

## Free Trade Agreement Corporate take-over

Andrew Jackson

**The Free Trade Agreement announced by the Australian and US Governments on February 8 in Washington amounts to a total capitulation by the Australian Government. It will be a huge disaster for all Australians, in all sectors of the economy, if it goes into operation. This is not, as the US and Australian Governments would have us believe, a mutually beneficial economic alliance between strategic and equal partners. It amounts to a take-over by US corporations in the interests of US corporations at the expense of the Australian people. The *New York Times* bills the deal as "a rare trade victory for the Bush administration".**

It signs away Australia's sovereignty and economic independence. It concedes economic, social and cultural sovereignty to the US corporate sector.

Howard and other Liberal Government Ministers declare that Australia's small gains will bring "enormous long-term benefits to the Australian economy". They are lying, yet again. Australia's enormous losses are hidden in the detail.

Despite the initial bravado and jubilation coming from the Federal Government, Mr Howard has now conceded that "This is not a perfect agreement but it was the best we could get in the current circumstances".

The "circumstances" he is referring to are his complete subservience to US interests. Howard has made a political decision which sacrifices Australia's interests and sovereignty.

The nature of its imperfections can be gleaned from the Office of the United States Trade Representative: "More than 99 percent of US exports of manufactured goods to Australia will become duty-free immediately upon entry into force of the Agreement". Manufactured goods currently

account for 93 percent of total US exports to Australia. According to the US's official estimates, this could result in a US\$2 billion (A\$2.6b) increase in imports of manufactured goods from the US.

"This is the most significant immediate reduction of industrial tariffs ever achieved in a US free trade agreement", declares the US Trade Office.

The FTA is a political victory for the Bush administration in an election year – many gains without the strongly opposed concessions that US farmers feared, such as in sugar.

Prime Minister John Howard and Trade Minister Mark Vaile, who appeared completely out of their depth, could hardly have done more to please President Bush or to sell out Australian interests.

Despite the reassurances Howard may give, agriculture, manufactured goods, financial services, intellectual property, investment, health, pharmaceutical benefits, education, entertainment, media, automotive, telecommunications, e-commerce, quarantine, technical regulations and standards, environment and labour are all up for grabs under this agreement.

The agreement goes far beyond a trade agreement. It covers other areas such as foreign investment, competition policy, government procurement, bringing domestic regulations into line with those of the US and the loss of other sovereign powers.

Conflicting assessments of the deal abound:

### US foreign investment

**Australia says:** "The Agreement preserves Australia's foreign investment policy, but with a range of changes that maintain our ability to screen all investment of major significance."

**The US says:** "US investors enjoy in most circumstances the right to establish, acquire and operate investments in Australia



on an equal footing with local investors, ..."

### Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

**Australia says:** "Access by Australians to affordable medicines under the PBS will be maintained under the AUSFTA."

"The Government has delivered on its commitment that the price of prescription medicines will not increase as a result of this Agreement."

**The USA says:** "Australia will make a number of improvements in its Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme (PBS) ... including establishment of an independent process to review determinations of product listings". [emphasis added]

This in effect will remove control from government bodies of listings of pharmaceuticals on the PBS and pricing.

"The FTA establishes a Medicines Working Group to further promote the agreement's public health principles through an ongoing dialogue between the United States and Australia."

Clearly the gate is being left open for a future full-scale assault on the PBS by US Pharmaceutical companies

### Local content rules

**Australia says:** "The Government has protected our right to ensure local content on Australian media, and retains the capacity to regulate new and emerging media, including digital and interactive TV".

**The USA says:** "Australia will accord substantial market access across its entire services regime, offering access in sectors such as ... audio/visual and entertainment."

"In broadcasting and audio-visual services, the FTA contains important and unprecedented provisions to improve market access for US films and television programs over a variety of media including cable, satellite, and the Internet."

continued page 2

*As the truth becomes known many sectors of Australian society will be outraged and will want to fight...*

Sydney Council sacking  
- p3

TeleTech staff demand union deal  
- p4

Iraqi CP statement  
- p6

Bush's educational eugenics  
- p7

Howard's "war on information"  
- p12

# The Guardian

No 1170

February 11, 2004

## More preparations for war in Asia-Pacific

The Howard Government took another step in its preparations for a major war in the Pacific with the announcement that it is to spend \$1 billion on the purchase of a dozen Global Hawk spy planes from the United States. This plane is manufactured by Northrop Grumman, one of the notorious arms manufacturers which profits from wars.

The Global Hawk is an unmanned spy plane capable of operating for 24 hours without refuelling or returning to base and has a reported range of 4800 kms. Without any apology, the Government has upped the purchase of this plane from three to 12 while the cost increased from the originally announced \$150 million to \$1 billion. Needless to say, if public hospitals or schools asked for such an increase, it would have been rejected with loud declarations that it would wreck the economy.

While the purchase is being sold to the public as contributing to Australia's "maritime surveillance" it is primarily for military purposes. Mr Aldo Borgu, an analyst for the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, is reported as saying that the purchase is "long overdue" and that "You could even use one to spy on Pyongyang". It adds, "Of course the North Koreans would shoot it down and at \$100 million each, maybe that's not a risk you'd want to take".

The purchase of the Global Hawks is part of the long-range plans for the extensive militarisation of Australia launched in 2001 by the then Minister of Defence Peter Reith. Launching the ten-year Defence Capability Plan he said it "marks an historic first for Defence".

The Plan involves the purchase of some 88 military and naval items of equipment and is now touted to cost \$50 billion.

In September 2003, Senator Robert Hill, the present Minister for Defence, said the Global Hawk had "leading edge radars and infrared electro-optic technology which would significantly improve Australia's intelligence gathering capabilities during Defence operations". He said that "detailed intelligence is critically important in any Defence operation or mission".

Robert Hill's reference to "defence operations" is actually code for Australian and US aggression in the Asia-Pacific region or anywhere else the US decides to attack or invade under its "pre-emptive strike" policy in pursuit of global domination.

"If you can put an unmanned vehicle up that can travel for 24 hours over huge distances, you can basically have a continual surveillance capability", said Robert Hill.

It is not hard to imagine that the Global Hawks will be flying over Indonesia and every other country in the South East Asian region - Malaysia, Thailand, China and yes, even the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It would be used to spy on ships that the US and Australia plan to "interdict", and to monitor the movement of troops, the building of industries, the progress of food crops and many other targets of strategic or economic interest to US transnational corporations. They would certainly spy on the Pacific Island states - Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands to name a few.

This would be an out-and-out violation of the sovereignty of these countries but this does not concern the leaders of the Howard Government who long ago tore up the principles inscribed in the Charter of the United Nations.

It might be hoped by some that a future Labor Party Government would reverse the war-mongering and subservient policies pursued by the Howard Government as the "Deputy Sheriff" of the United States. However, when the Defence Capability Plan was announced in 2001, the Labor Party indicated its support.

Mark Latham declared when addressing the National Conference of the ALP in January that "Our [foreign] policy has three pillars. Our membership of the United Nations; our alliance with the United States; and comprehensive engagement with Asia".

Crunch-time will come for a Labor Government when the US hots up its aggression against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or against the People's Republic of China over the Taiwan issue. The question will then arise, whether Australia truly asserts its independence or once again gives absolute priority to the US alliance.

### PRESS FUND

John Howard is refusing to initiate a genuine inquiry into the intelligence used to justify invasion of Iraq. Such an inquiry might well lead to hugely damaging revelations about how the government helps the US dominate world oil production and marketing, by any means including war. *The Guardian* intends to reveal as much as possible about these matters, and if you want to help us, please send a contribution for the next issue.

We offer our sincere thanks to those who contributed so generously this week, as follows:

Laurie and Peter Reed, In memory of Jim Mitchell \$125

Elke and Mike Ainsworth \$25, T Bartlett \$200, John Clancy \$1000, Cathy Picone \$12, "Round Figure" \$8.

This week's total: \$1370. Progressive total: \$1810

# Luna Park no fun for residents

Peter Mac

The NSW government has once more pranced into the limelight as environmental villain and developers' friend, with its support for a planned gross overdevelopment of Sydney's heritage-listed Luna Park. The plan has joined a huge list of controversial development proposals which the Carr Government has attempted to force through, despite fierce public opposition over major environmental issues.

The Luna Park site, formerly the steel fabricating yard for the Sydney Harbour Bridge, occupies prime harbourside land at Milson's Point (on the northern side of the Harbour). Although still beloved by Sydneysiders, its fortunes began to wane with the advent of television and other forms of entertainment.

The Park was closed after a disastrous fire some 20 years ago. It reopened some years later with upgraded facilities. Although its financial situation improved, the Park's management, which favoured redevelopment of the site, decided to shut it down once more.

A series of consultative processes found public opinion overwhelmingly in support of preservation of the site with no new development. However, the Park's owners have now lodged an application for construction of a complex of five cinemas and a 14-storey building within the Park site.

The proposal would massively violate existing planning regulations (the site is zoned for two storeys). It would also obscure harbour views, jeopardise the Park's historic fig trees, spoil and weaken the adjacent heritage-listed cliff face, rob the nearby historic North Sydney Swimming Pool of sunlight, and create massive parking problems in an area where parking is already almost impossible at times.

The office building as proposed is a good example of the mad



architectural cult of Big and Ugly. Clearly visible from the Bridge and across the harbour, this monstrosity would resemble an assembly of huge children's blocks painted white with black edges, just to make sure you don't miss them.

As was the case with the hideous proposal for a garbage recycling plant in the Sydney suburb of Auburn, it seems that the Carr government would be willing to pass a special law to override any council decision against construction of the new Luna Park development.

The Mayor of North Sydney, Genia McCaffery, commented bitterly: "... this latest development has the power to take away one of the most prized harbour vistas ... If the government approves this application it will be ignoring planning controls it approved in law, in the interests of a developer.

"The kind of intensification of use proposed by this project ... is simply not permitted under the planning controls for Luna Park approved by the State government. ... The Premier's own stated aim of preserving the harbour from excessive height - through the process of "stepped back" buildings - would be made meaningless by approval of this building."

The Carr Government's methods of pushing through major

development proposals are notorious. They include the passing of special laws to override court and council decisions, the bypassing of normal government procedures, and the scrapping of openness in government.

Ms McCaffery commented: "The development application calls into question the tendering process which saw the site's redevelopment contract awarded. Selective tendering to three potential bidders behind closed doors, based on planning controls that could be arbitrarily scrapped if this building is approved, deserves far closer scrutiny.

"There was an outcry at Mark Latham's proposal to sell off Kirribilli House. Yet a far more stealthy sell-off of public land on Sydney Harbour is occurring right under our noses, and only the State Government has the power to stop it."

Alas, Ms McCaffery, the government might have the power to do so, but they certainly won't have the motivation - as a group, the developers are now by far the biggest contributors to the NSW ALP's coffers - unless the various concerned groups, trade unions and community at large wage a determined, united fight to retain the site. ☼

## Corporate take-over

continued from page 1

### Quarantine control

Australia says: "The integrity of Australia's quarantine regime and our right to protect animal, plant, and human health and life are preserved".

"A framework for discussions on specific products has been established".

Which products? And what will be the outcome of the discussions?

The USA says: "Food inspection procedures that have posed barriers in the past will be addressed, benefiting sectors such as pork, citrus, apples and stone fruit".

### Agriculture

For the USA: "All US agricultural exports to Australia, totaling more than \$400 million, will receive immediate duty-free access."

But for Australia: "Two thirds of all agricultural tariffs ... will be eliminated immediately."

Just last week a spokesperson for Trade Minister Mark Vaile confirmed that "Australia would not sign a deal that excluded sugar". However, there have been no gains for sugar producers, as was always expected.

There have been only fractional gains for dairy and beef producers - and even those will be phased in over 18 years.

Mr Howard has since offered his condolences: "They are the victims of a corrupted world trading system and I feel sorry for them".

US Trade Representative Mr Zoellick, on the other hand, proudly outlined to US farmers - under the heading "Sensitive to Agricultural Concerns" - the extensive tariffs and quotas that would remain in place protecting US farm interests.

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF), the peak body of corporate agriculture and died-in-the-wool Coalition supporters, tried to put on a brave face.

The NFF press release begins with "... market access gains had been achieved for Australia's dairy, beef, horticulture, sheep meat and wool sectors", among a number of other "positive outcomes".

However, the veneer is thin, and by the end of the release NFF President Peter Corish is saying, "Australian sugar producers will be justifiably frustrated by this outcome.

"It's extremely hypocritical. The US is a huge agricultural exporter and demands access to overseas markets, but continues to hide behind a veil of protection in its own market."

### Where to now?

The two governments hope to have the agreement in operation by

July 2004, which gives little time to mount a campaign and defeat it. Even more so because the full details of the actual agreement are not going to be released for some time.

In Australia, the process involves approval by Cabinet of the final terms of the FTA and the signing of the Agreement.

Only after the Agreement is signed, will it be published!

It will be tabled in both Houses of Parliament for 20 sitting days while a Joint Standing Committee reviews it.

Parliament (and likewise US Congress) will then be expected to pass implementing legislation to ensure Australia's laws are in conformity with it. At this point it comes into force.

The ALP and Democrats have expressed major reservations with the FTA in its present form. The Communist Party of Australia and the Greens reject it outright.

The FTA in its present form is a crass betrayal of Australia's economic interests and of Australia's sovereignty. As the truth becomes known many sectors of Australian society will be outraged and will want to fight. It is a fight that must be fought and won - now! Out with the Howard Government! ☼



# Bush, Blair, Howard WAR CRIMINALS

Tom Pearson

**US President George W Bush and Prime Ministers Tony Blair and John Howard of Australia are taking desperate evasive action as a tidal wave of evidence reveals they used deception and collusion in order to wage war on Iraq. The war, which has caused the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis, was a criminal act and the leaders of the three countries that participated in it should be made to face the consequences of their actions and be charged with crimes against humanity before an international tribunal.**

If there was ever any doubt that the governments of the US, Britain and Australia sent their countries to war based on lies, it has now been dispelled. The revelations are so damning that the trio have been forced to abandon their premise for war, that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Instead they are claiming the war was based on UN resolutions on Iraq's weapons.

This is despite the fact that the world witnessed the US's arrogant dismissal of the overwhelming majority of UN members who opposed the war. The decision by the US and Britain to go to war also cut short the search for weapons by the UN weapons inspection team in Iraq, thus killing off any peaceful resolution to the situation.

Each leader has tried to shift the blame onto security misinformation, intelligence lapses and failures by weapons experts. "Intelligence is an imprecise science", said Howard last week.

The cold, hard fact is that no

weapons of mass destruction have been found despite searches by teams of weapons experts, including the UN team led by Hans Blix, and a 1400-strong US group headed by former CIA official David Kay, which has been in Iraq for eight months.

As a diversionary tactic the three governments have each set up an inquiry into the information which they claim misled them to believe Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

In Australia the findings of a parliamentary review, conducted by a small number of hand-picked trusted from the Liberal, National and Labor Parties will be vetted by Howard and the spy agencies before being made public. The small committee includes two former Labor Defence Ministers – Bomber Beazley and Senator Ray.

In Britain another inquiry has been proposed in the wake of the Hutton inquiry which last week whitewashed the Blair Government's mass deception of the British people.

In the US a presidential commission is now investigating the intelligence which the Bush administration claims made it believe Iraq possessed WMD. But intelligence analysts there, as in Australia and Britain, are breaking ranks, refusing to be made scapegoats.

And compounding the growing pressure on Bush, his Secretary of State Colin Powell is rolling over, saying he couldn't have justified going to war if he had known there were no WMD.

As it has become clear that there were never any weapons stockpiles,



METHODS OF CRASS DISTRACTION

*Each leader has tried to shift the blame onto security misinformation, intelligence lapses and failures by weapons experts. "Intelligence is an imprecise science", said Howard last week.*

## Power play in council merger

Tom Pearson

**The four-yearly local government elections in NSW will be held on March 27. There was to have been voting for 172 local councils throughout the state but there will be one less now because of the Carr Government's forced amalgamation of the South Sydney and City of Sydney councils.**

Carr has done a Kennett, appointing commissioners to take over the councils and sacking all elected councillors, just as Kennett did to Victorian local councils when he was Premier in the 1990s.

The forced merger was an ambush by the Carr Government which secretly gained the necessary proclamation by the Boundaries Commission and two weekends ago sacked the councils.

On the surface the impression is being given that it is "business as usual", that the summary sacking of elected local representatives will simply be put right at the March elections. But a pointer to what is behind the takeover is the call by the NSW Greens for development applications to be frozen and for no development decisions to be made until after the elections.

And also by the local government workers and their union, the United Services Union, which has warned that a new merged entity would attack workers' entitlements. A spokesperson for the union said, "The amalgamation hands over control in the City to the bureaucrats who have not dealt in good faith with employees in the past".

The merger is in line with the contracting out and privatisation of council services that have accompanied forced amalgamations over a period of years. In addition, the forced amalgamation with South Sydney, a traditional Labor Party-controlled council, deals the Carr Labor Government a powerful hand in the development and running of a major chunk of inner city real estate.

Historically the City of Sydney Council has been a pawn of successive state governments, which has seen it sacked on a number of occasions, usually following a change of government.

Liberal and Labor governments have manipulated its boundaries in whatever way it has suited them politically, in particular to curry favour with developers and to try and entrench Labor or Liberal political control.

It has generally been a moribund operation serving the interests of the Sydney Business District. To that extent it is a sham creation of Macquarie Street two-party politics.

This situation is behind the stream of abuse and threats from the state's Energy Minister, Frank Sartor – a former City of Sydney mayor – when told the City Council was considering legal action against the merger.

"You are just a bunch of local government pissants", he told Mayor Lucy Turnbull, herself a pro-development conservative. "The Government is powerful and we will destroy you and the council." ❖

the trio have also dropped references to "arsenals" and started talking up "weapons programs".

In February last year after the Government had committed Australia to war, Howard said, "The Australian Government knows that Iraq still has chemical and biological weapons. Iraq continues to work on developing nuclear weapons."

Last week on the ABC's 7.30 Report host Kerry O'Brien quizzed Howard: "Before the war you told the Australian people time and time again there was no doubt that Iraq had an arsenal of weapons."

"And even then, when the Australian people were doubtful about a war, how do you think they would have reacted to the idea of going to war, not because Iraq had weapons, but because it was in defiance of a UN resolution that demanded the destruction of weapons Iraq, apparently, didn't have?"

Howard answered that "everybody believed Iraq had WMD at the time the war was started."

Last year Andrew Wilkie, a security expert in the Howard

Government's Office of National Assessment, resigned in protest at Government manipulation of intelligence. He called the information on Iraq used by the Howard Government "skewed, misrepresented, used selectively and fabricated".

Weapons expert Brian Jones, who was in the British Ministry of Defence in the lead up to the war, stated last week: "In my view the expert intelligence analysts of the defence intelligence staff were overruled [by the government] in the preparation of the dossier [claiming Iraq had WMD] in September

2002, resulting in a presentation that was misleading about Iraq's capabilities."

The Australian Greens Senators are calling for a genuine investigation, a judicial inquiry. "We will move for an inquiry with the powers of a royal commission to subpoena papers and people – that includes anyone up to the Prime Minister", said Greens leader Senator Bob Brown.

He described the parliamentary inquiry as "a joke" because it has allowed its findings to be vetted by the government and the intelligence agencies. ❖

## Qld elections: Greens make gains

**With counting continuing in the Queensland election it is clear that Premier Peter Beattie will return to Government with a massive majority – holding 63 seats out of 89 (down from 66 in the last Parliament).**

Two of Labor's losses to the National Party were in so-called "sugar seats" – the coastal electorates of Burdekin and Burnett – giving credence to claims that the Federal Government deliberately withheld the outcome of the Free Trade Agreement until after the election.

During the final week of the Queensland campaign, a Department of Trade spokesperson said that no deal would be signed without the inclusion of sugar. That appears now to have been deliberately misleading.

In terms of vote gain the big

winners were the Greens who increased their primary vote by from 4% to 7%. Fifteen of the Green candidates scored above 10% of primary preferences in their electorates, with two scoring over 20%. However, they had no candidates elected.

Greens Senator Bob Brown said, "This result is built on the Greens' strong support for public health and education and ability to lever popular environmental wins out of governments".

One Nation came away the big loser, with their primary vote dropping from 9% to 5%. The Party has retained just one seat, Tablelands, based on the city of Atherton.

The Queensland results once again demonstrate the flawed and undemocratic nature of Australia's electoral system.

The ALP scored 47% of the

primary vote, yet walked away with 71% of the seats.

The Liberals, on the other hand, scored 18.5% of the vote, yet garnered only five seats – 5.5%.

Queensland has no Upper House of Parliament – it was abolished by the governing Labor Party in 1922. Without a chamber of proportional representation the Labor/Coalition duopoly is almost guaranteed full power over Government, even though neither party actually achieves the majority of votes.

To exacerbate the situation further, Queensland has an "optional preferential" system in the Lower House.

With the major parties pushing a "Just Vote 1" strategy, it further weakens democratic representation by becoming a US and UK-style "First Past the Post" system. ❖

# Call centre staff stand up to TeleTech



**Call centre staff at TeleTech International in Sydney and Moe, Victoria decided to stop work last Monday to express their frustration at TeleTech's refusal to negotiate a new employment agreement. The US-based TeleTech, one of the largest call centre corporations in the world, is notorious for its treatment of staff.**

Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) members at TeleTech's Moe site and United Services Union (USU) members at the Pennant Hills site, Sydney decided to take joint action.

"Staff have refused to accept sub-standard individual contracts, otherwise known as AWAs", explained CPSU Organiser Hayden Jones, "so TeleTech has decided to punish them by leaving them on expired agreements and refusing to negotiate."

The original contracts that have expired sliced thousands of dollars off rates that had been negotiated with Telstra. The company forced on staff on a take-it or leave-it basis.

This time round staff are demanding the right to a collective agreement. "We're talking about

the biggest contract call centre in Australia, mainly doing out-sourced work for Telstra, yet they are treating their employees with contempt", said Mr Jones.

Telstra has sacked workers and contracted work out to companies such as TeleTech, its own Stellar joint venture and IBM (see below). This has provided them with a backdoor means to undermining award wages and conditions.

"TeleTech are being completely unreasonable", he said. "When it became clear that our members weren't going to accept individual contracts, TeleTech wrote to them with an ultimatum of 'take it or leave it'. The proposed contracts were withdrawn just prior to Christmas and TeleTech have done nothing since to address the situation."

CPSU Organiser Sue Brookes described the conditions in the new AWAs as worse than in the original ones.

USU Executive President Michael Want said, "It is ridiculous that a company can refuse to negotiate just because staff want a collective agreement. John

Howard's legislation is stacked against low paid workers, they get no choice, no rights. These people are some of the lowest paid in Australia yet their jobs require significant skill and expose them to enormous pressure."

This is not the first time TeleTech staff have had to resort to industrial action. Moe staff took industrial action in 2002 regarding pay problems and last December they stopped work to demand the resumption of agreement negotiations.

One worker was sent home after he attended a CPSU stop-work meeting, and docked for being off-site, but not until he had been on the job for two hours and 46 minutes and helped the centre overcome its morning peak.

TeleTech has also docked call centre staff, unseen by the public, for wearing collarless shirts.

"Many of the conditions at TeleTech are below industry standards contained in the Contract Call Centre Award, which TeleTech is also resisting", said Mr Want.

Although the new award provides only minimal safeguards, it would oblige TeleTech to pay loadings for Saturday and Sunday hours, which the old AWAs do not require.

Issues that staff want addressed in an agreement and/or the Award include:

- Decent pay increases well above CPI rates
- Penalty rates
- Duty to consult with employees about rostering preferences/changes
- Reference to their union/any representative in the Dispute Resolution Procedure. ☺

## LABOUR NOTES

Last week more than 100 construction workers walked off the Australand site at Eastern Creek (NSW) where teenager Joel Exner fell to his death last October. Joel fell more than 12 metres from a roof without a safety harness. The workers say that work continues without harnesses. The Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) said if safety measures were not put in place further industrial action would be taken. CFMEU officials are currently in talks with Australand management. If these talks are unsuccessful a 48-hour stoppage is planned involving all Sydney Australand sites.

Workers in the Victorian electricity industry endorsed a campaign for a shorter working week and more apprenticeship places to overcome skill shortages. They are seeking a trial four-day working week with nine-hour days and the employment of one apprentice for every three tradesman by Victoria's five electricity distribution and transmission companies. Victorian Electrical Trades Union Secretary Dean Mighell said the union also wanted a licensing system to keep unskilled workers out of the industry. The campaign of industrial action could include state-wide stoppages starting this week.

The Queensland Teachers' Union has called on the Federal Government to rule out spending taxpayer funds on private schools run for-profit by companies. The call follows news that ABC Learning Centres is going to develop a private school at Springfield in Brisbane. The company also plans to develop other schools across Australia. QTU Vice-President Steve Ryan warned that the Federal Government's school funding scheme could lead to funds being provided to private schools for profit. Mr Ryan said it was already a major concern that the Federal Government gave 65 per cent of its school funding to private schools despite them having only 30 per cent of the nation's students.

Nurses have topped the Roy Morgan poll for the country's most honest and ethical profession for the 10th year in row. They have topped the poll since 1994. "This result shows that the people of Australia are very satisfied with the care they receive from nurses", Australian Nursing Federation Acting Federal Secretary Ged Cowin said. "These poll results show there is great value in governments investing in nursing education and the nursing workforce."

Television advertisements supporting the NSW Teachers Federation's (NSWTF) public education campaign went to air on metropolitan and regional stations from Sunday February 8. Federation President Maree O'Halloran said, "In the wake of the Prime Minister's deliberately divisive and damaging comments about public education, teachers have determined to air positive messages about public education. Public schools value and care for all Australians." The advertisements show positive images of public education and call for greater investment in our public schools.

*"Staff have refused to accept sub-standard individual contracts, so TeleTech has decided to punish them by leaving them on expired agreements and refusing to negotiate."*

## Celebrating 120 years of unionism in SA

**The South Australia United Trades and Labour Council (UTLC) began the first of a series of celebratory events on Sunday February 1 with a historical function at the Brecknock, King William Street, Adelaide.**

The organisation arose out of workers' concerns about economic recession and its effect upon the working-class.

The UTLC soon became the focal point for working-class organisation and struggles for emancipation from the tyranny of the business classes. Economic grievances were directed toward

the political arena as working-class consciousness developed.

An early member of the organisation, George Buttery, a migrant from England who was elected president in 1890, was an acquaintance of Karl Marx and former member of the First International.

A re-enactment of the original meeting was dramatised by Patrick Frost.

During its proud 120-year history, South Australian unions have chalked up many gains in struggle as employers never let up in their attempts to increase the exploitation of labour.

## CPSU will fight IBM/Telstra offshoring to India

**The recent announcement by Telstra and IBM to offshore at least 450 jobs to India is not acceptable to the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) or to the Australian people. After consultation with workplace delegates, the CPSU has decided to put the following demands to IBM and Telstra:**

- IT jobs should be performed by Australians if skills are available in Australia.
- Foreign nationals brought to Australia must be employed on exactly the same terms and conditions as Australian workers.
- Workers employed overseas on any outsourced contracts must be guaranteed International Labour Organisation approved terms and conditions in their own country.
- There must be no forced

redundancies at IBM Australia as a result of work off-shored to IBM India. All roles lost to offshoring must be managed by a company-wide call for voluntary redundancies, allowing job swaps, retraining and part-time work, in consultation with the CPSU.

### What's next?

A Save Oz Jobs Campaign Committee has been established and will be actively lobbying IBM, Telstra and the Federal Government to act in the public interest and prevent the disappearance of professional jobs from Australia.

See last week's *Guardian* for details of the Telstra/IBM strategy of relocating IT development and support jobs to India. ☺

Whether it be the achievement of an eight-hour working day, trade union rights or equal pay, the struggle continues today.

UTLC Secretary Janet Giles, speaking at the celebration stressed the event was a celebration of collectivity and solidarity by those who possessed a "vision of a better world and better future".

In an address, noting the importance of history, Elliot Johnson, QC, reminded those present of the "masters and servants" times, and how hard the capitalists were hard to defeat".

Yasuro Takedo, President of Rengio Gifu, a Japanese trade-union organisation, spoke about the recent development of international links with the UTLC. He gave accounts the many struggles being waged in Japan which is experiencing recession and the casualisation of labour.

Brian Butler, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Regional Co-ordinator, spoke about the importance of struggles and victories waged by Indigenous people.

Lee-Anne Woods, an organiser for the Finance Sector Union took up the question of education and organisation for young people.

The preliminary meeting of the UTLC took place on the same date in 1884. Historical documents from the UTLC archives were on display.

MC for the event was UTLC President, Martin O'Malley.

Music was provided by Abbie Cardwell. A video, *Closer than Ever*, about the history of the trade-union movement was also shown. ☺

# Bring back the birch

## Mark Latham on kids and parenting

Bob Briton

Mark Latham has been pedalling his ideas on parenting, education and children to a receptive media for quite a while. He must be encouraged by the public reception for the latest offerings contained in his Australia Day address. In it he committed the next federal Labor government to including a list of rights and responsibilities for citizens in the Citizenship Act. He was thus able to use the usual themes of the holiday to get the focus back onto his favourite topic: demanding greater responsibility from the most disadvantaged groups in society.

While he was at it, he raised once more the idea of putting sanctions on the parents of problem children. His latest plan would see the parents of disruptive or truanting kids sign a voluntary pact with authorities – the school, the Police, social services and community leaders – to attend parenting classes and then lift their performance in disciplining their youngsters.

*John Howard's outbursts about the ALP venturing into "dangerously Orwellian territory" mask a disappointment that he didn't hit upon the scheme first.*

Failure to comply would mean that the parents would be served a Parental Responsibility Order from the Courts with all the consequences that might entail.

Like a lot of Latham's ideas, this one comes from Blair's Britain where an 18-month old trial is supposed to be achieving great results. The new Leader of the Opposition has been on the radio with an impressive statistic to back up the latest populist policy offering. Apparently there has been a 50 percent reduction in the number of offences committed by children whose parents were placed under this type of order.

We are expected to take these figures on face value in the same way we were supposed to swallow the propaganda surrounding New York Mayor Giuliani's "zero tolerance" and "three strike and you're out" policies.

Apparently, these transformed the city's social conditions overnight with no consequences anywhere else in the community. Too bad that when similar ridiculous policies were tried in the Northern Territory they proved to be either oppressive or unworkable. They have since been unceremoniously dumped.

In Britain in 2002, a drug-addicted woman was imprisoned for failing to stop her teenage daughter wagging school.

Nevertheless, these are the sorts of "reforms" the ALP is now embracing. WA Premier Geoff Gallop has admitted having talks with Tony Blair about the program and is now considering a report about the practicalities of a local scheme.

Latham has kept this pot simmering since he floated the idea of docking parents' welfare payments if they did not encourage their children to learn in his whimsically titled book *Civilising Global Capital* in 1998.

Since then he has suggested a

caught the bug. He is proposing a \$90 million program of his own for disciplining the state's children and their parents.

### Deflecting the real issues

To differentiate himself from Latham, John Howard has had to forego his usual "mutual obligation" posture in favour of the classic conservative hypocrisy about the state having no business in the affairs of the family. Can you believe it? A number of columnists have pointed out that his outbursts about the ALP venturing into "dangerously Orwellian territory" mask a disappointment that he didn't hit upon the scheme first.

At a number of levels, Latham admires Howard and wants to imitate his success in hoodwinking the electorate. Neither of them want to do a single thing to "civilise" or otherwise disturb global capital.

Latham wants to develop the skill Howard has for burying the burning issues of the day, which are class issues. Howard will deflect attention away from the scandal surrounding university funding by opening up a discussion on the "values free" character of our "politically correct" public schools.

Latham calls this the "politics of public culture". It has also been called "culture wars". Latham puts his tactics in "culture wars" this way: "You don't want to sit there in Howard's firing field, do you? If you go sit in his field he'll do you some damage. You don't want to sit there drawing someone else's agenda into you, you want to be setting your own agenda."

He was referring to how he plans to steer clear of issues like "national security" and refugees where he feels the Government has a stronger hand. He could just as well have been talking about how he goes to incredible lengths to attribute "responsibility" for what is happening in countries like Australia to anybody except the capitalist ruling class.

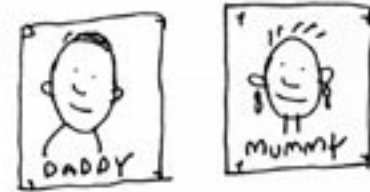
The latest nonsense about Parental Responsibility Orders deflects attention from burning social issues and failed government policies. It helps disguise the actual class war going on. In the course of this war, global capital is emptying communities of jobs, services and possibilities for young people. Latham and Howard have no intention of joining this war on the side of the disadvantaged. ☹

mentoring program for boys living in families without a suitable role model. He is now suggesting that the parents of newborns be given books to encourage them to read to their children every night.

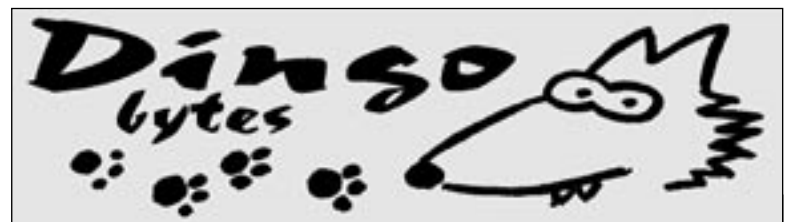
In 2001 he startled some of his Werriwa electors with a newsletter item that supported the reintroduction of the cane in schools.

Latham has restarted the bidding between the Coalition and Labor to see who can demand more from struggling members of the community. Federal Children's Minister Larry Anthony wants to introduce a "fat camp" program for the country's overweight school kids. Latham wants a whole range of initiatives involving doctors, the schools, the ubiquitous community leaders and sporting clubs to address the problem.

Even the Queensland Opposition Leader Lawrence Springborg has



*'There's no easy way to tell you this dear — rip Daddy off the wall!'*



Talk about government-sponsored persecution. A man locked up in the Australian Government-sponsored Manus Island refugee prison camp was brought back to the mainland last year after attempting to commit suicide. He was assessed as suffering post-traumatic stress syndrome. After six months in Australia he would have had the right to begin an appeal to the Refugee Review Tribunal to stay. The six months was up on January 29. On January 21 the Government had him sent to its Government-sponsored prison in Nauru.

The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Peter Jensen, has leaped through an opening made by PM Howard to call for more God bothering in public schools. Based on the assumption that "God created the world, it belongs to Him", Jensen makes his argument with the almost laughable claim that there needs to be more religious teaching because otherwise there is "a vacuum for ignorance". It is interesting that Howard's tirade against the public school system has been interpreted by Jensen as a rallying call for the religious indoctrination of public school students. So that's what Johnnie, himself a religious zealot, was getting at when he branded public schools "value neutral" and "too politically correct". In fact, religion is taught in government schools in non-compulsory designated periods. Parents decide if their children attend.

The National Coalition for Gun Control (NCGC) has called the NSW Carr Government's handling of an escalation of handgun crimes in Sydney "diabolical". In 2001 Don Weatherburn, the Director of the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, produced a report warning the Carr Government of an increase in handgun shootings in south-west Sydney, the area that now accounts for 55 percent of all handgun shootings in the State. The NCGC continues to call on the Government to outlaw all semi-automatic handguns. Said spokesperson Samantha Lee, "You don't have to be Einstein to foresee that handgun crime in Sydney will continue to climb at an alarming rate: all you have to do is count the number of bodies."

The man responsible for the decisions of the Reserve Bank which have such an affect on the Australian economy and our lives, Ian Macfarlane, has spent more than \$249,000 on his taxpayer-funded credit card during the past two years, mainly on travel and hotel stop-overs with his wife. Nice work if you can get it.

**CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK:** is retiring National Australia Bank chief executive, Frank Cicutto. During his tenure the bank developed a "new culture". So, for his service to the system Cicutto was given a going away present of \$14 million as shareholders wonder how many hundreds of millions of dollars were lost gambling on currencies.

Sydney

### WORKING LIFE 1

An exhibition of paintings and works on paper

by Paula Bloch

Wharf, Gallery Level  
Hickson Road  
Walsh Bay

(opposite the Sydney Theatre Company's new venue)

open 9am 'til late

For more info 02 9665 0559





# Iraqi Communist Party statement

At its meeting held on December 11-12 the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) issued a statement summing up its estimation of the events in Iraq since its July meeting, the present situation in occupied Iraq and the tasks ahead. *The Guardian* has abridged the statement for publication. The full text can be found on the CPA website ([www.cpa.org.au](http://www.cpa.org.au)).

The period [July to December] was characterised by the intensity of events and speedy developments on all fronts, especially on the political scene, with increasing complexity fraught with dangers. At the same time it opens up the prospect of a peaceful and relatively speedy transition from the previous dictatorial era to a democratic, federal Iraq where the rule of law and respect

with many pressing issues and decisions were taken in the interest of the people, which ministers endeavoured to carry out as well as making changes to the role of staff and cadres in ministries and their tasks.

However, many of the decisions taken by the GC and ministers have clashed, and continue to clash, with the Coalition Provisional Authority's [use of] pretexts about the scarcity of financial resources and lack of proper budgetary allocations.

Then as now, the security issue predominates. The security situation has been deteriorating with a rise in the intensity of explosions, terrorist attacks and random shootings.

The instigators of such criminal acts of terror have apparently improved their capabilities, with co-operation between the remnants of Saddam's regime and terrorist

ments in the provision of public services, water, electricity, health and education, the Iraqi people are worn out by and still suffering from the cumulative effects of decades of despotic rule, three wars unleashed or caused by the dictatorial regime and 12 years of strangulating economic sanctions, during which they had to sell much of what they had owned.

Moreover, the process of reconstruction and revamping of the infrastructure has been compromised owing to the lack of a clear economic policy and prospects, although it is apparent that liberal capitalist orientation has increasingly prevailed in economic policies.

This state of affairs has retarded the development of the economy, as does the rampant corruption in the inherited administrations, in ministries and institutions at all levels.

Senior officials have been rushing to sell the homeland and public property for any price to parasitic elements and black marketeers seeking maximum profits, taking advantage of the current extraordinary situation and the delay in removing them from positions of power.

During the discussion of the draft of the foreign investment decree, a consensus was noted within the Governing Council of the necessity to exclude important sectors of the national economy (including oil) from foreign investment, as well as delaying the issue of privatisation until an independent government is established.

The problem does not lie in foreign investment per se, as we recognise the need for it to revitalise the economy. However, we are concerned with the circumstance and conditions within which such investment is allowed and we stress the necessity to institute proper regulations and limitations to protect national capital and workers' rights.

## The security issue

The change of regime in accordance with the US plan ... has created a situation in our country characterised by occupation and foreign rule. The first to be struck by this reality were forces that had thought they could build democracy through this US plan. In actual fact, the patriotic and democratic forces within Iraq are confronted with two pressing tasks.

(1) Ending the occupation and ensuring the speedy transfer of power to Iraqis in a manner that regains national sovereignty.

(2) Eradicating the legacies and influence of the previous dictatorial regime and building a democratic regime. This requires getting rid of all the remnants of the dictatorship – political, psychological and ideological – and not allowing the emergence of a new dictatorship.

In full opposition to these tasks are the terrorist acts and sabotage operations that have ravaged the country for several months. Their real aim is to revive the dictatorial regime. It is an insult to claim that such operations constitute "resistance". The perpetrators of these activities are driven by narrow,

self-serving interests to regain privileges endowed by the previous regime and to regain their grip over political and economic power.

Their actions contradict the basic interests of the people and of liberating the country. They are inflicting grave damage to the well-being of Iraqis and the country. In the final analysis, they provide pretexts for prolonging the occupation!

It must not be forgotten that the former regime had, to the very last minute of its existence, attempted everything possible to gain the approval of the US Administration to stay in power while capitulating unconditionally to the Americans. Is it then possible that the instruments of the former regime have turned into sudden converts to defending national interests?

In addition to their endeavour to restore the old regime, with or without Saddam at the helm, their actions to destabilise the situation, disturb peace and spread chaos, also aim to pressure the Americans to hand them, at least, some role in the new Iraq!

The resulting deterioration in security within the country has naturally provided more favourable ground for all forms of terrorism and sabotage, including criminal elements (freed by Saddam just before the start of the war). They seized sizeable caches of weapons and money.

These forces have pursued their activities unabated due principally to the failure of the occupation authority to effectively and resolutely curtail their activities and punish them. It should be clear by now that the security tasks must be transferred, first and foremost, to the Iraqis themselves before we can hope to see a reduction in terror and sabotage and, ultimately, their abatement.

Serious measures to reconstitute the police force, army and security organs are a necessity towards achieving this goal, as is the proper monitoring of the country's borders. The various political parties are further required to step up their role within society to create conditions to rebuff terrorists and saboteurs.

It should also be taken into consideration that restoring security involves not only pure policing measures, but also appropriate and concrete changes in the political, economic and social arenas.

All of this must be carried out simultaneously to ensure a speedy and complete end to the current situation, where terror forces retain the initiative and offensive, while those defending the people of Iraq, their rights and the country's sovereignty and democracy, find themselves on the defensive!

## Governing Council

The Governing Council has endeavoured to assert itself and to expand its authority, influence and role in the decision making process. It has been involved in continued struggle with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) to ensure the transfer of power to the Iraqis and regain independence, sovereignty and end the occupation.

It has managed in this respect to achieve a measure of unity. However, the obstacles put up by the CPA and limitations imposed on the Council's powers, have impeded its efforts. Coupled with this are the slow decision-making, apparent deficiencies and weak initiatives, as well as insufficient ties with the Iraqi people. All this presents the Council as an easy prey for those



A burns victim in Iraq – terrorist attacks are

wanting to deny its ability and suitability to lead the country.

## New Agreement

The "Agreement Regarding Political Measures", signed by Mr Jalal Talabani, representing the GC, and Paul Bremer, representing the CPA, on November 15, was the result of a multitude of factors. Among them are the deteriorating security situation, on the one hand, and the growing demand by the Governing Council to speedily transfer security matters and power to the Iraqis, as well as mounting popular pressure which is yet to materialise in well defined forms.

All these were behind the change in the US administration's position towards [the] transfer of power and the formation of a government with full authority that will be born out of the formation of a national assembly comprising representatives of all of Iraq's political, national, religious and ethnic mosaic. This would have taken the country along the path of regaining its independence and national sovereignty and ending the occupation.

The agreement, [however] represents a step in the right direction. For the effective implementation of the agreement, it is necessary for the Governing Council to retain its coherence, act collectively and in a unified manner, and co-operate with the patriotic forces active outside the framework of the GC.

## UN Security Council Resolution

The UNSC Resolution (1511) at the end of October 2003 generally marked a positive development but it was discussed and formulated in the absence of any representation of the Iraqi people.

It included the formation of a multi-national force under a unified command, but without a clear indication of who takes the commanding role. Nor did the resolution indicate the authority of the force, or whether it will replace the current occupation forces.

Clause 15 of the resolution indicates that the Security Council will look into the responsibilities of this force and its needs within a period that does not exceed a year from the passing of the resolution. However, the resolution leaves open the question of how long this force will remain, and links it with the political process. The text allows one to conclude that the force could possibly stay even after the formation of



Плакат Геннадия КОМОЛЬЦЕВА.

for human rights become the prevalent norms.

This requires the creation of conditions to empower the Iraqi people to end the occupation and regain national sovereignty as soon as possible while ushering the country towards democratic development and reconstruction.

The period referred to began with the [US-appointed Iraqi – Editor] Governing Council (GC) starting to function, with limited authority, alongside the occupation authority which had been granted international legitimacy and the right to exercise authority in all fields by UN Security Council Resolution 1483.

Executive power has gradually been transferred from the advisers connected to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) [the Authority created by the US, British, Australian and other occupying countries – Editor] to the ministers who started work in early September and exercised their powers within a complicated, multifarious and contradictory process.

The Governing Council dealt

Islamist extremists, benefiting from weak preventative measures and the failure of the occupation forces to maintain internal security, as well as the inability to secure the borders, thus enabling foreign terrorists to infiltrate from abroad.

All this is closely related to the slow improvement in the living conditions in general. For broad sections of the people, these conditions have either failed to improve or even deteriorated. Worsening fuel shortages have recently aggravated the situation.

While the salaries of some sections of government employees were increased and there were wage rises, prices, rents and the cost of services [have soared]. The rising inflation has depleted a lot of the increases in real income enjoyed by some, and intensified the burden for the unemployed who constitute more than 50 percent of those able to work.

Unemployment is widespread and is too deeply rooted to be remedied with limited and short-term measures.

Notwithstanding some improve-

*Our tasks are interconnected:*

- ending the occupation
- regaining Iraq's sovereignty and independence
- consolidating the democratic process in all forms of political life.





not resistance to the occupation

a representative and internationally recognised Iraqi government.

The positive aspects of the resolution emerge in it stressing the temporary nature of the occupation and its call to the occupation authority to give back responsibility and power to the Iraqi people.

The resolution also recognises the Governing Council and brings to the fore its role in the political decision making process. It recognises the authority of the appointed ministers and asserts that the institutions formed by the interim Iraqi administration will gradually run the affairs of the country.

The resolution also puts the UN in a more active role in the political process that is evolving in our country. The resolution further takes a firm stand in rejecting the so-called "resistance" and its terrorist activities and calls upon UN members to deny terrorists arms and finance and to put an end to their infiltration into Iraq.

Having said the above, the implementation of the resolution in a manner that achieves positive results is dependent on the steadfast and unwavering commitment on our part and all the patriotic forces in Iraq to mobilise world public opinion in support of our people's objectives to regain Iraq's independence and sovereignty and to end the occupation.

### Our Tasks

- The proper fulfillment of tasks necessitated by an estimation of the existing reality requires forming the broadest political alliance possible and constituting a political front based on agreed common denominators, in various shapes and forms. Our tasks are interconnected: ending the occupation and regaining Iraq's sovereignty and independence, as well as consolidating the democratic process in all forms of political life.

- We seek to strengthen co-operation between members of the Governing Council, on the one hand, and dialogue and co-operation between the Council's members and patriotic forces and political figures outside the Council, on the other.

- Our party further seeks to co-operate and form other alliances with the democratic forces ... in the interest of the people and country.

- There is always a pressing need for our party's media to uncover facts, criticise shortcomings and put forward logical and positive alternatives and solutions to existing problems.

- If and when an agreement is reached to elect assemblies for governorates and municipalities, our comrades and organisations need to be ready to actively and effectively participate in the elections. It is necessary to make proper preparations [and form] coalitions with genuine and decent patriotic figures and groups and provide effective assistance to ensure success.
- There is an urgent need to combat brutal acts of terror through broad mass action throughout the country and in various forms.

- In addition to the security issue, living conditions and difficulties associated with them present a most pressing demand. Our comrades need to carefully and genuinely address people's demands: they must listen to people's complaints, and effectively involve them in the struggle to gain their rights at the workplace and in society. We need to address our own shortcomings and provide appropriate solutions, launch mass initiatives and seek effective ways to consolidate the solidarity of society. The responsibility for taking the initiative in all this falls on the shoulders of our party members.

- The cornerstone of our political orientation remains the revitalising of popular activities, especially among the working people. We must proceed tirelessly and steadfastly.

At the end of the meeting, the Central Committee stressed its confidence that, in spite of the complexities and challenges, our Party along with the political forces concerned for national unity and democratic progress in Iraq can move forward to achieve a unified, federal and democratic Iraq. ✪

# Bush's new educational eugenics

Greg Palast

**Go ahead, George, and lie to me. Lie to my dog. Lie to my sister. But don't you ever lie to my kids.**

Deep into your State of the Siege lecture, long after sensible adults had turned off the tube or kicked in the screen, you came after our children. "By passing the No Child Left Behind Act", you said, "we are regularly testing every child ... and making sure they have better options when schools are not performing."

You said it ... and then that little tongue came out; that weird way you stick your tongue out between your lips like the little kid who knows he's fibbing. Like a snake licking a rat. I saw that snakey tongue dart out and I thought, "He knows."

And what you know, Mr Bush, is this: you've ordered this testing to hunt down, identify and target for destruction the hopes of millions of children you find too expensive, too heavy a burden, to educate.

Here's how No Child Left Behind and your tests work in the classrooms of Houston and Chicago. Millions of 8-year-olds are given lists of words and phrases. They try to read. Then they are graded, like USDA beef: some prime, some OK, many failed.

Once the kids are stamped and sorted, the parents of the marked children ask you to fulfill your tantalizing promise to "make sure they have better options when schools are not performing".

But there is no "better option", is there, Mr Bush? Where's the money for the better schools to take in the kids getting crushed in cash-poor districts? Where's the open door to the suburban campuses with the big green lawns for the dark kids with the test-score mark of Cain?

And if I bring up the race of the kids with the low scores, don't get all snippy with me, telling me your program is colour blind. We know the colour of the kids left behind, and it's not the colour of the kids you went to school with at Philips Andover Academy.

You know and I know the testing is a con. There is no "better option" at the other end. The cash went to eliminate the inheritance tax, that special program to give every millionaire's son another million.

But you'll tell me, you took tests as a youth. I know you did. And you scored on the Air Guard flight test 25 out of 100, one point above too dumb to fly. But you zoomed past the other would-be flyboys. They were stamped, "Ready for 'Nam".

The ugly little irony is this: the core of No Child Left Behind is that failing children will be left behind another year. And another year and another year.

You know and I know that this is not an educational opportunity program— because you offer no opportunities, no hope, no plan, no funding. Rather, it is the new Republican social Darwinism, educational eugenics: identify the nation's loser-class early on. Trap them, then train them cheap.

No Child Left Behind is of one piece with the tax cuts for the rich, the energy laws for the insiders, the oil wars for the well-off. Someone has to care for the privileged. No society can have winners without lots and lots of losers.

And so we have No Child Left

*But you'll tell me, you took tests as a youth. I know you did. And you scored on the Air Guard flight test 25 out of 100, one point above too dumb to fly. But you zoomed past the other would-be flyboys. They were stamped, "Ready for 'Nam'".*

And you took a test to get into Yale. And though your pet rock scored a wee bit higher than you, your grandpa on the Yale board provided the "better option" which got you in.

Here in New York City, your educational Taliban, led by Republican Mayor Michael Bloomberg, has issued an edict to test the third-graders. Winnow out the chaff—the kids stamped "failed"— and throw them back, exactly where they started, to repeat the same failed program another year.

Behind—to provide the new worker drones that will clean the toilets at the Yale Alumni Club, punch the cash registers colour-coded for illiterates, and pamper the winner-class on the higher floors of the new economic order.

Greg Palast is author of *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*, which has returned this month to the New York Times bestseller list. View Palast's writings at [www.GregPalast.com](http://www.GregPalast.com). *People's Weekly World* ✪



*The existing reality requires forming the broadest political alliance possible and constituting a political front based on agreed common denominators.*



# El Salvador awaits presidential poll

Bob Briton

**The people of El Salvador go to the polls next month to vote for a new President of the Republic. The main contenders will be Schafik Hándal of the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and Antonio Saca of the rightist Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA).**

Schafik Hándal is the son of Palestinian immigrants and has been a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of El Salvador since 1959. He was

neo-liberal policies that it has pursued.

Its connection to wealthy elites in El Salvador and overseas and the operation of a highly suspect electoral system have no doubt helped keep ARENA in control. It is not clear whether a number of electoral irregularities will be fixed in time to give Schafik Hándal a fair chance at the March 21 poll.

Authorities have been slow to allow "residential voting", which would allow voters to cast their ballot at the nearest polling station rather than at an office often

gains made in the elections for the National Assembly last March when it won 31 out of the 84 seats on the body. Anger at the effects of the privatisation of the telephone and electricity industries has continued to grow. Sympathy with workers resisting privatisation of the health sector saw a series of "white marches" to the streets of the capital San Salvador. One of these involved an estimated 300,000 people.

The FMLN wants to stop any future privatisations and to review the ones that have taken place. It would re-jig the tax structure to ensure that the wealthy pay more tax. The proceeds would be spent on improvements in health and education. The minimum wage would be raised.

The FMLN platform includes the establishment of national development and agriculture banks and measures to promote the circulation of the Colon - El Salvador's currency which was "dollarised" in 2001. The consequences of the Government's decision to allow commercial transactions in US dollars have been punishing. The country has lost control over fiscal policy which could otherwise be used to stimulate growth in the sluggish economy.

The FMLN would also try to promote El Salvador's interests and sovereignty in the negotiations currently underway for a Central American Free Trade Agreement with the US. The FMLN would prefer to integrate the economies of the whole of Central America before an agreement is concluded with the US. ☘

*The FMLN wants to stop any future privatisations and to review the ones that have taken place. It would re-jig the tax structure to ensure that the wealthy pay more tax.*

elected General Secretary of the Party in 1973 and remained in that position until he was relieved of the post in 1994. This happened as part of a unification process carried on within the FMLN at the time. He was a leader of the guerrilla campaign during the 1980s in several war zones.

ARENA has managed to hold on to power in El Salvador since the UN-sponsored Peace Accords of 1992 brought the 12-year civil war to an end. ARENA has done this despite its founder's connections to the notorious death squads that used to terrorise the country and the devastating effects of the

several kilometres away. There are still three identification documents required to register to vote instead of one - a situation that slows down the process. There is no provision for absentee voting for Salvadorans living abroad. Previous elections have been marred by the presence of substantial numbers of the "voting dead". Voter turnout is low.

The FMLN is appealing for financial assistance for their election campaign and is calling for international volunteers to work in observation teams to help control abuses. [See to the right for contact details]

The FMLN is hoping to build on



The FMLN would promote El Salvador's

For further information about participating in an election observation team visit: [www.poemundi.com/ficha.htm](http://www.poemundi.com/ficha.htm)

Contact through the local Salvadorian community:  
COSA "FUM" Ph: 02 9726 5280 or 02 8786 1849  
Or email: [elise\\_aya@hotmail.com](mailto:elise_aya@hotmail.com)

To assist financially or to discuss your attendance in El Salvador as an election observer, please contact Jose Amaya  
1/144A Wattle Ave Carramar, NSW 2163 or phone (02) 9726 5280.

## "School of Assassins" protestors sentenced

Jack Yor

**The trials of 27 people arrested at Fort Benning in the USA for their November protest of the infamous "School of the Assassins" began January 26 before a federal magistrate.**

Of the 27 arrested during the actions, 23 were sentenced to three to six months in federal prison and four received probation, Eric LeCompte of SOA Watch said in a telephone interview.

Most of the defendants were fined from US\$500 to US\$1,500. The charges ranged from civil disobedience to accidentally driving on a public highway that goes through Fort Benning property. More than 10,000 people demonstrated against the school on November 22-23.

Initially established in Panama in 1946, the school was kicked out of that country in 1984 under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty. Former Panamanian President Jorge Illueca said the SOA was the "biggest base for destabilization in Latin America".

Over its 56 years, the SOA, dubbed the "School of Assassins," has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers in counter-insurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics.

Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans among them educators, union organisers, religious workers and student leaders have been

tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared" and massacred by those trained at the SOA.

The protests began in 1990 and have grown in number each year, according to Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of SOA Watch, from 10 people to more than 10,000.

"These are people who have heard Bush say, 'We've got to go to the terrorist camps and shut them down'", Father Bourgeois said in a phone interview. "We're saying, 'Start in our own backyard.'"

SOA costs US taxpayers US\$20 million every year and more than 160 people have gone to prison for peacefully protesting the school, Bourgeois said, "collectively serving 75 years, while the bullies of the SOA get away with their crimes".

In 2001 the SOA was renamed the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation", a move designed to deflect attention away from its continuing activities, say anti-SOA activists.

That same year the Army began putting a barbwire fence at the entrance to Fort Benning to keep protestors from entering the base. It quickly became a place to put signs, crosses, and personal items in memory of the victims. In 2002 police began blocking off the entire demonstration area, forcing all participants to go through metal detectors and have their belongings searched.

This year the city required expensive insurance coverage for any demonstration with more than

10,000 people, a measure clearly tailored to target SOA Watch.

Another new harassment tactic this year was the Army blaring music and military propaganda from huge loudspeakers to try to drown out protest speakers and musicians.

One of the 45 arrested this year was Kathy Kelly, founder of Voices in the Wilderness and one of the original 10 SOA protestors in 1990. Military police (MP) roughed her up while she was in custody, according to Father Bourgeois. This is the first time the MPs have used this level of brutality, he said.

When asked if the stepped-up repression was a sign that the closing may be near, Bourgeois laughed and said, "We're getting there." Referring to SOA's directors, Bourgeois said, "I wouldn't want their job right now. They know we'll keep coming back, and in greater numbers, until it is closed."

Trade unionists were among those leading the demonstration last November. "We know if we don't stand up for the workers in Central America, and El Salvador, Nicaragua and Colombia - if we don't stand up for those workers we're going to be brought down to the level of poverty of those workers", United Auto Workers International Vice President Bob King told the huge crowd.

"I understand and I know you understand in being here that if people of good will and people of conscience and people of deep spiritual values don't stand up today in America, then we're going to see this country shift to be a police state."

For more information on the SOA Watch, visit [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org)  
*People's Weekly World*,  
abridged ☘

*Educators, union organisers, religious workers and student leaders have been tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared" and massacred by those trained at the SOA.*

## Anti-FTAA Conference in Cuba

**As Australia was in the process of negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the USA, more than 1500 people from the Americas gathered in Havana to voice their opposition to a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas.**

The conference, held at the end of January, looked at the current progress on the FTAA and discussed in detail the likely ramifications.

The FTAA would mean a further loss of sovereignty and a reduction in the already very low living standards of millions of Latin Americans.

Conference delegates adopted a plan of action to continue the struggle when they returned to their respective countries.

The struggle in the Americas, including in Canada and the USA itself, is so strong that there is

talk of another type of FTAA. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the transnational corporations are seeking an agreement which would involve bilateral agreements with one or another nation.

With the USA and its corporations dictating the agenda, this would see individual nations having to deal with the US on a one-to-one basis.

The poorer and the smaller the nation the weaker its position is to stand up to US pressure.

The negotiation of bilateral agreements is being used, as are regional agreements to push ahead with the WTO and IMF agenda on as many fronts as possible, especially since the serious defeats suffered by the US and its partners at Seattle and more recently, Cancun. ☘

Newcastle

### Politics in the Pub Medicare and Universal Health Care

Dr Con Costa

National Vice President Doctors' Reform Society

Dr David Brookman

Newcastle University, Discipline of General Practice

6.30pm Tuesday February 17  
Hamilton Station Hotel 02 4961 3852  
Across from Hamilton Station

For more info ph: Harry 02 4967 1889



# Is Britain killing thousands?

Felicity Arbuthnot of Britain's daily socialist paper, *Morning Star*, looks into report that the British army in Basra is allowing deadly material to be smelted and spread.

Destroyer tanks and armoured vehicles hit by and contaminated by depleted uranium (DU) weapons in the March invasion of Iraq are being melted down in huge smelting facility near Basra, in southern Iraq, under the auspices of the British army, and being turned into "prefabricated bridges, litter bins and even pots and pans", believes the Independent's veteran Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk.

He told the *Morning Star* that the story in Basra is plausible and consistent.

was astonished by the use of DU in the 1991 war.

The UKAEA was so alarmed that it "self-initiated" a report, which it sent to the Ministry of Defence in April 1991, warning of a health and environmental catastrophe.

It estimated that, if a residual 50 tonnes of DU dust remained after the impact of weapons, there could be an excess half a million "potential deaths" from cancer "in the region" within 10 years.

The Pentagon has confirmed

of DU in 1991, have reached epidemic levels.

The effects of the further use last year has yet to be assessed.

The implications for the population and, especially, for those working in the smelting plant and breathing in the DU dust, can only be imagined.

DU, if injected or inhaled, "has the potential to generate significant medical consequences", states the AEPI.

"Short-term effects of high doses can result in death, whilst long-term effects of low dose can result in cancer".

Labour Blaenau Gwent MP Llew Smith has tabled a question to the Defence Secretary asking: "What methods are being used to decontaminate Iraqi tanks and other military equipment disabled or destroyed by the use of depleted uranium munitions in the southern sector of Iraq under British military control?" A reply is still due on this issue.

Professor Malcolm Hooper, emeritus professor at the University of Sutherland and a government adviser on Gulf war illnesses, said: "Taiwan springs to mind, where radioactive material was used in building structures and deaths and illnesses were so great that they had to be demolished.

"I would be very unhappy about using these materials – it would be a disaster for workers, a disaster for those living in the vicinity and it would be a real toxic brew also containing mercury, cadmium" – and numerous other lethal pollutants.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence told the *Morning Star* that it had no knowledge of tanks being melted down as a method of disposing, commenting: "There are illegal smelting facilities all over Basra".

The spokesman suggested contacting the British military's Basra headquarters.

Fisk comments, cynically: "It makes sense. Maybe Iraqi housewives who live through nights of power cuts can now spot their household utensils glowing quietly in the darkness of the kitchen". ☛

*If a residual 50 tonnes of DU dust remained, there could be an excess half a million "potential deaths" from cancer "in the region" within 10 years. The most recent conflict has, cite reports, left at least a further 2,300 tonnes.*

"I believe it to be true, but I can't prove it", he said. Due to time restrictions and travel complexities in current circumstances, he said, "I did not get to the facility".

"Depleted uranium is a ... radioactive waste and, as such, should be deposited in a licensed repository", states the US Army Environmental Policy Institute (AEPI).

After the 1991 Gulf war, tanks hit with depleted uranium were taken to a nuclear decontamination facility at Barnwell, North Carolina, built only for the purpose of dealing with vehicles damaged and contaminated by DU in the war.

Those which could not be decontaminated were sent to a special secure landfill site owned by Chem Nuclear or to the similar US Department of Energy Savannah River site.

The Barnwell manager at the time, Roger Johnson, talked of the vast amount of radioactive and toxic material affecting the vehicles being contaminated. "Something that takes only four days can produce a lot of material".

A UK Atomic Energy Authority spokesman said at the time that he

that 320 tonnes were left behind. Some scientists say that the real figure could be closer to 900 tonnes.

The most recent conflict has, cite reports, left at least a further 2,300 tonnes.

The UKAEA paper states that "DU can become a long-term problem if not dealt with and ... a risk to both the military and civilian population". Its calculations "indicate a significant problem".

The report continues: "Localised contamination of vehicles and soil may exceed permissible limits and these could be hazardous to both clean-up teams and the local population.

"Inhalation of DU dust particles can lead to unacceptable body burdens (putting) the public at risk. DU can also be a danger if taken into the body by ingestion or through a cut.

"Furthermore, if DU gets into the food chain or water, then this will create potential health problems".

DU remains radioactive for four-and-a-half billion years.

Basra's cancers and birth defects, linked by experts to the use

## Iran striking workers killed

**The Tudeh Party of Iran is seeking support for an international campaign of protest against the violent suppression of the Iranian workers. "We call for Urgent Solidarity actions by all progressive, trade union and democratic organisations", the Tudeh Party urged. Letters should be sent to Iranian Embassies, the ILO, WFTU, ICFTU. The request comes from the International Department of the Central Committee of the Party, following shooting of striking workers.**

"Assaulting the peaceful protests of overworked workers who are losing their livelihoods under the devastating anti-popular policies, in a country with abundant natural and human resources, which has had a wealth of oil income in the recent years, is indicative of the depth of the economic-political crisis, and also the corruption, brutality and oppressive nature of the administration", the Party appeal said.

According to reports released by official media, the regime's repressive assault against the protesting workers of Copper Smelting Plant in Shahr-e Babak in Kerman Province resulted in the killing of four workers and injury of 20 others.

The workers, who have worked for some time for contractors to Copper Smelting Plant, had staged a sit-in, at the entrance of the plant, to pursue their collective demand of permanent employment.

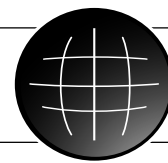
It had previously been agreed that 1500 workers of Khatoon Abad Copper Smelting Plant would get permanent work contracts at the Plant. The struggle of temporary workers at the plant is part of the struggle of workers around the

country against the use of temporary contracts by employers to evade their responsibilities under the labour.

Fearing the spread of workers' protests, the unpopular regime declared emergency conditions and sent in special intelligence and law enforcement forces from to attack the protesting workers.

"This criminal action is the beginning of a new phase in regime's attempts to overcome the crisis that it is faced with. It also shows the panic reaction of the leaders of despotic regime in the face of the expansion of the popular movement in our country and joining of workers with this movement", the Tudeh Party said. ☛

*"It also shows the panic reaction of the leaders of despotic regime in the face of the expansion of the popular movement in our country and joining of workers with this movement"*



## Global briefs

**RUSSIA:** Russia's nuclear forces are reportedly preparing their largest manoeuvres in two decades in an exercise involving the test-firing of missiles and flights by dozens of bombers in a massive simulation of an all-out nuclear war. President Putin is expected to personally oversee the manoeuvres, which are apparently aimed at demonstrating the revival of the nation's military might in the lead-up to the Russian presidential elections on March 14.

**CUBA:** President Castro addressed a gathering of about 1000 international activists against "free trade" and in particular the US-backed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). In a five-hour speech in Havana, Fidel Castro also referred to the US President's plans to overthrow the Cuban Government and to him. "We knew that Mr Bush had made a commitment with the mafia [Cuban exiles] of the Cuban-American foundation to kill me. I accuse him of this", Fidel Castro said. "This dead man can still talk. This dead man can make plans. This dead man ... is not dead yet. With a gun in my hand, I don't care how I die, but I'm confident that if they invade us, I will go down fighting", Mr Castro said to tumultuous applause from the audience, which included Andean Indians, landless Brazilians, and Canadian postal workers. Fidel Castro survived several CIA plots to assassinate him during the 1960s but many Cubans now fear that Washington, frustrated by the failure of a 40-year embargo to bring down Fidel Castro, may be planning an imminent land invasion. Some 130,000 "committees for the defence of the revolution" and other local organisations have been told to step up their vigilance. President Bush has set up a special committee to monitor events in Cuba and "plan for the happy day when Castro's regime is no more". If Bush loses the coming elections, he would be the 10th US President that the Cuban leader has seen off.

**NORTHERN IRELAND:** Loyalist paramilitaries have launched a spate of racist attacks against ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland. Over 200 incidents were reported in the past nine months. Chinese, Romanian and Ugandan families have been burnt out of their Belfast homes. A Muslim was shot at through their kitchen window. Another person was left in a coma after a beating, while others have had legs and noses broken. At the same time loyalist paramilitaries continue to make attacks on Catholics. Most of this violence goes unreported in the British media.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Management at Ingwe Collieries, a subsidiary company of BHP Billiton Australia, has informed the National Union of Mineworkers that it intends retrenching 397 workers. This is on top of the more than 3400 workers already sacked over the past two years. The NUM proposal to avoid retrenchments. Ingwe claims it needs to improve its performance. It wants to increase the rate of return (profits as a percentage of investment) from nine percent to 13 percent.

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

## Get rid of the lot

How much longer do Bush, Blair and Howard think they can get away with their lies and arrogant, aggressive behaviour? The patience of the public in the US, the UK and Australia is wearing thin. All three have to face the electorate soon.

All three have been forced to hold inquiries. They got away with controlling the ambit and personnel involved. Hutton's whitewash was so feeble that Blair is in deeper than before, frantically searching another way out.

It's the security and misnamed intelligence agencies that are in all three cases being lined up as scapegoats. A very dangerous game for any government to play and God knows what they know about the governments that they don't want to leak out if they upset these outfits too much.

Already in all three countries individuals from these agencies have stepped bravely forward to add a few home truths about the non-existence of stockpiles of weapons

of mass destruction and the impending global threat posed by Saddam. One is dead – his death the subject of another cover-up.

There is a limit to how long any security outfit will swallow its pride and go on lying for a government which is trying to make it the fall guy. Dumb politics – Eh?

Surely these are very dangerous enemies to make for a government after re-elected.

People don't like being lied to. And moreover, they don't like unjustified wars and occupations.

These are not the only problems facing these governments. Electorates in all three countries are fuming over cuts to social services, education, health, public transport, particularly so when they are accompanied by tax cuts and whopping hikes in war budgets. No money – Eh?

Nor can major opposition parties sit back complacently. They after all voted for or went along with most of it.

In Britain and the USA the working class have the option of voting with their feet, but in Australia voting is compulsory. Let's use the Federal election to crucify the Howard warmongering government, but let's not forget to join forces and build an anti-war, anti-Free Trade Agreement, pro-people alternative.

J E Simpson  
Ultimo, NSW

## Farmers and greens

Why is being "green" being anti-farmer?

John Anderson, Federal Minister for Transport and Deputy Prime Minister, said this on ABC radio on 22/1/2004.

There are more "green" farmers now than ever before. Many pioneer environmentalists were farmers, or people who worked the land.

Has John Anderson, a "traditional" farmer, bothered to do his homework? Perhaps the "greening" of the farmers has something to do with all the various kinds of "green" education, and basically the desire to work the land better, and to preserve a farm's fertility and viability.

Denis Kevans  
Wentworth Falls, NSW

## A remarkable woman

The Guardian article on the life of Chris Kempster is also a tribute to Madeline, his mother, a remarkable woman in the '30s, '40s and '50s.

Madeline was a member of the Communist Party before and after the Second World War.

She took her socialist message and program to her many colleagues, teachers and the children she taught – musicians, artists, writers, authors and others. She had

remarkable ability as an organiser, public speaker and anti-war activist.

Madeline was elected as an Australian delegate to peace conferences in Vienna and Berlin. She took this message on her Australian itinerary, at rallies, conferences and meetings locally and interstate: that the world would never be safe while the armament warmongers and reactionary governments used all their weapons to destroy people in bloody war.

Chris' steps follow the giant strides of his mother, as true daughters and sons of the Australian working class.

Phyllis Johnson  
Padstow, NSW

## An independent Speaker?

Latham's idea to have an independent Speaker for the Federal Parliament has merit. However, to appoint an Independent MP would only neutralise the Independent and be seen as a major party trick.

Why not appoint an independent non-politician from outside the legislature? And whilst they are at it why not appoint all Ministers from outside the Parliament where the choice is infinitely greater? The quality of the government, of any government, would improve beyond belief. This is the system in all European countries and in

the US. Could Latham move to end the functional amateurism of our politicians??

Klaas Woldring  
Pearl Beach, NSW

## Bravo to Latham

Bravo to Latham and the ALP for putting the kibosh on Australia's participation in the US National Missile Defence fiasco thus saving many millions for pro-social policies.

Howard should explain how much his NMD plans are going to cost the community and which of our cities are going to be "protected".

How good is his intelligence this time.

Time to go Johnnie!

Gareth Smith  
Byron Bay, NSW



# Culture & Life

by  
Rob Gowland

## Absolutely true and scientific

In last week's *Worth Watching*, I referred to the "numerous programs of recent times that seek to ally science and Christianity". I was, in that instance, writing about a program, ostensibly on the history of Buddhism, which sought to do the same thing for science and Buddhism.

It reminded me, however, of a quotation I had read in the 1970s about reconciling religion and science. After some searching around I found it, in Bill Hornadge's 1971 publication *A Squint At The World*, published in Dubbo, NSW.

The undated quotation is by the Reverend Dr Livingston T Mays, Pastor of the Citywide Baptist Church in that famous centre of tolerance and progress, Montgomery, Alabama. The Rev Mays gave a whole new meaning to the term "scientific".

He said: "It is the belief of true scholars that those who try to harmonise science and religion waste their time, for religion is true and the Bible is true, therefore scientific, and all genuine science accepts the Bible because every statement in it is absolutely true and therefore scientific."

"The Bible, notwithstanding all statements to the contrary, has not one solitary unscientific or untrue sentence in it."

So there! Dr Mays notwithstanding, there has been a great upsurge in attempts to marry science and religion.

In one form or another, this has been going on ever since the victory of socialist revolution in Russia in 1917. It is a form, albeit a subtle one, of anti-communist propaganda.

It tries to undercut – indeed, to deny – the materialist philosophical position. It seeks to turn observable

scientific fact from being evidence of the rule of scientific laws in the universe and the working of evolution to being instead evidence of the will, or whim, of God.

Exponents of religion have been strenuously denigrating the concept of evolution ever since Darwin's own day. And they knew it was a political question long before George W Bush led the Christian fundamentalists into the White House.

In 1924, Billy Sunday, the American evangelist with the highly appropriate name, had this typically mild rebuke for the advocates of teaching up-to-date science in schools:

"If anyone wants to teach that God-forsaken, hell-born, bastard theory of evolution, then let him go out and let him be supported by men who believe that blasted theory and not expect the Christian people of this country to pay for the teaching of a rotten, stinking professor who gets up there and teaches our children to forsake God and makes our schools a clearing house for their God-forsaken dirty politics."

The separation of church and state was clearly not something Billy supported.

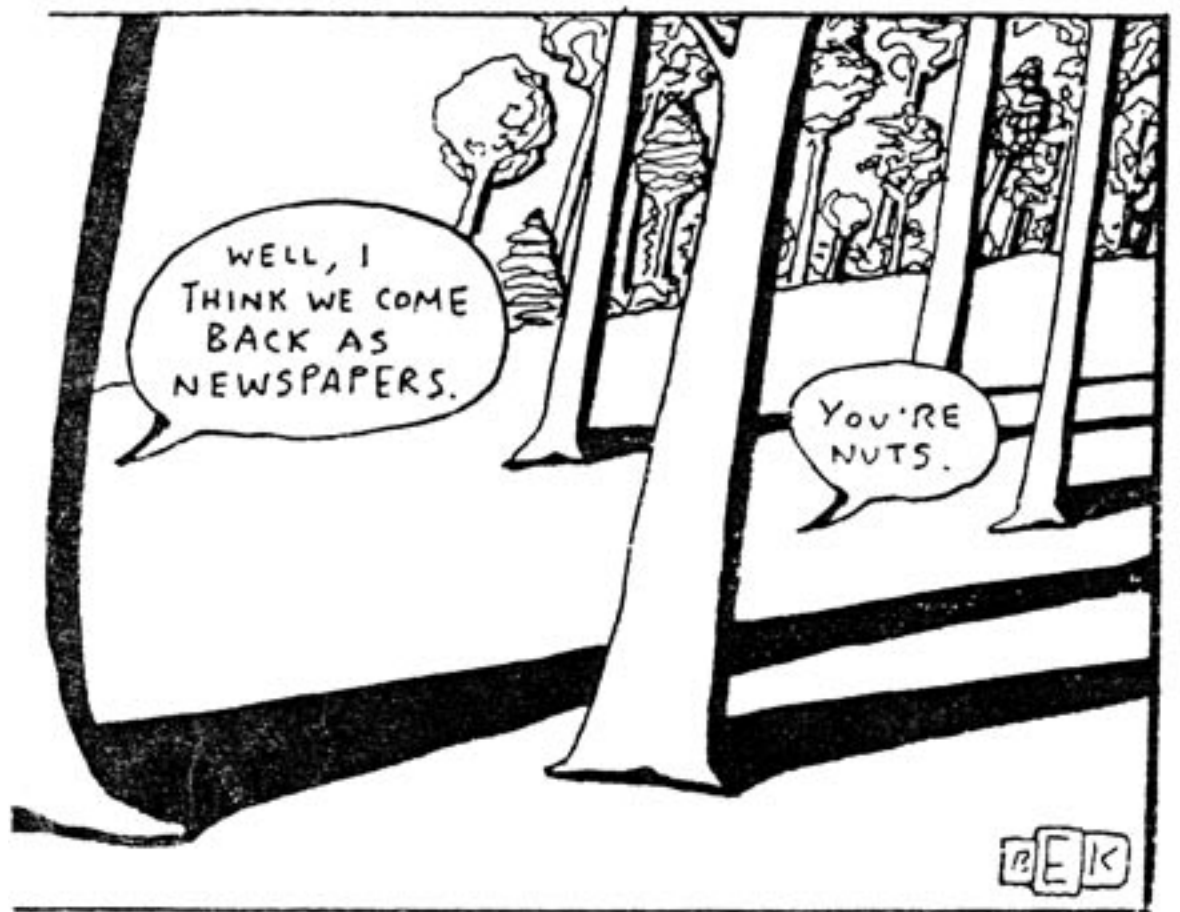
The late Carl Sagan, the noted US space scientist, in his land-mark television series *Cosmos*, made the very forthright statement on this subject: "Evolution is not a theory; it is fact."

But scientists with Sagan's developed understanding of the scientific, materialist world-view, and the willingness – as well as the clout – to defend it publicly, are not readily found.

Dependent on research grants from corporations or governments, rather than from independent institutes or universities, scientists are increasingly unwilling to rock the boat, least of all to stick their necks out in the capitalist mass media.

A culture of silence and acquiescence is being fostered in which vehement debate and defence of science against obscurantism and religion is confined to the Internet or the rarefied columns of specialist journals.

The advocates of science being



compatible with a belief in God, on the other hand, have unrestricted access to the mass media and are assured of a sympathetic, non-hostile environment in which to present their views.

*Guardian* readers and CPA members need to consciously increase their efforts to defend scientific socialism and materialist philosophy. Because, make no mistake, they are under attack.

Two weeks ago in *Worth Watching*, I wrote up and strongly recommended Mark Worth's documentary on West Papua, *Land of the Morning Star*. Not long before the film went to air Mark Worth died in Jayapura, West Papua.

His death was attributed to pneumonia and liver complications. He was 45.

To many, his sudden and untimely death was seen as simply too convenient for the Indonesian

authorities, whose repressive occupation of West Papua he exposed in his reporting and his films.

Whether suspicious or the result of years of stress, his death certainly comes at a time of stepped up repression for the West Papuan people.

As *Pacific Media Watch* reported the day after his death, "recent weeks have seen a major escalation in intimidation and provocation [in West Papua] by Indonesia. In the last few days five Papuans have been sentenced to between 20 years and life for their alleged involvement in a raid on a military post in Wamena."

Five Papuan students were being held in prison in Jakarta after daring to raise the West Papuan Morning Star flag. They were being threatened with 20 years in jail, but have now (after two months) been released.

Seven highland leaders how-

ever are still being held in jail in Jayapura.

And in mid-January "infamous former police chief of East Timor, Timbul Silaen, who was charged with gross human rights violations during the 1999 East Timor atrocities", took up the position of Indonesia's police chief in West Papua.

Mark Worth was widely believed to have been linked to footage on SBS *Dateline* last November, in which leaders of OPM, the West Papuan armed resistance movement, appealed for international help to bring about peaceful dialogue to solve the problems of West Papua.

"Two days after the footage was screened, ten Papuans, including one of the leaders who featured in the film, were shot as they slept in a raid by 200 Indonesian soldiers. Their bodies were later displayed like hunting trophies." ☹





Sun February 15 ~  
~ Sat February 21

**Handle With Care**, on *Inside Australia* (SBS 7.00pm Sundays) is a four-part series that follows the dedicated team who work for NETS, the neonatal and paediatric emergency transport service that brings mobile intensive care to the bedside of critically ill children.

Headquartered at the New Children's Hospital at Westmead (in Sydney's western suburbs) the NETS teams of intensive care nurses and doctors fly to all parts of NSW to treat and stabilise children in local hospitals and then deliver them to specialist units.

It's a splendid scheme, that could certainly do with more funds and facilities. Worryingly, if the Howard Government succeeds in privatising the health service, we can expect the entire cost of transporting the tiny patients, their parents and the medical teams by helicopter or fixed wing aircraft to be sheeted home to the families.

Kerry Brewster's splendid four-part fly-on-the-wall series about boys at the underfunded public school Canterbury Boys' High in Sydney, *Our Boys*, continues this week in the *Reality Bites* slot (ABC 8.00pm Tuesdays).

This week's episode, *Frank*, deals with a 17-year-old student trying to complete year 11 while living alone, the sister he normally lives with having returned to Ghana for several months to be with their sick mother.

This is good television that brings out not only the critical

situation in public schools but the dedication and professionalism of the teaching staff.

We all know about the farce of "embedded" journalists and the rigid control and manipulation of the media exercised by the US military in the invasion of Iraq. But what of the journalists who were not acceptable to the US brass?

Over 3000 journalists gathered in Kuwait City as the invasion loomed, but only a trustworthy minority were allowed to accompany the US forces and their allies into Iraq.

*War Feels Like War*, screening on the *Cutting Edge* (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday), looks at the invasion of Iraq through the eyes of journalists who provided alternative coverage to the official reporting of events.

Known as "unilateralists" to the US authorities, these non-embedded journalists included reporters and photographers who had been sent out to cover a major news event and resented being prevented from doing their job.

Some fought with the US officials, others made their own way into Iraq. The program contrasts the experiences of Stephanie Sinclair, a *Chicago Tribune* photographer who has never covered a war on this scale and reporters such as Jacek Czarnecki, an experienced radio journalist from Poland who has covered conflict in Rwanda, Zaire and Afghanistan.

Sinclair photographs dead civilians and others with horrific injuries at a time when the official coverage maintains that civilian deaths have been minimal. The images of a very young girl who has died are, she believes, the strongest photos she has ever taken.

*Good Riddance* (ABC 9.20pm Tuesdays) is an Aardman-influenced animated series (models not cartoons) about an "eco-friendly" pest exterminator. The rats he tried to eliminate in last week's episode pulled the wool over his eyes and gleefully moved into his garage.

This week turns the tables: in redesigning his little van as a clean green vehicle, he resorts to clock-



Cary Grant and Shirley Temple in an embarrassingly bad movie (*The Bachelor And The Bobby Soxer*)

work, solar, wind and even rain power, but his coup de grace is the addition of rat power.

This is not really a kids' series, but is actually whimsy from, of all things, the ABC's Natural History Unit!

The title of *Maggie: The First Lady* shows that particular program's bias fairly clearly. This is the second and thankfully last of two episodes screening in *The Big Picture* (ABC 8.30pm Wednesday).

It is the "personal story" of Margaret Thatcher, modestly identified as "the most significant Englishwoman since Elizabeth I" (so much for all those other great Englishwomen who actually contributed to human progress).

This type of program makes a great thing about the "insider" status of the talking heads that appear on it. They reveal the minutiae of who said what to whom on the telephone

during some historical occasion, but nothing at all of serious analysis.

Such programs give you the illusion of getting the "inside dope", while essentially and skilfully restricting themselves to the surface of events, not the substance.

*Pirates of the South China Sea* (SBS 8.30pm Thursday) is a piece of investigative reporting about Singapore-organised pirates who use unemployed Indonesian sailors to hijack ships (and cargoes) in the South China Sea on behalf of Hong Kong triads.

As the program shows, the pirates depend on corruption to evade punishment. In a region where most people live on the smell of an oily rag, the amount of money to be made from selling the entire contents of an oil tanker must be a massive inducement to turn a blind eye to wrong doing.

The book and TV series *Sex and the City* supposedly depict the complicated rituals of dating and mating among (mainly white) middle class professionals in New York.

As portrayed on television (except in police shows), New York seems to have very few working class people, even fewer Hispanic, Chinese, Korean or Arab inhabitants. But in fact it's the yuppie white middle class professionals who are the minority.

*The Truth About Sex And The*

*City* (SBS 10.00pm Friday) says that even the reality of white middle class dating and mating in New York is very different to its popular presentation.

Yuppies in New York today are mainly white, male investment bankers or other satraps of the capitalist business world. The acquisition of wealth and self-indulgence rule almost all aspects of the daily life of these New Yorkers - particularly dating and relationships.

The program observes that this is a city full of alienated young people keeping busy just to ward off the feelings of loneliness. But, finding their "other half" is subject to certain conditions and affection features quite low on the list of priorities.

For young middle class professionals, their potential Mr Right must at least be "tall, fit and rich", and there is no room for compromising on standards of appearance, behaviour, finances or background. Isn't capitalism wonderful?

*The Bachelor And The Bobby Soxer* (ABC 10.25pm Saturday) is an embarrassingly bad movie. Cary Grant does his best but the screenplay is trite and witless.

Amazingly, and inexplicably, the screenplay actually won an Oscar. Myrna Loy is required at one point to literally imagine Grant as her knight in shining armour. Feeble, indeed. ☹

## The Storyteller's Oath

Poems by Tom Pearson  
Illustrations by Tom Pearson  
\$10 (incl p&p)  
Order from SPA Books, Further enq 02 9212 6855



South Coast

### Strengthening the Trade Union Movement: Communist Party of Australia's policy

Speaker: Anna Pha  
Editor of "The Guardian"

Sunday February 29 2004  
10.30 am for 11 am

The Beaches Hotel  
Lawrence Hargrave Drive Thirroul

A BBQ lunch will be provided  
\$10 (waged) \$5 concession

Organised by the North Illawarra Branch of  
the Communist Party of Australia.

For further details contact Janice on 4283 6130  
or janhamilton34@hotmail.com

## Subscribe to The Guardian

12 MONTHS: \$88 (\$80 conc.)  6 months: \$45 (\$40)  3 months: \$23 (\$20)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE: \_\_\_\_\_

Pay by  Cheque  Money order  
to: Guardian Subscriptions  
65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, Australia

or by credit card:  Bankcard  Mastercard  Visa

Card #

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Guardian

65 Campbell Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010  
Phone: (02) 9212 6855  
Fax: (02) 9281 5795

Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

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

Sydney

## Politics in the Pub

Every Friday night 6pm - 7.45pm  
Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills

(across from the Chalmers St exit and Devonshire St tunnel at Central Station)  
Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

February 13

An evening with Anne Summers

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

February 27

Batting for the Senate

ALP Senator John Faulkner; Greens Senator Kerry Nettle;  
Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett

Inq: Pat Toms 9358 4834 pbtoms@bigpond.com; Janet Fischer 9398 8891;  
PO Box 325 Rozelle NSW 2039; Win Childs Fax 9660 6554

www.politicsinthepub.org



# The "war on terror" and the war on our right to know

Bob Briton

Since December last year Australia has had new "anti-terrorism" laws in place. People have been detained and questioned for allegedly having links to or sympathies for terrorist organisations like al-Qaida, Jemaah Islamiyah and Lashkar-e-Toiba. A 20-year-old man in Sydney was the first person charged under the new laws: one count of making preparations for a terrorist act. He faces penalties which include life imprisonment.

The full details of the allegations made by ASIO and the Australian Federal Police against Zeky Zak Mallah have not been made public. Under the new legislation there is no requirement for that to happen. In fact, there is a ban on journalists or others disclosing any information relating to the issuing of a warrant and conduct connected to such warrants for up to 28 days.

Jail terms of up to five years await them for revealing any "operational information" within a two-year period from the issuing of the warrant. Even then, the Government would advise interested parties to get legal advice.

"Operational information" includes any information being put to the person being questioned – who may or may not be suspected of terrorist activities – and anything

Ball for new structures of oversight under the Cabinet Security Committee will almost certainly fall on deaf ears.

The potential for corruption within ASIO, given the experience of the relatively much more open state police forces, is obvious. It sets the scene for the Australian equivalent of the Birmingham Six or the Guilford Four, as pointed out in the mainstream press.

You would think that in these circumstances our newspaper, TV and radio news would contain nothing or precious little about the "terror suspects" in our midst. However, nearly the exact opposite is the case. These services have regular articles about some of the 100 Australians that ASIO is reportedly keeping under surveillance as part of its "anti-terrorism" brief.

The *Herald Sun* of the 11th of December had a list of eleven of "AUSTRALIA'S TOP SUSPECTS". The list included David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib, both now detained illegally in Guantanamo Bay by the US military. Also listed is Jack "Jihad" Thomas [the *Herald Sun's* description] who allegedly trained with al-Qaida but whose activities predate the new "anti-terror" laws.

The media reports about Mr Thomas allege that the Melbourne man trained with Jemaah Islamiyah instructor Azman Hashim at a



to a limited amount of information – information of his choosing.

## Allegations

He can comment coldly about all sorts of things. He has talked about how French authorities detained Australian citizen and the wife of Willie Brigitte, Melanie Brown, even though there is no evidence she had engaged in terrorist activities in Australia or elsewhere. He has explained how Brigitte was handed over to the French even though he was suspected, supposedly, of planning terror attacks in Australia, including one on the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor! How mysterious that ASIO never sought to interview Mr Brigitte!

Justice Minister Chris Ellison has also been a good source of virtually unanswerable allegations. He told the John Laws radio program that Bilal and Maher Khazal were "of interest" to Australian authorities and that ASIO was investigating links between Bilal and al-Qaida. His Australian passport has been surrendered and Ellison has declared that any request from the Lebanese Government for the extradition of the two men would be given top priority.

We are told that the Khazal brothers were convicted *in absentia* on terrorism charges for helping to finance an organisation that carried on a violent campaign that included the bombing of a McDonald's restaurant.

Compare this approach to the reputations and privacy of Australian citizens with the way the Federal Government guards its secrets from public scrutiny.

## FOI beyond reach

Take, for example, the case of the request from *The Australian* newspaper under Freedom of Information for documents about the increasing tax burden on work-

ers. Treasurer Peter Costello issued so-called "conclusive certificates" that prevent the Administrative Appeals Tribunal from hearing any appeal. The matter will have to go to a special hearing of the Federal Court.

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer used "conclusive certificates" to block the release of documents about the legality of David Hicks' detention at Guantanamo.

In other cases, the cost of acquiring documents under FOI is proving to be a strong defensive wall for the government. Media organisations are denied the right to plead hardship.

Last year News Limited decided not to go ahead with an FOI request about violent incidents in immigration detention centres after it was quoted a fee of \$158,672.03 for the documents.

Charges for FOI requests have gone up 300 per cent since 1996. The number of requests has risen by just 5.5 per cent. Last year initial quotes for documents requested under the Federal FOI Act totalled \$928,124. Only \$150,636 or 16 per cent of that was collected. Clearly, a lot of people dropped their pursuit of the truth when faced with the bill.

The government also uses simple delaying tactics. It took over a year to provide *The Australian* with information about the Australian Museum.

Nobody within the bureaucracy, it seems, gets into trouble for exceeding the deadlines for completion of requests.

The referral of refused requests to the Administration Appeals Tribunal is also a useful delaying tactic.

In other cases, the department in question might act in a way that undermines the commercial interests of the applicant. The Australian Tax Office and journalist Michael

McKinnon were engaged in a long and costly battle last year over documents revealing the ATO's poor debt collection practices.

The ATO responded to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal decision in favour of Mr McKinnon by releasing the information free of charge to all the media at the same time.

The Federal government sees the 22-year-old *Freedom of Information Act* as a problem to be managed. Labor's homeland security spokesperson Robert McClelland says "The extent to which the Howard Government is misusing the processes of Freedom of Information is becoming a very concerning trend towards secrecy."

For example, a study produced by the Melbourne Institute showing the ineffectiveness of the Work for the Dole scheme was obtained under FOI. Other stories bob up in the news from time to time.

The government can side-step FOI entirely by using other devices. The workings of the few remaining government enterprises are usually exempt from FOI.

The "commercial-in-confidence" excuse covers most dealings with the growing number of private operators and other contractors. FOI will not give access to embarrassing material registered as a "Cabinet Paper".

The trend toward secrecy is a "win/win" for the Federal government as it becomes more effective at defending itself from legislation that was intended to inform the legitimate concerns of the people.

At the same time, it uses the new *Terrorism Act* and ASIO powers to smear individuals it does not approve of.

The labour movement must challenge and reverse this trend. Given the level of concern even at official levels, it is clear that it will find many allies in the struggle. ☉

*The potential for corruption within ASIO, given the experience of the relatively much more open state police forces, is obvious. It sets the scene for the Australian equivalent of the Birmingham Six or the Guilford Four, as pointed out in the mainstream press.*

related to how ASIO might have gathered its information.

Media concern was so high that the senior management at John Fairfax, News Limited, SBS, Commercial Radio Australia, the Australian Press Council and the ABC wrote a joint letter in early December to Senators then about to consider amendments to the *Terrorism Act*. Their pleas were ignored.

## Unaccountable

Even though it has now had its powers enhanced to the point that it becomes a fully-fledged secret police force, there are few controls on ASIO and plenty of room for it to manoeuvre within the law. Bill Blick is the Inspector-General of Security and Intelligence but he can only investigate allegations of strict breaches of the law.

Parliamentary Committees have limited powers. They cannot publicly delve into operational matters and often rely on the openness of people who have taken a spy's oath to secrecy. A call from defence and intelligence expert Professor Des

boot camp near Katoomba, west of Sydney. At the same time Rob Stary, a lawyer for Mr Thomas, cannot comment on the two-year police and ASIO investigation because of the new Federal legislation.

## Smear campaign

"National security sources" nowadays appear to be the authors of much of the information about "terror suspects" and their associates. Occasionally, these sources appear to have a bit of fun with what they release to the public. "Karate training in the bush is a ... long way short of a breach under the terror legislation", one source is meant to have told *The Australian* late last year in connection with Mr Thomas' case. The damage done to the reputations and livelihoods of Mr Thomas and others as a result of this type of ongoing smear campaign is no laughing matter.

Of course, the head of ASIO Dennis Richardson and federal Attorney General Philip Ruddock are both exempt from constraint. Ruddock has been a regular on TV and radio and opens the pipeline



## Communist Party of Australia

**Central Committee:**  
**General Secretary:** Peter Symon  
**President:** Hannah Middleton  
65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, 2010  
Ph: 02 9212 6855 Fax: 02 92815795  
**Sydney District Committee:**  
Rob Gowland  
65 Campbell St, Surry Hills 2010  
Ph: 02 9212 6855 Fax: 02 92815795

**Newcastle Branch:**  
303 Hunter St  
Ph: ah 02 4926 1752  
**Wollongong Branch:** Leanne Lindsay  
PO Box 276 Corrimal 2518  
**North Illawara Branch:** Janice Hamilton  
16/26-30 Hutton Ave  
Bulli NSW 2516  
Ph: 02 4283 6130

**Riverina:**  
Geoff Lawler  
PO Box 1016 Wagga 2650  
Ph: 02 6921 4316 Fax: 02 6921 6873  
**Melbourne Branch:**  
Andrew Irving  
PO Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall  
Lygon St Carlton Sth 3053  
Ph: 03 9639 1550 Fax: 03 9639 4199

**West Australian Branch:** Vic Williams  
5B Jemerson St Willagee Perth 6156  
Phone: 08 9337 1074  
**Brisbane Branch:** David Matters  
PO Box 2148 Salisbury East 4107  
Ph: 07 3398 9623  
**South Australian State Committee:**  
Marie Lean Rm 5, Lvl 1, 149 Flinders St,  
Adelaide 5000 Ph: 08 8232 8200

Website: [www.cpa.org.au](http://www.cpa.org.au) Email: [cpa@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpa@cpa.org.au)