the dreadful working conditions imposed on call-centre workers in Australia – we can only wonder about conditions in India or the Philippines, the most popular destinations for off-shoring.

In an article on offshore outsourcing of call centres *TechRepublic* (an IT Web-Magazine) compares labour costs and explains that "...the fully loaded per-agent cost in a US call center averages \$40,000 per year; in India, it is only between \$5,000 and \$10,000".

Trade union campaigns

Basically, in the age of the Internet and cheap communications no job is really safe. Consider Accounting, Human Resources, Advertising, Client Relations, Logistics – there is no special reason for the profit-hungry to keep any costly back-office department at head-office when they can ship the job off to any company or country that charges a fraction of the cost.

Up to now union membership by IT workers has been patchy, mainly because job security and relatively high wages were almost guaranteed. Many developers and support staff opted out of full-time work to go onto short-term but well

paid contract work – with contracts typically lasting 3-12 months and usually being renewed. With the dotcom crash and slipping confidence in all things IT and now job competition on a global labour market, life has turned into a very ugly opposite.

Union reps and shop-stewards who have stopped trying to recruit IT workers are now much more likely to find a receptive audience. Defending IT jobs helps defend our administration, distribution, call centres and other areas that bosses are targeting for cost savings.

The threat of off-shoring provides trade unions a new opportunity to recruit and build in the IT area. The NSW Labor Council's IT Workers' Alliance is a great example of focussing on IT workers, and taking up their specific problems – recruitment agencies, contracts, unpaid overtime. This could be the basis of campaigns that draw workers into the union and help them defend themselves when the employers attack. ☹

The Howard Government's support for the logging of old growth forests was given a big thumbs down in a January national Newpoll which showed that almost nine out of ten Australians want old-growth forests protected. Said Greens leader Bob Brown, "John Howard and [Tasmanian Premier] Jim Bacon's immovable alliance to destroy Tasmania's forests and wildlife at the fastest rate in history is facing the irresistible force – it's a tidal wave – of Australian public opinion." Senator Brown pointed out that even the great battle to save Tasmania's Franklin River in the 1980s did not get such strong support. He said the poll also sends a loud, clear message to the ALP that it should get behind the huge weight of public opinion on the issue.

The New Zealand Labour Government of Helen Clark is a typically opportunistic, wavering social democratic one. Like their ALP counterparts here in Australia they introduce occasional progressive leaning policies with one hand while delivering a pro-capitalist agenda with the other. As far as asylum seekers go Clark comes up smelling like a rose. A number of refugees rejected by Australia have been allowed to settle in New Zealand permanently. Now Clark has announced NZ will take 26 of the asylum seekers the Howard Government sent to the prison camp on Nauru. Even though they have been classified as refugees Australia still refuses them entry. In three years they will be New Zealand citizens.

Workers beware! Just prior to last weekend's ALP national conference Labor leader Mark Latham called the ACTU executive to his office for a little chat. After the meeting ACTU president Sharan Burrow said that "it's going to be a conference that reasserts Labor values". The last time such values were asserted back in the 1980s the ACTU betrayed workers and signed up to an Accord with the Labor Government that cut jobs, wages and working conditions across the board while overseeing a massive increase in company profits.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK is Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer. While in Israel last week appeasing the fascist Sharon Government, Downer was pronounced an "honorary Zionist" by no less a personage than the chairman of the Israel-Australia Chamber of Commerce in Jerusalem. Downer laid it on thick: "We admire your tenacity. We admire your determination to build a society here in circumstances which are somewhat embattled", he told the Chamber of Commerce members. Not surprisingly they treated the obsequious suck-up to a standing ovation. On the other side, Downer refused to meet with any Palestinian representatives. And it is worth recalling that Australia was one of only seven nations in the UN to vote with Israel against a motion condemning Israel's new apartheid wall.

Molly & Mobarak

by Australian Filmmaker
Tom Zubrycki

Molly & Mobarak is a feature documentary which takes you behind the headlines to Young, a small town in rural NSW where ordinary Australians share their community with 90 Afghan refugees working at the local Abattoir. A timely and revealing documentary which clearly illustrates the human cost of the government's harsh and punitive policies on asylum seekers.

"Deportation or heartbreak? Sensitive, significant filmmaking." Sacha Molitorisz, *SMH*

SYDNEY

From JAN 29
Valhalla cinema
166 Glebe Point Road, Glebe
Info & bookings ph: 02 9552 2456

MELBOURNE

From FEB 5
Kino Dendy Cinemas
45 Collins St, Melbourne
Info & bookings ph: 03 9650 2100
kinocinemas@bigpond.com

BRISBANE

From FEB 5
Schonell Cinemas, Uni of Qld
Union Road, St Lucia
Info & bookings ph: 07 3377 2229

From the Suburbs – Building a Nation from our Neighbourhoods

by Mark Latham
Pluto Press, 2003

Reviewed by Bob Briton

Is it worth reading any of the books written by Mark Latham in recent times? Would the exercise help us anticipate what a future federal Labor government might do? Only time will tell and, no doubt, certain things must be kept in mind when examining offerings like *From the Suburbs*.

The first is that not all of the bright ideas and “new directions” hit upon by Labor thinkers while the Party is in opposition actually make their way into legislation. Before his election to the Federal Parliament, then to the post of Leader of the Opposition and finally to the Prime Ministership, Bob Hawke had all sorts of brave ideas. He thought that the unemployed could work on kibbutzim if they could not be absorbed into the mainstream of the capitalist economy, for example. This idea was quietly dropped when Labor romped into office in 1983.

The ideas contained in Latham's manifesto might suffer the same fate. Latham, himself, points out that extended periods in opposition tend to spark all sorts of efforts at reinvention within the ALP. Some are successful and strike a chord with the electorate. Curtin and Whitlam did it and now Latham is doing it – at least according to Latham.

In fact, political “realism” has already seen Latham backtrack on a number of previously held positions. One of his first acts as opposition leader was to stand beside the Star and Stripes in a gesture of public apology for his comments about the incompetence of US President George Bush.

Latham has boundless enthusiasm for globalisation and “free” trade. He says that barriers to trade like tariffs are a type of racism. However, a belated recognition that the immediate dropping of the tariffs protecting the local car industry would de-industrialise much of our economy has tempered his language considerably on this issue.

Nevertheless, *From the Suburbs* does give the reader insights into the thought processes of figures like Latham in parties like the ALP

all over the world. In the book Latham lines up with other “Third Way” advocates like Tony Blair, Bill Clinton and writers like Amitai Ezioni with their ideas on “Social Entrepreneurialism”. (More on this later)

In explaining the development of his thinking, Latham several times attaches great importance to the collapse of the Berlin Wall. He links the loss of faith in governments as agents of change on his side of politics to that event. In truth Latham's side of politics, i.e. the politics of the right wing of the ALP, had always been hostile to socialism and socialist countries. I would be surprised if the Lathams of this world did not break out the bubbly when the Wall came down.

Indeed, those events were of the utmost importance for those trying to resist the attacks and increased demands of capitalism worldwide. It sapped people's confidence that an alternative to capitalism could be sustained during a period when trade union membership was falling. For some time, social activism waned. Some resisted this devastating trend. Others saw “opportunities” to carve out a “new” politics of capitulation for the labour movement. This is where Latham steps in.

New Labor values

Consistent with the utterings of every other “reformer” of social democracy, Latham claims to be true to his roots. He has always been anti-establishment, he says. The basic Labor values are “democratic fairness, economic aspiration and social responsibility” according to Latham. This slogan is vague enough for anyone, Labor supporter or not, to subscribe to. These words could have wonderful adventures in their application and avoid the meddlesome precision of the old (pigeonholed) slogan involving the “socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange”.

Concepts like those are anathema to Latham. To disguise his hostility to working class ideology he takes up the now customary pose of being opposed to all ideology.

Rather than spend more and more on public or private schools, parents should be encouraged to establish and run their own “charter” or community schools.

This is code for taking up the ruling capitalist class' ideology. He lays it out in its most modern form on page 57:

We need to acknowledge the things that are self-evident in Australian politics:

- Market forces work better than planned economies;
- Free trade works better than tariffs and industry welfare;
- Competition policy works better than monopolies, either public or private;
- Governments need to be fiscally responsible, delivering surplus budgets and low interest rates;
- The strongest form of job security lies in a good education and lifelong learning; and
- Increasingly, people see themselves as economic owners and consumers, not just as workers.

Remember; this is not ideology or dogma! From beginning to end, *From the Suburbs* is an exercise in concealing the main divisions in society. There is no class struggle or classes for that matter. There are only “insiders” and “outsiders”. There are Left insiders (with a capital “L”) and Right insiders (with a capital “R”). Phillip Adams and Piers Akerman, respectively, exemplify these poles.

People like these occupy powerful posts in the media, the arts, the bureaucracy or the boards of corporations. They belong to the intellectual elites and live in suburbs like Paddington, drink lattes and have a detached “tourist's” view of politics.

It is not entirely clear from reading the book whether the “outsiders” are simply the rest of the population or, specifically, the impoverished inhabitants of the outer suburbs of Australia's larger cities.

Whatever the case, the chal-

lenge for “left-of-centre” politics (note the use of lower case indicating the absence of ideology – these are the good guys) is to go out into the suburbs to get a “resident's” view of politics. People living in the suburbs, people like us, have little interest in the controversies discussed by Adams or Akerman. Latham is ahead of the wave – he lives in the Western suburbs of Sydney and represents some of the most isolated “outsiders” you can get.

For Latham there are no class issues, just “social” and “cultural” ones. Only the Left, for its own perverse self-justifying ends, perpetuates the myths of class. One needs to be careful with definitions here. Latham uses the term “Left” and “Leftist” in the same way that Bob Santamaria used to when he referred to the growth of a “New Class” in Australian society.

These “Leftists” are well-paid, over-privileged products of middle class backgrounds and tertiary educations. They thrive in the upper echelons of government bureaucracy and sponge off big grants in the arts. Mark Latham, like John Howard, prefers to define the “Left” in these terms. The rest of us recognised long ago that the individuals they are referring to are the phoney “left” that, for career purposes, jettisoned any loyalty to socialism long ago.

New unionism

The various protest movements and the trade unions scarcely rate a mention. The decline in union membership is due to the same failure of mass collectivism that afflicts big government departments. In Mark Latham's world, most workers are the sort of extreme individualists you would expect to find in an Ayn Rand novel. Many high skill workers in this post-material world have the whip hand in the global labour market, he says.

They want assets and quite a few of them are already racking them up. Fifty-four per cent of Aussies now own shares. Many are sitting on considerable amounts of superannuation. This “can do” set does not aspire to live in Paddington but, rather, in their comfortable two story homes in the outer suburbs from where many of them telecommute to work.

If unions want to remain relevant in this brave new world where they are neither wanted nor needed, they should look at things like Employee Share Ownership Programs. They could even get the employers to support their borrowing to get bigger slabs of shares in the companies their members work for. With this comes power, we are told – like the power unions have by having representatives on boards in the \$216 billion superannuation industry.

But there is something not right in this information age of super capitalism that Latham

clearly loves. He says that people have never felt more disconnected and powerless. In the same book Latham recognises that people are much more likely to experience “sudden sharp declines in living standards” (unemployment) than before. That is okay if they have assets and engage in Life Long Learning and can overcome it. This phenomenon is inevitable in this age of change. We will all have to learn to live and breath risk.

But he also recognises that if the “jam tomorrow” superannuation payout is taken out of the average Aussie household asset portfolio – the combination of their dwelling, their consumer durables and financial assets – wealth inequality has worsened sharply over the past 15 years. The situation with housing affordability is worsening. The under 35s are mostly locked out of home ownership. In order to promote some of his pet projects, he also has to own up to the fact that in parts of his electorate there is a 50 percent unemployment rate and 80 percent welfare dependency.

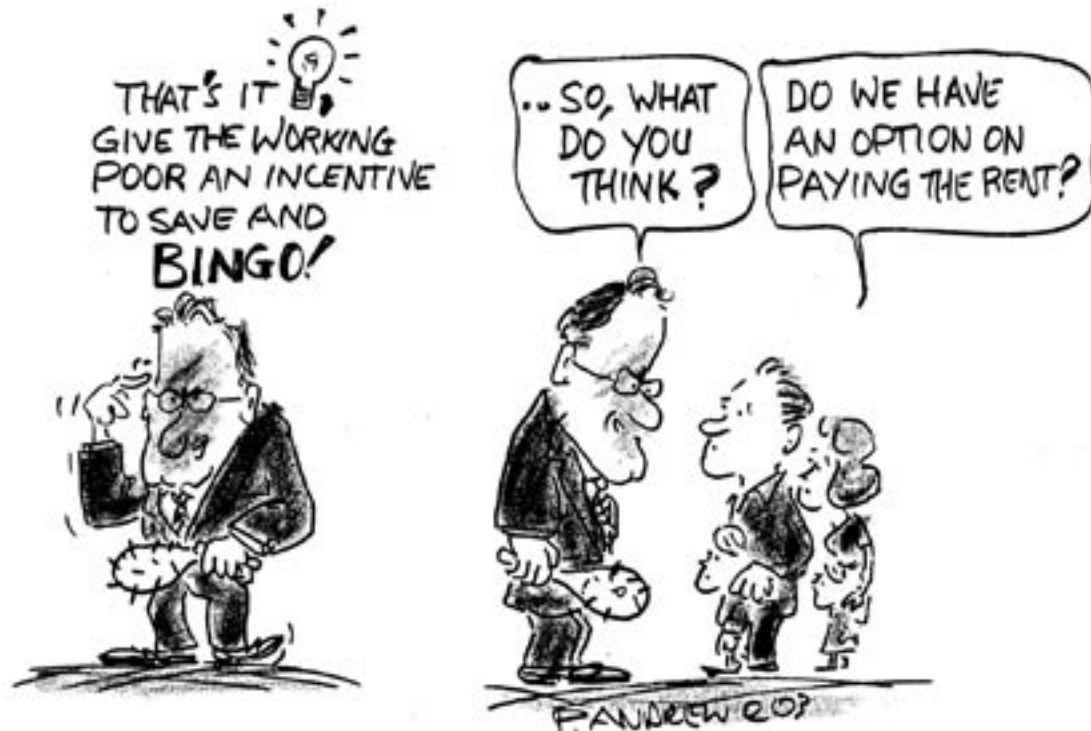
“Responsibility agenda”

Undaunted and still convinced that globalisation is lifting tens of millions of people out of poverty, Latham uses the realities of these areas to attack his other great hate. Now that the ruling class is refusing to fund the “welfare state” component of modern capitalist society – a component originally put there to head off demands for real working class power – Latham despises it, too.

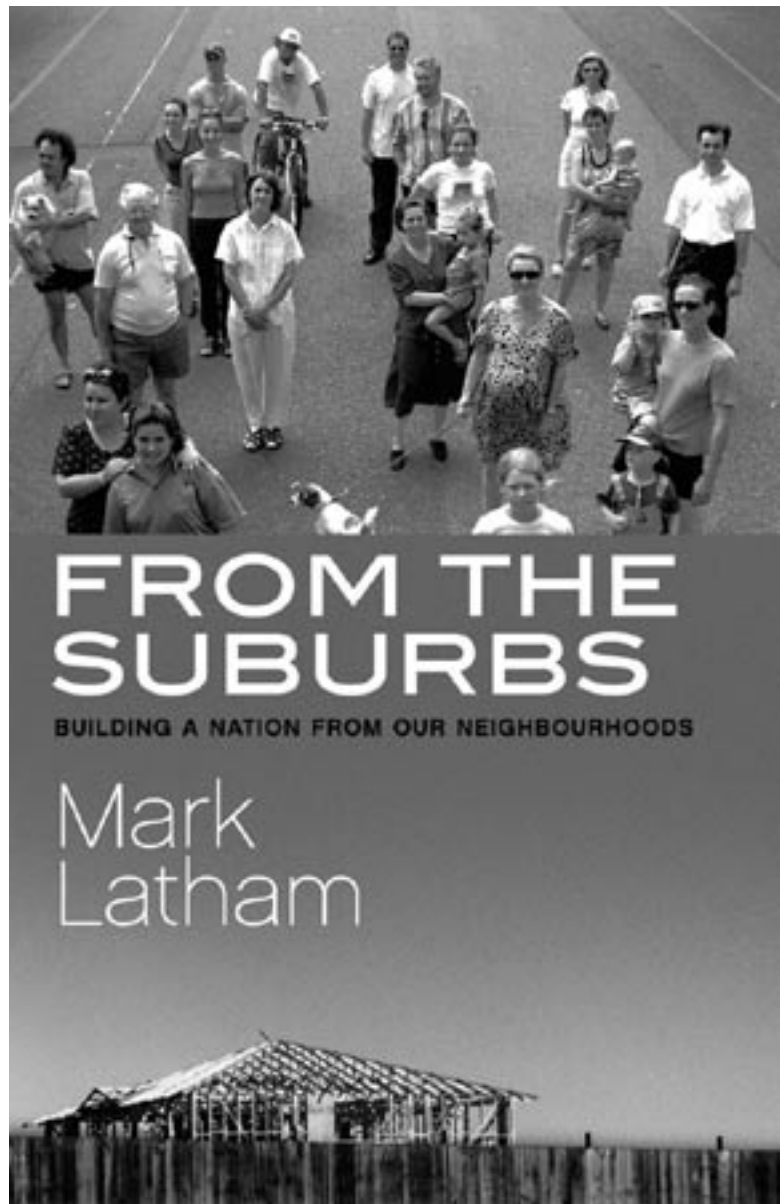
In fact, except for a momentary lapse on page 30 where he called the creation of the welfare state “the great civilising achievement of Western government”, for the remainder of the book he attacks it with a passion he might have borrowed from the US Right, which has a similar loathing of the New Deal and Franklin Roosevelt.

“The welfare state is good at mythology but not so good at ending the problems of poverty”, he says. “As a result, welfare has become an exercise in political mythology. It gives people on the extreme Left a warm inner glow, even though they have little understanding of how the system works in practice.”

You could be forgiven for thinking that in Latham's parallel universe, people's annoyance with Centrelink and other government instrumentalities is so strong that they do not bother applying for unemployment and other payments. People in the suburbs mentioned in the book are only interested in a “responsibility agenda”. No more



*From beginning
the main divisions in society*



Is Syria next in line for US invasion?

Mark Alberg

The passage towards the end of last year in both houses of Congress of the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act is but one facet of a relentless build-up of US pressure on Damascus.

The Syrian Accountability Act effectively brands Syria an outlaw. It accuses Damascus of supporting international terrorism and possessing or developing biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction. It hints that nuclear weapons may be under development, too. It calls on Syria to adopt a US-style democracy and to end its longstanding military presence in Lebanon.

Bush administration officials claim that Syria is hiding Iraqi Ba'athists and Iraq's missing weapons of mass destruction, and allowing "busloads of Syrian fighters" to pass into Iraq to fight US and British forces. The source for many of these claims is the notoriously right-wing Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, John Bolton.

The Senate version of the Accountability Act passed on November 11 by an overwhelming margin, 89-4, mirroring the House vote in October of 398-4. When signed into law, Syria will be subject to a wide array of diplomatic and economic sanctions until it has proved to Washington's satisfaction that it has changed. Iran is already suffering under a similar sanctions regime.

Since US trade with Syria is relatively small – only about US\$150 million per year by some estimates – and since Syria receives no US economic aid, the sanctions are less about economic coercion than

about sending a political message. And in many ways the campaign against Syria is eerily reminiscent of the early stages of the US build-up against Iraq.

Ian Williams, writing in the November 19 edition of *Middle East International*, observes how "all the excuses for war on Iraq have been resurrected and applied to Syria".

Why is Syria getting this treatment? While not posing any military threat to the US (its military budget is quite small, about a third of the direct military aid that the US gives to Israel), Syria's government has historically charted an independent path, economically and politically. In today's world, particularly in the oil-rich Middle East, such independence is unacceptable to Washington policymakers and Wall Street.

The bulk of Syria's trade today is with Italy, Germany, France, and Turkey. Its trade with members of the European Union amounted to over US\$6 billion in 2002. Syria is planning to increase its co-operation with the EU and 12 of its Mediterranean neighbours in a long-term plan that is to take effect in 2010. This economic orientation angers US corporations and banks which seek to dominate all Middle East markets.

Politically, Syria has also steered an independent course. For many years it had friendly relations with the former Soviet Union, from which it obtained much military equipment. It has been a staunch opponent of Israeli expansion-

ism, and has long supported the Palestinian people in their quest for justice and self-determination. This has earned it the undivided enmity of successive Israeli governments, which have urged the US to take punitive action against Damascus.

The US Government has found Israel to be a useful ally and its local gendarme in the oil-rich Middle East. Thus, when Israel sent fighter-bombers deep into Syrian territory in October and dropped bombs there – in violation of the United Nations charter and international law – the US threatened to veto any UN condemnation of the attack. This fits into Washington's campaign of intimidation and its pursuit of its own geopolitical aims.

Passage of the Syrian Accountability Act may have more time-sensitive motives for the Bush administration, too. Ian Williams writes: "There is a worrying seduction to its logic in an election year. Retreat from Iraq is unthinkable, but as in Vietnam, where the logic led to Cambodia and Laos to stop the supply lines, Syria is the perfect scapegoat for failure in Iraq, for the missing weapons, for the missing Ba'athist leaders, for the continuing attacks on US troops, when we all know how glad Iraqis were to be liberated."

Williams asks a haunting question: "How long will it be before American troops are being blown up daily in Damascus, too?" *People's Weekly World*, paper of the Communist Party USA. ☛

"rights" for them! Of course, it would be silly to insist on the non-existent "right" to a job. Only the vagaries of the market can deliver those.

Latham quotes a US experiment for welfare recipients whereby a condition of the lease on their dwelling is that they remain engaged in education or training. No training – no roof over your head. For all his professed admiration, the "poor" in Latham's world are like children – they want limits and discipline and he intends to provide it. The only reason he distances himself from the Work for the Dole scheme, I believe, is that he didn't think of it first.

In the final analysis, it appears that the Member for Werriwa expects the Outer Arc of our major cities to be poor for quite some time and, given that government can no longer splash money around, somebody has to tend to the needs of these communities. Latham insists that Social Entrepreneurs will do this more efficiently. These are the salt-of-the-earth individuals we all know that organise clean-ups, street barbecues, car pools and the like.

Borrowing from the Blair guide-book, Latham wants to help these people to access Social Entrepreneur Venture Capital Funds to be drawn from charities (the "third sector"), corporations and governments to complete various projects in disadvantaged communities. This is the type of "cross-sectoral" approach he likes. After chapters worth of hype about this new wave of social democratic reform, we are given only a few examples of real life success stories.

The first is Brian Murnane who, in his role of coordinator for the Argyle Community Housing Association, organised clean-ups, barbecues, community gardens and was even looking to buy out the run-

down shopping street in Claymore and establish cooperative ventures there. Police callouts to the area dropped dramatically as a result of these community-building efforts.

Latham is right to praise people like Brian Murnane but he is either deluded or cynical if he believes that virtually all the functions of the welfare state can be taken over by their activities.

Latham's refers to "Third Way" solutions to other spending problems of the decaying welfare state. An example would be in the field of education. Rather than spend more and more on public or private schools, parents should be encouraged to establish and run their own "charter" or community schools. The parents of this post-material age are set to get even busier, by the look of it.

To be fair, I should mention that the book's central theme of responsibility extends from the impoverished outer suburbs to the boardrooms of the corporate headquarters in the CBDs of our big cities. However, while there is a lot of detail on how responsibility among the poor is to be enforced, there is very little about what is to be expected of the corporations. Even though we now, apparently, demand greater transparency, ethical standards and social responsibility from business, these are the days of deregulation, after all.

In fact, I only found one page that dealt at any length with the big end of town and even there it only threatens other parts of the private sector – like the petrol industry – with something like the "social charter" Labor unveiled before the last election for the banking industry. No legislation, just "a wishin' and a hopin'" that transnationals do the right thing. This is Latham's recipe for a new social democracy. ☛

"How long will it be before American troops are being blown up daily in Damascus, too?"



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Hutton whitewash too thin to last

The findings of the inquiry conducted by Lord Hutton into the death of Dr David Kelly should have seen the resignation of Britain's Secretary of Defence Jeff Hoon and Prime Minister Tony Blair.

They should have sent shivers down the spines of George W Bush and John Howard, threatening their political careers as well.

Dr Kelly was an expert on Iraqi weapons in the Defence Ministry and the whistleblower who exposed Blair's "sexed up dossier" on Iraq as a military threat to the world.

The inquiry could have and should have once and for all exposed the fact that the US, Britain and Australia went to war on the basis of lies, that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and in particular none that could have threatened Britain "within 45 minutes" of an order from Saddam Hussein, as claimed by Blair.

Lord Hutton produced the whitewash that the British Government and intelligence agencies would have expected of him when appointed by Tony Blair to carry out the inquiry.

Instead of Blair and Hoon being nailed, scapegoats were found for Kelly's death in the form of BBC management and reporter Andrew Gilligan who exposed Blair's lies and the whistleblower Dr Kelly.

The report absolves the guilty and uses the situation to attack the integrity of the BBC for doing its job of an independent broadcaster which is not only heard in Britain but around the world including in Australia.

Hutton has delivered and a quick look at his impeccable establishment qualifications shows why he was chosen for the job: he is a

conservative upper-class white male judge educated at a posh all-boys boarding school before going on to Oxford.

He is well known to residents of the six counties of Ulster – back in the late 1960s as junior counsel to the Northern Ireland Attorney-General and then later in 1988 rising to the top job of Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland.

He spent much of his career as judge and jury in the notorious Northern Ireland kangaroo "Diplock Courts".

These were special non-Jury courts notorious for their inhumane treatment and miscarriage of justice.

He distinguished himself (in the eyes of the British ruling class) after the Bloody Sunday massacre of civil rights protestors in 1972, playing a key role in the judicial cover-up called the Widgery Inquiry which absolved the British troops of murder.

Hutton also played an important part in attacking Lord Hoffman, a Senior Judge who contributed to the decision to arrest and extradite the former dictator of Chile, mass murderer General Pinochet during his visit to Britain.

Hutton's attack on Lord Hoffman was on the grounds that he had links to Amnesty International and hence that invalidated Pinochet's arrest.

Lord Hutton said "public confidence in the integrity of the administration of justice would be shaken" if Hoffman's ruling was upheld.

Hutton was also involved in a more recent ruling that former MI5 agent David Shayler could not argue he was acting in the public interest by revealing secrets.

So it is not surprising that he had no time for another whistleblower or a public broadcaster that gave air to information from that whistleblower.

Though Blair has been officially exonerated, his credibility and political future have suffered a serious blow.

This was compounded last week when he only just managed to pass highly unpopular legislation to increase university fees.

Blair only scraped in with a majority of five in a House where Labour had a majority of 161. He got there by intimidating and threatening MPs with a vote of confidence in Parliament that could have brought down the Labour Government. It was a hollow victory with 70 Labour members crossing the floor.

His position is made even more insecure by developments in the US where Powell and Bush are starting to express lack of certainty about the existence of the biological and chemical weapons and nuclear arms program that up to now they were so adamant about.

Also hanging over Blair's head are mounting doubts about the "suicide" claim of Dr Kelly. A number of medical scientists have pointed out that it was most unlikely that he could have died in the way described. ☘

The report absolves the guilty and uses the situation to attack the integrity of the BBC for doing its job.

Behind Bush's push for the stars

Kate Hudson

Alarm bells are already ringing over President Bush's latest space plans, with his announcement that the US is going beyond its current vision of world domination to space. This will involve establishing permanent bases on the moon and landing astronauts on Mars.

The spin that Bush places on these developments harks back to the idea of bravely pushing the frontiers of space in the noble cause of science and human progress, but behind this supposed "renewed spirit of discovery" is an alarming subtext of both military and commercial interests.

Space exploration and rocket technology have always been inextricably linked with missile military development ever since Werner Von Braun and his team took their V2 missile technology from Nazi Germany into the US space program.

Part of the new proposals that Bush has outlined is likely to be a nuclear rocket known as Project Prometheus, named after the God of Fire.

This would halve the amount of time that it would take to reach Mars, but according to peace activists the project would have military applications as well and is a dangerous, unproven technology.

And, according to the organisation Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, "The military has long eyed the moon as a potential

base of operations as warfare is moved into the heavens."

Again, this reinforces what we read about in the US strategy document *Vision 2000*, which refers to "full spectrum military dominance" on land, sea, air and in space.

Surely Bush's recent proposals are bringing this horrifying scenario closer than ever. Commercial interests are strongly to the fore here, too. The moon also happens to have an abundant supply of helium-3, an isotope that is rare on the earth and is a possible energy replacement for fossil fuels.

As reported in the *New York Times* in December last year: "When fusion reactors start coming online, lunar entrepreneurs may stand to make the kind of money their predecessors raked in during the gold rush and the oil boom".

This potentially adds a whole new terrifying dimension to the notion of resource wars if they are to be carried into space.

But attempts have been made to stop space becoming just another commercial and military battleground. For example, the UN introduced the Moon Treaty and the Outer Space Treaty as ways to prevent ownership, exploitation and war fighting beyond our own planet.

However, as Leeds Metropolitan University Professor Dave Webb explains, "The US never signed the 1979 Moon Treaty and estate agents are already selling plots of land [on the moon] to US citizens."

The question of the costs of these new initiatives is of great concern within the US as the coun-

try faces record deficits. The White House claims that the project will not require major spending increases in the short run, but initial estimates of the cost of a mission to Mars suggests around US\$1 trillion over the next decade or so.

As the organisation Scientists for Global Responsibility argues, such a large sum of money could be put to much better use. "It is larger than the estimated increase in global aid necessary to provide clean water for all, eliminate hunger and malnutrition and provide universal literacy."

Few would argue against scientific advance and exploration, but the questions of motives and priorities are crucial. Take for example the US missile defence program. It is clearly contributing to new nuclear arms race and heightening global tensions.

As if that isn't bad enough, it also costs nearly US\$10 billion a year – the cost of providing clean water for all – with an eventual total cost of over US\$1 trillion.

We are better informed than ever about what is going on in the world – about the real motivations and interests that lie behind government policies and military strategies. It is absolutely clear what these space developments are about, no matter how they are dressed up.

So, let us keep on with our campaigning and keep space for peace and the world for the peaceful fulfilment of real human needs.

Kate Hudson is chairwoman of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), Britain. ☘



Washed up – Blair's future has suffered a serious blow

White House pushes deficit to trillions

Tim Wheeler

Just a week after bragging in his State of the Union speech that the economy is on the mend, George W Bush faced angry charges that his policies have pushed working people deeper in debt to enrich the wealthy elite.

The Fair Taxes for All Coalition (FTFA) released a scathing statement January 26 citing a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report that the federal deficit will reach an all-time record US\$477 billion this year. Over the coming decade, the CBO projected the deficit mushrooming to US\$2.4 trillion, a trillion dollars higher than the nonpartisan agency projected last August.

The new deficit projections "show that President Bush's tax cuts are harming American families now and into the future", the FTFA charged. Bush's US\$2 trillion in tax cuts, approved by the Republican-majority Congress, "has not improved the standard of living of average Americans or created new good jobs", it continued.

Referring to Bush's call in the

State of the Union to make those tax cuts permanent, the FTFA added, "The administration continues to push reckless proposals that divert even more money from health care, education, and Social Security to give more tax breaks to millionaires. ... As today's CBO numbers confirm, the Bush administration is imposing trillions of dollars in debt on current and future taxpayers."

The FTFA unites 325 organisations, such as People for the American Way, National Women's Law Center, AFSCME, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, USAction, and the Campaign for America's Future.

It said "millions of Americans (have) pledged to defeat Bush administration tax proposals. ... The time has come to reform the tax system to insure that everyone pays their fair share and to provide adequate revenue to assure a world class education for our children, quality health care, retirement security, and economic opportunity."

People's Weekly World abridged. For full text visit www.pwww.org ☘

In light of recent Mars missions ...

When NASA was preparing for the Apollo Project, it took the astronauts to a Navajo reservation in Arizona for training. One day, a Navajo elder and his son came across the space crew walking among the rocks. The elder, who spoke only Navajo, asked a question. His son translated for the NASA people: "What are these guys in the big suits doing?" One of the astronauts said that they were practicing for a trip to the Moon. When his son relayed this comment the Navajo elder got all excited and asked if it would be possible to give the astronauts a message to deliver to the moon. Recognising a promotional opportunity when he saw one,

a NASA official accompanying the astronauts said, "Why certainly!", and told an underling to get a tape recorder. The Navajo elder's comments into the microphone were brief. The son listened to the recording and laughed uproariously. But he refused to translate. So the NASA people took the tape to a nearby Navajo village and played it for other members of the tribe. They too laughed long and loudly but also refused to translate the elder's message to the moon. Finally, an official government translator was summoned. After he finally stopped laughing the translator relayed the message: "Watch out for these assholes. They have come to steal your land."

Immigration plan "chains workers"

Rosalio Muñoz

The "more compassionate" immigration system for undocumented workers proposed by President George W Bush on January 7 will grant corporations greater ability to pit US workers against the global work force for domestic jobs, say labour and immigrant rights leaders. It will also help businesses further exploit undocumented workers.

Bush is proposing a massive temporary worker program that will match "willing foreign workers with willing American employers".

The program, which will be administered by the Department of Homeland Security, establishes a three-year temporary worker visa for which both employed undocumented immigrants and foreign workers with job offers can apply. "Participants who do not remain employed, who do not follow the rules, or who break the law will not be eligible for continued participation and will be required to return to their home", Bush said.

But AFL-CIO (peak trade union council) President John Sweeney pointed out that the program will "serve large corporations' needs over those of immigrant workers and their families". Sweeney said the proposal "creates a permanent underclass of workers ... (and) deepens the potential for abuse and exploitation of these workers". It would "formalise an even larger class of workers accorded only second-tier status in American workplaces and will exacerbate the decline in job quality and job security for all workers", he said.

Democrat Rep Bob Menendez called the temporary worker program "a rotation of human capital, to be used and discarded, with no hope of permanently legalising one's status".

Bush said employers "must

make every reasonable effort to find an American worker for the job at hand". He promised that "the government will develop a quick and simple system for employers to search for American workers", and said the new temporary worker system "should be clear and efficient, so employers are able to find workers quickly and simply". Undocumented workers will have to pay a "one-time fee" to be eligible for consideration. Workers recruited abroad apparently will not have to pay a fee.

Labourers Union President Terence O'Sullivan told the Workday Minnesota news service that Bush is proposing to "chain a worker to an employer and claim to protect human rights". Chaining workers to employers, he added, "protects corporations and employers ... but leaves workers themselves vulnerable and beholden to those employers for the right to stay here".

The program, said Raul Yzaguirre, President of the National Council of La Raza, appears to offer the business community full access to the immigrant workers it needs while providing very little to the workers themselves. And because these workers would be vulnerable during their temporary status and even more vulnerable when it expires, "the program would have a negative impact on the wages and working conditions for their US-born co-workers" as well.

The National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium (NAPALC) said in a statement that Bush's proposal fails to provide a reasonable and timely path to lawful permanent residence. "It is unrealistic to expect people to come out of the shadows and become fully integrated members of our community and economy if they know that they will be forced to leave everything behind when their period of

stay under the program ends", said NAPALC member Phil Y Ting.

Bush's temporary labour program has predecessors in the form of indentured servitude, contract labour, and coolie labour systems of past centuries. The Bracero Program, begun during World War II, brought temporary Mexican workers in to augment crop harvesting for agribusiness in the Southwest. Business forces greatly expanded the program after the war.

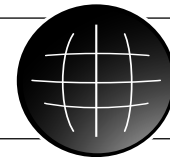
Government and business colluded to undermine labour rights of citizens, green card holders, *braceros* and undocumented workers with the Bracero Program, pitting all against each other, according to Ernesto Galarza, who helped organise the Mexican-American/Labor alliance that won its repeal in the early '60s.

Galarza's book, *Merchants of Labor*, describes how the *bracero* workforce grew from 4203 in 1942 to nearly 300,000 in 1959. Many *braceros* found that working without documents was more advantageous, so as the program grew, so did the number of undocumented workers. The government responded with increased deportations, which rose from 5,100 in 1942 to over one million in 1954 during the racist program the government called "Operation Wetback".

The multi-tiered system fostered the continued growth of agribusiness over the family farm, prevented successful union organising, and sharply reduced the number of citizens in the farm labour workforce.

The Bush proposal will create a temporary work program on a scale potentially far broader and deeper than the Bracero Program. Undocumented workers are found in almost every job description that exists, professional, skilled, unskilled, and in every region of the country. According to the Bush statement, undocumented workers will be eligible to apply for permits for the jobs they now have, workers in other countries, perhaps now employed by US global corporations, will also be able to seek invitation to such jobs.

People's Weekly World



Global briefs

USA: The US army's suicide rate in Iraq is about a third higher than past rates for troops during "peace time", the Pentagon head of health affairs William Winkenwerder said. Winkenwerder said that around 2500 troops are waiting for medical care after returning from overseas. The army sent an assessment team to Iraq late last year to see if anything could be done to prevent troops killing themselves. It increased counselling services to returning troops after several returned soldiers killed their wives and themselves.

BRITAIN: More than 140 MPs signed a House of Commons motion urging the Blair Government to press Israel to scrap its 425-mile apartheid wall. The motion pointed out that the wall denies 400,000 Palestinians access to their jobs, schools and hospitals. Richard Burden, who warned: "A new form of apartheid is being built as the international community looks on". Explaining why 143 MPs have signed his Commons motion, Mr Burden said: "The British Government has expressed its concerns about the wall, but we should be putting more pressure on Israel to stop it, directly, through the EU and through our influence with Israel's main benefactor, the United States". Palestine Solidarity Campaign spokeswoman welcomed the Commons motion and appealed to the Blair Government to demand the dismantling of the wall, which said, she said, "created a ghetto".

INDIA: Trade unions have called for a country-wide general strike on February 24 against the "total failure of the right-led present government of India to take the required steps to negate the pernicious impact of the supreme court judgement on the right to strike". The strike will also present an opportunity to demonstrate people's resolve to fight against anti-people and anti-national economic policies dictated by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation. These policies have resulted in a worsening economic situation with galloping unemployment, growing poverty, reckless privatisation and closures, combined with delays in adopting laws for safeguarding the interests of workers.

IRAQ: A US defence contractor best known for its military communications hardware won a Pentagon contract worth US\$95.5 million to rebuild an Iraqi television station. The group, Florida-based Harris Corporation, will also take over national newspaper Al-Sabah and two Baghdad radio stations. The plan to group the media properties together as the Iraqi Media Network was hatched by the US State Department before the US-led invasion. After Baghdad fell, the Pentagon sent equipment and media experts from Science Applications International, a US defence contractor whose staff is packed with former US military and intelligence officers. The network's close ties to the coalition and its slow coverage of breaking news have made it unpopular with Iraqis, who prefer its competitors, Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya.

Chaining immigrant workers to employers protects corporations and employers ... but leaves workers themselves vulnerable and beholden to those employers for the right to stay here...

International action for East Timor resource rights

The East Timor Action Network/US (ETAN) marked the January 26, Australia/Invasion Day national holiday by drawing attention to the fact that Australia does not honour the national sovereignty and resource rights of East Timor.

East Timor supporters around the world phoned, faxed and e-mailed Australian diplomatic missions to urge a speedy and fair resolution of the maritime boundary between the two countries.

"What is at stake here is billions of dollars that rightly belong to East Timor under international law. The world is watching how Australia treats East Timor in boundary negotiations", said John MMiller, spokesperson for ETAN.

The Laminaria-Corallina oil field, which is twice as close to Timor as it is to Australia, is now mostly depleted after generating more than US\$1 billion in revenues for the Australian Government; not a cent has gone to East Timor, ETAN said. If international law were obeyed, some 60 per cent of the oil and gas entitlement that

Australia is claiming would belong to East Timor.

East Timor is one of the poorest countries in the world, with a severe lack of essential services and high unemployment.

In October 2002, East Timor enacted a Maritime Boundary Law, claiming a 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone in all directions, based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Where neighbouring claims overlap, as is the case with East Timor and Australia, countries must negotiate a permanent maritime boundary, usually halfway between their coastlines.

In March 2002, Australia gave formal notice that it was withdrawing from international legal mechanisms - the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea - to resolve boundary issues that cannot be settled by negotiation. The withdrawal prevents East Timor from taking Australia to the Tribunal to contest

its refusal to engage in timely and co-operative boundary negotiations.

The two countries held their first negotiating session last November, more than a year after East Timor requested it. They will not meet again until April.

Representatives of 100 organisations from 19 countries sent a letter to the Australian Prime Minister John Howard last November, which stated: "We have been troubled by your government's callous disregard for East Timor's sovereignty and rights, which seems contrary to the deep concern for East Timor expressed by so many Australians. Australia's long-term national interests are best served by a stable and prosperous East Timor ..."

"This is the 21st century, not 1788. The Australian government needs to wake up and realise that it no longer acceptable to seize territory or resources belonging to another people", said Karen Orenstein, Washington co-ordinator for ETAN.

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
65 Campbell Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Values and schools

I have watched with interest and frustration the current debate on schools and values initiated by PM John Howard and his Health Minister Tony Abbott. It was wonderful to read Tom Pearson's article on the cover of *The Guardian* (28/1/2004) which actually addressed the real issues.

My interest comes from the fact that I was a teacher for over a decade in both state and private schools in Australia and overseas and because I believe education is very crucial in promoting the values of social justice, peace, fair play and respect for all. I have also been an organiser for the Australian Education Union.

In my experience most schools in Australia that I have taught in or visited during my education career promote the values I have mentioned. Even the very elite school that Tony Abbott attended did. I know this because I taught there when he was a student in the early 1970s.

What has intrigued me about the debate is that while our PM and Health Minister claim that our state schools do not teach values, they fail to spell out what values they want to see taught. Could this be because so many of their policies are devoid of humanity and compassion and that they simply want to promote nationalist and elitist

pretensions as Tom Pearson identified in his article?

What sort of values lead our federal government to treat asylum seekers so shabbily, cheat East Timor, the poorest country in the world out of its rightful share of the oil and gas in the Timor Sea, provide generous funding to wealthy schools at the expense of the poorer ones and try to push Australia into a free trade agreement that will impact harshly on many disadvantaged Australians?

Sadly, I come to the conclusion that the purpose of this debate is about driving a wedge between Australians in the lead-up to a federal election and to attack Australians who do promote positive humanitarian values as being "do-gooders" or "politically correct".

We do need a deep and far-reaching debate about human values in Australia at this time, but the one initiated by Howard and Abbott is not genuine. The only "values" they seem to be promoting is that selfishness, callousness and greed are good.

My plea to all Australians is let us reject the negative values that the Howard Government is promoting to show the world that we really do value the concept of a fair go and compassion for suffering humanity.

Andrew (Andy) Alcock,
Forestville SA

What is the purpose of government?

With the start of another year, as we reflect upon the events that have passed, we may ask ourselves, what is the purpose of our Government?

The Constitution is somewhat vague on this subject; our instru-

ment of government contains no clear definition of the role it is to perform.

This arrangement may have been acceptable when Australia, at the beginning of the 20th century, was still a colonial outpost of the British Empire, but here and now in the 21st century, when the people of Australia consider themselves as citizens of an independent nation, it is deficient in so many ways.

Section 51 of the Constitution, mentions the power "to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth", and, while it bestows considerable powers on the Federal Government, it in turn, demands no responsibilities of the government to the people!

The meaning of "peace" and "order" are clear enough, but "good government" is a somewhat subjective term, depending on whether you are the government, or being governed, and when we consider the manner in which the Government has become injurious to the people, then it is time to question its reason for being.

The disciples of Mammon believe that the purpose of the state is simply to provide them and their entourage with the opulent lifestyle they enjoy. They have constructed elaborate mechanisms of government that are utilised by this parasitic organism to enable it to feed off its host.

A successful parasite does not kill its host, for it understands the principle of the golden goose. Carefully managed it can draw sustenance from its host forever, somewhat like the good shepherd who tends his flock. He keeps them fed and watered, free of disease, and protects them from predators, but he does this only so that

he might fleece them at regular intervals.

The word commonwealth is a conjunction of two words, common and wealth, which in essence means the wealth we share in common. This common-wealth comprises the nation, the land, and the infrastructure that has been developed in order that modern civil society may function.

Infrastructure in particular, is something essential to modern society, and includes the water and sewerage, highways, electrical power generation, telecommunications, health and education, etc. It is something that functions best, when publicly owned, and operated for the common good.

When infrastructure is not publicly owned, and utilised to generate dividends for a select group of citizens rather than provide the services to the whole community, then the quality of the services are diminished in order that dividends be paid.

History also records the way in which private ownership of infrastructure has been utilised to the detriment of business enterprise, to stifle competition and extract a large tribute from society.

Those that believe that nothing should be publicly owned have corrupted the Houses of the people and passed laws that will forever prevent the people from the full enjoyment of their common property.

They, that is the agents of the disciples of Mammon, have deliberately mismanaged our infrastructure in order that when it no longer functions as it should, they can justify selling it to those faceless men, those controllers of the giant corporations, who will then exploit it for their personal self-interest rather than the common good.

The new year will bring forth a new push for the Republic, as there is a Senate inquiry currently in progress. Its terms of reference are almost identical to those given to Malcolm Turnbull in 1993.

Rather than falling for the establishment's ploy of dividing the nation against itself, that is between Monarchists and Republicans in order that nothing will change, that is, nothing except the title of the office of Governor-General, we should focus on the issues that unite us, rather than those that have been contrived to divide us, then perhaps together, we may be able reform this rotten system of government that we inherited from England.

Gary Edwards
Gilgandra, NSW

Questions

Here are some questions for Mr Latham and the Labor Party. Will a Labor Government:

- Withdraw Australian troops from Iraq or leave them there under the command of the most dangerous US President in history?
- Increase the rebate to doctors and restore the universality of bulk billing?
- Cancel the subsidies to private health insurance companies?
- Put a stop to any further privatisation of public enterprises and public institutions?
- Oppose Australia's involvement in the US Star Wars program?
- Cutback subsidies to private and church schools and substantially increase support for public educational institutions?
- Abandon mandatory detention and close refugee detention centres?

Bruce Gillman
Sydney, NSW

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

The spirit of luxury

Two days before Christmas, P&O Australian Resorts announced that over the next eight months or so it would be developing a "top class outback station resort" in Queensland.

The resort would be on Wrotham Park, a cattle station that sprawls over a mere 600,000 hectares (that's well over a million acres) on the Mitchell River west of Cairns.

"Capitalising on the strong demand both domestically and inbound for soft adventure tourism, Wrotham Park station will cater to a maximum of 20 guests at one time", said the boss of P&O Australian Resorts, one Mark Campbell.

Twenty people may not sound like a money-making crowd, but this resort is not catering to your common tourists on average incomes. Dear me, no.

Tariffs at Wrotham Park will be about \$800 per person per night. The meals will want to be pretty good, eh?

The thinking is, presumably, that the idle rich, having "done" the Barrier Reef, will pop over to Cairns by plane and go on the extra 300km to Wrotham Park by Lear jet or even helicopter to whet their jaded appetites on "the outback".

P&O Australian Resorts is being joined in the project by a joint venture company formed by the late RM Williams, the outback clothing guy, and a company owned by Peter Holmes à Court.

With no sense of irony, they have called their joint venture for the well heeled The Authentic Outback Experience.

Mark Campbell echoes their warped idea of what constitutes the authentic outback: "Wrotham Park Station will position itself as a holiday experience that captures the heritage and spirit of outback Australia."

In a pig's eye it does. The heritage and spirit of the squattocracy, perhaps, but contrary to what bourgeois propagandists would have you believe, the outback of this country was not developed by "kings in grass castles".

It was developed by ordinary bush workers – drovers, stockmen, shearers, boundary riders, bullockies, timber-getters, fencers, farriers, cooks and practitioners of a 101 other trades.

They developed the genuinely authentic "heritage and spirit" of outback Australia, not the squatters who, picking whatever large stretch of fertile land they could find, simply dispossessed the Aborigines as of no importance (except as peons) and set themselves up as grandees.

What "heritage and spirit" could they reveal except that of robber barons?

The spirit of the bush, that Lawson and a whole generation of Australian writers recorded and celebrated, was inherently democratic, egalitarian, militant and anti-bourgeois.

The squatters, on the other hand, were concerned only with property, their property, and that included not only the land but the people on it.

A comrade, now dead, who had been a drover in Queensland and the Northern Territory, told me once of how he had been part of a team that brought a mob through to a large Queensland station. The grateful

owner said "Go down to the Blacks' camp and get yourselves a gin each for the night."

Aboriginal stockmen were always paid less (sometimes much less) than their white counterparts, despite being acknowledged as excellent workers and splendid stockmen.

Aborigines that would work around a station could stay; those that wouldn't or couldn't were told to clear off. Those who fought back against the wholesale seizure of their tribal lands, watering places and food sources were murderously hunted down and attacked.

Will the "authentic" outback experience at Wrotham Park include the parading of Aborigines chained by the neck for the crime of defending themselves, their families and their land from invasion and occupation by European or (in the case of Nematluk, for example) Japanese intruders?

I suspect not. For despite all the talk, the guests at Wrotham Park will be getting pampered luxury, not authenticity.

Changing the subject entirely, I recently acquired from an elderly friend a splendid and much appreciated addition to my collection of books on the cinema: *Movie Parade*, by British film historian Paul Rotha.

Published in 1936, this rare work is a pictorial survey of the then 40-year history of the cinema (European and Japanese as well as British and US).

Rotha had previously written what was for a long time the definitive (as well as the only) history of world cinema, *The Film Till Now* (first published in 1929).

Movie Parade contains stills I have never seen in any other publication (as well as many that have been reproduced many times since).

In the Introduction, Rotha



deplores the fact that "from a profit-making point of view, the executives of Wardour Street and Wall Street, of Berlin, Hollywood, Paris, Tokyo and Vienna ... will recall only those films of the widest success. ... In terms of coin, a *Singing Fool* [the first all-talking Hollywood film, with Al Jolson] takes a place prior to a *Kameradschaft* [G W Pabst's intensely powerful cinema classic of German coal miners overcoming post-WW1 prejudice to go to the aid of French miners following a cave-in].

"Only, I believe, in the Soviet Union might every field of cinema

be developed to a degree of intellectual value fit to rank equal with the other arts.

"Only in a cinema based on cultural and social purpose should we find tragedy permitted to be tragedy without fear of commercial failure, should we find a sociological approach to modern problems without that extra quality which the executives of our film business call 'box-office'."

With "cinema" changed to "television industry", that final paragraph should be engraved on a plaque and given to every member of the ABC Board for their edification. ☺

**Rob Gowland
previews
ABC & SBS
Public Television**

Sun February 8 ~
~ Sat February 14

There are new episodes of two familiar British cop shows on the ABC this week, perhaps to compensate for the ludicrous soap opera that is now *The Bill*. The first is from the BBC, another two-part adaptation of one of PD James' best-selling novels, in this case *Death in Holy Orders* (ABC 8.30pm Sundays).

Martin Shaw stars as James' hero Commander Adam Dalgliesh of New Scotland Yard. Also in the cast are Robert Hardy (*All Creatures Great and Small*), Jeff Rawle (*Drop the Dead Donkey*) and Jesse Spencer (*Swimming Up Stream*).

PD James' tightly plotted and relentlessly middle class stories about Adam Dalgliesh are more popular in England than here. When *Death in Holy Orders* ran in Britain, more than six million people watched it.

Still, if you enjoy whodunnits, you'll probably like this.

The second is a new four-part series of actor Robson Green's own production *Wire In The Blood* (ABC 8.30pm Fridays). Made by Green's company for Britain's commercial network ITV, the series is nothing if not modern: serial killers, black masses, kinky sexual murders, and an uptight, flawed hero.

Set in the north of England city of Bradford, the series stars Robson (a curiously wooden actor with very little charm but he kind of grows on you) as that very modern thing, a clinical psychologist turned police profiler.

His insights are a trifle pat, but the series is shot and edited with verve (lots of cutting on sound to link scenes) and while it may not be much as detection it is quite good as a thriller.

There have been numerous programs of recent times that seek to ally science and Christianity, to convince people that believing in some supreme, omnipotent deity is not incompatible with a scientific outlook.

In terms of philosophy, this is very subtle anti-materialist (and hence anti-Marxist) propaganda.

Now we have one that seems to be trying to do the same thing with Buddhism.

The two-part series *The Life of Buddha*, screening on *Lost Worlds* (SBS 8.30pm Sundays), supposedly "draws on the ancient art of storytelling, as well as historical and scientific facts to retrace the life and doctrine of Buddha".

For modern tastes, Buddha emerges as an anarchist visionary out to destroy the caste system in India. We are told that "he invented the law of cause and effect, whose relevance scientists have recently rediscovered".

Interesting, but take it with a large pinch of salt.

The best program of the week is undoubtedly Kerry Brewster's acutely observed little fly-on-the-wall documentary series *Our Boys*, screening on *Reality Bites* (ABC 8.00pm Tuesdays).

This is genuine reality TV, humane, real, involved and committed. The series looks at the lives of five teenage students and their teachers at a typical, cash-strapped government high school in south-west Sydney.

The irony that the school, Canterbury Boys High, was Prime Minister John Howard's old school, cannot be lost on staff or students (or viewers).

Filmed over a school year, the short series tells the personal stories of today's public education system. Ninety percent of the pupils at Canterbury Boys come from non-English speaking backgrounds. The school is starved of funds,



Relentlessly middle class – Martin Shaw as Commander Adam Dalgliesh (*Death in Holy Orders*)

the boys know that many of them will go from school to unemployment. It is a story of teachers who go far beyond their traditional classroom roles.

I have not seen the BBC/History Channel co-production *Horror In The East* (ABC 9.30pm Tuesdays) because the preview tape was faulty and would not play, which was a pity.

But the synopsis already points to a serious flaw in the program's approach. The program is described as "an investigation into the Japanese psyche during the Second World War which confronts one of the most dramatic and important historical questions of the 20th century – why did Japanese soldiers behave as they did?"

The series "probes the Japanese belief in their own racial superiority" and "tells horrific stories of Japanese atrocities". But deliberate starvation, sadism, bestiality and mass murder were not peculiar to Japan in WW2.

The same policies were pursued, the same bestial traits exhibited, by the German Nazis and their

Hungarian, Croatian, Latvian, Estonian, Ukrainian, Slovakian, Finnish allies.

Their races were different, as were their "ancient traditions", but their ideology was the same: the ideology of fascism. Whatever local customs or traditions can be used to bolster a fascist mentality would be utilised, but the root cause was the need by big capital of an army that would terrorise and destroy without question and without thinking.

Which is why the US army has so often indulged in atrocities. But I am sure the History Channel won't be going into that!

Watch out for *Seduced By Sai Baba* (SBS 8.30pm Thursday), about how gullibility, credulous celebrities like Goldie Hawn and the Duchess of York, phony miracles and the search for something to believe in have given the Indian guru Baba personal assets of \$3 billion and made him the leader of a 30-million strong cult.

Following widespread allegations of misconduct, sexual abuse and paedophilia, Sai Baba and his organisation are currently being

scrutinised by UNESCO, the British Parliament, the FBI, CBI and even the US Department of State – which has issued an official warning to present and would-be devotees.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Suspicion* (ABC 10.30pm Saturday) epitomises the inability of the film artist to create freely under the commercial constraints of capitalism (see Paul Rotha's comments in this week's *Culture & Life*).

Hitchcock shot the film so that Joan Fontaine's suspicion that her new husband, Cary Grant, was trying to kill her would be proven to be correct. Grant played the male lead in that vein, delivering every line in a manner to make it suspect.

But Grant was a big star, and RKO thought it would harm his image and future box-office appeal to have him play a heartless wife murderer, so they imposed a totally illogical happy ending on Hitch, in which it is all Fontaine's misunderstanding, and Cary's really a good guy.

Up to that point, the film was one of Hitch's best, but the imposed ending makes it all silly. ☘

Western Australia

The Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Centre Needs You

The Centre is having a funding crisis. Located in the beautiful Balgo Hills area off the Tanami track, it was set up in 1999 by senior Aboriginal Law Women to revitalise and care for their cultural, spiritual and artistic traditions. It is an interim safe house for women and children escaping abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault; it is a Ceremonial Law Ground for women. In short, it is a great and worthwhile service.

**You can help by donating second hand clothes:
women's, men's, children's and babies', linen, hats, shoes, sandals or thongs.**

Bring to the office of Senator Ruth Webber
1/153 Trappers Drive, Woodvale, WA

Or post free of charge to:
The Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Centre
PMB 308 Balgo Hills
Via Halls Creek WA 6770
Quoting Australia Post Business A/C no. 9180241

**If you are willing to help out financially, or are willing to sell raffle tickets,
contact Amanda at amanda.rainey@aph.gov.au or on 08 9409 9599.**

The CPA on the WEB

For more information on the Communist Party of Australia, documents, *Guardian* archives, campaigns, links to other parties, papers and organisations and much more, visit our websites:

Central Committee: www.cpa.org.au
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Sydney

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Margo Kingston, journalist *SMH* & Web Diary;
Anthony Green, political commentator ABC

February 13
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Speaking on The End of Equality:
Work, Babies and Women's Choices in 21st Century Australia

February 20
Light on the hill, heart of the nation. Where is it?
Judy Davis, Academy Award winning actor;
Pat Dodson, Inaugural Chair of Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation

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Surry Hills NSW 2010
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Editor: Anna Pha
Published by T Pearson
65 Campbell St
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Printed by Spotpress
105-107 Victoria Rd
Marrickville 2204
Responsibility for electoral comment
is taken by T Pearson,
65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, 2010

The World Social Forum – A festival of movements

The World Social Forum 2004 was held in Mumbai (India) from January 16-19 with over 100,000 delegates from about 80 countries participating. About 30,000 participants came from outside India.

The huge attendance indicated a growing global movement against corporate globalisation and US imperialism in particular. The atmosphere at the opening all-in meeting was terrific. Singing and drumbeating participants from many Indian states took part. The Pakistani music group Junoon gave a wonderful performance while a Brazilian troupe Siwela Sonke captivated the audience with an energetic performance.

Chico Witaker, one of the founding members of the WSF said the main challenge was to continue and deepen the common struggle. "We are so many now, we need to co-operate. New initiatives, new proposals and new mobilisations are emerging. This huge attendance today gives us the confidence that the WSF can be expanded throughout the entire world", he said.

Women and children victims

Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi of Iran said that women and children were the first victims of today's wars, with 90 percent of those who die in wars being civilians. She felt globalisation needed to be democratised and there should be greater respect for human rights. She said the right to Palestinian self-determination must be seriously asserted by democratic people throughout the world. Ebadi also wanted the WSF to take up the issue of the growing number of terror attacks.

Author and activist, Arundhati Roy, said that there is not a single country in the world that can escape the weapons of US imperialism – either cruise missiles (as was seen in Iraq) or IMF cheque books (as was seen in Argentina).

She advocated that the two US companies which were profiting the most from reconstruction contracts in Iraq should be identified and shut down through global action. "We should not only oppose but become the resistance in Iraq. We must consider ourselves at war".

No to occupation

He welcomed the decision taken at a Jakarta conference to hold a meeting in Baghdad in the near future with the theme "No to Occupation – Yes to the Iraqi People". He ended his speech with the call "Let's go to Basra, Nassiriya, Fallujah and through to Baghdad".

The British Labour Party MP, Jeremy Cobin, said the anti-war

movement mobilised young people in a way like never before and cited the February 15 rally in London as the turning point in the movement.

He also felt the success at Cancun were the World Trade Organisation (WTO) could not come to a conclusion, was largely because an influential group of developing countries refused to toe the imperialist line. Such resolve was not displayed by the governments of the same developing countries a year earlier at Doha. That they did so at Cancun shows that one of the important factors was the pressure built on these governments through popular protest actions.

Mustafa Bargoita of Palestine said that his people will emerge victorious like the Indians, Algerians and Vietnamese in their struggles against occupiers. He said Israel was shutting down every part of Palestine with the construction of the "apartheid wall".

Every conceivable expression of protest against marginalisation and exclusion in the process of globalisation from across the globe was visible at the World Social Forum.

Tribal groups from the Indian state of Orissa interacted with natives from the Amazon River jungles in Brazil. The aboriginal native inhabitants who were ruthlessly displaced and destroyed by the white settlers in New Zealand rubbed shoulders with Dalits in India who are denied an equal, respectable and dignified status.

The common cause found by these people resulted in a common resolve to confront the common enemy that is responsible for this state of affairs.

Seminars

Thousands of seminars, debates and discussions took place and they were a battleground for ideological debates on the question of the alternative to imperialist globalisation.

Social democrats, NGOs, communists, anarchists and trotskysts took part in these debates. Some of the finest minds and personalities in the world participated.

Among the communist parties taking part were those from the socialist countries of China, Vietnam, Cuba and Laos, and important communist contingents from Brazil and Latin America and various European parties. The presentation of the communist viewpoint culminated in a big public meeting organised by the CP of India (Marxist), the CP of India and the Peasants and Workers Party.

The communist parties asserted that if another world is possible, it would and can only be a socialist world. They called for greater integration of the anti-globalisation and anti-war movements into one powerful current of anti-imperialist



Every expression of protest was visible at the forum

struggle and resolved to work in unison even if separately towards this end.

A seminar called "Socialism Today: Challenges" was chaired by A B Bardhan, the General Secretary of the CP of India.

He said that the experience of many countries since the fall of the Soviet Union made it very clear that capitalism is no solution to people's problems. Bardhan said communists are inspired by the slogan "Another World Is Possible" and that this world should be one which brings to an end all exploitation and ushers in peace for humanity.

The analysts' claims in capitalist propaganda that the collapse of socialism in the USSR led to the demise of socialism and of Marxism are false. The decade of the '90s showed throughout the world how capitalism as a system exploits the poor masses in order to cater to the interests of global capital. The successes of socialism in Cuba, China, Vietnam and the coming to power of Left forces in Latin American countries underscores that socialism can be and will be a viable alternative to capitalism.

Sitaram Yechury, a leading member of the CP of India (Marxist), spoke of the remarkable contribution to human endeavour of socialism in the 20th century. This could not be erased from history, no matter how much the imperialist and capitalist forces try, he said.

Speaking of the reasons for the

collapse of socialism in the USSR, he said that as the USSR emerged as a major force on the world stage, many third world countries were looking at socialism as the means of getting out of their troubles.

But capitalism adapted to the changed situation and created illusions among these countries that capitalism can contribute to their development. This was one of the contributory reasons to the passing away of a revolutionary vision at that time.

Referring to the growing anti-imperialist struggles, he said this was the beginning of a new revolutionary process which should not be mistaken with that of the old one.

Sitaram Yechury said that "imperialism seeks to pit the workers of advanced countries against the workers of third world countries. It is the task of communists to counter and expose this strategy."

Socialism or barbarism

Today, the choice before the people is between socialism and barbarism and he called upon the communists to engage in a "severe ideological battle" to project socialism as the alternative to capitalism.

Kenya Seranno from Cuba gave a short but inspiring speech to a jam-packed audience. She said that after the collapse of socialism in USSR, Cuba lost an important ally and supporter in fighting the

US blockade, and yet the people of Cuba chose to fight for socialism rather than surrender to imperialism. She said that the Cuban youth are proud of the guidance they received from Che Guevarra and Fidel Castro and ended by saying that the Cuban revolution will continue its fight and will never give up no matter what adversity they encounter.

Fausto Bertinotti, General Secretary of the Communist Refoundation Party of Italy, said the growing struggles against globalisation and for political transformation won't be easy and that it would be of great help if the European communist parties could free themselves from the grip of the moderate Left. He said they look on the developments in Latin America and the growing co-ordination between Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina and Cuba with keen interest.

Simultaneously convened with the WSF were the International Youth Forum and the World Parliamentary Forum. The presence of delegations from Pakistan and other Islamic countries gave the Forum wide legitimacy, establishing it as the foremost platform available for all anti-imperialist forces to participate in to clarify and sharpen the struggle against imperialist globalisation.

By any measure the WSF 2004 was a big success.

Acknowledgement to *People's Democracy*, newspaper of the CPI (M) ☺

If another world is possible, it would and can only be a socialist world.



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