

TOTALITARIAN POWERS New laws to ban organisations

The federal government has been handed more totalitarian powers with the Senate last week giving the Attorney General broad, fascist laws to unilaterally ban organisations. Anyone who is a member of a banned organisation, or gives financial or any other form of support to one faces a jail sentence of between 10 and 25 years (maximum). The *Criminal Code Amendment (Terrorist Organisations) Bill 2003* was passed by the Senate on March 4 after the Australian Labor Party (ALP) rolled over contrary to previous promises to oppose proscription.

"This bill gives Philip Ruddock, without reference to parliament or the courts, the power to name organisations as 'terrorist' and have members therefore categorised as criminal on the advice of ASIO alone", said Greens Senator Bob Brown.

The new provisions were originally contained in the *Security Legislation (Terrorism) Amendment Bill*, which also gave a broad definition of a terrorist act, created new offences and broadened the definition of treason. The ALP supported the Bill when the government agreed to restrict its banning powers to organisations listed as terrorists by the UN.

At the time Labor Senate leader John Faulkner said: "Labor insisted that domestic proscription – giving an attorney-general the power to ban organisations – was too dangerous a proposal and should be resisted at all cost.

The definition of "terrorist" is so wide-ranging that it could include peace groups, trade unions, anti-globalisation activists, solidarity organisations

"Historically, proscription has been used for political repression. It has rightly been resisted by the Australian people", Senator Faulkner said.

The definition of "terrorist" is so wide-ranging that it could include peace groups, trade unions, anti-globalisation activists, solidarity organisations (e.g. Australia Aid

for Ireland, Bougainville Freedom Movement, Australia West Papua Association) and political parties.

Once the Attorney General has proscribed an organisation, it will be a criminal offence to recruit for, finance, be a member of, receive training from or possess things or collect or make documents that might be connected with the organisation.

The government already has considerable powers to cripple organisations and individuals through a backdoor form of proscription. Under the *Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism Bill 2002*, also passed with the ALP's support, the Foreign Minister has the power to list and have the finances and other assets of organisations and individuals frozen.

"The loose and wide-open provisions of this bill mean that there is nothing to stop a future government from freezing the bank accounts of trade unions and community organisations on the flimsy basis that their activities were a threat to public health and safety", Senator Bob Brown warned when the Bill was before the Senate. "Activists and protesters added to the list would have their credit cards confiscated."

In other draconian laws, also passed during the last two years, ASIO has been given wide-ranging police powers to detain and interrogate people indefinitely with no right to contact anyone outside. There are a whole range of "criminal" offences carrying huge penalties for anyone who reports

anything about such detentions.

Justice Higgins of the Federal Court, speaking to the National Press Club last week, referred to one of these laws saying: "In the fight against terrorism, truly draconian legislation has been passed which allows anyone to be detained on the mere suspicion held by the Attorney-General that



such detention will, and I quote, 'substantially assist the collection of intelligence'."

How does Labor justify its latest capitulation over the proscription of organisations? Labor spokesperson Robert McClelland claims that the now amended bill provides robust safeguards against any misuse of the banning powers. And what are these robust safeguards?

The leader of the opposition must be briefed on the government's intentions prior to an organisation being proscribed. Note that the opposition nevertheless still has no power of veto over any such action by the government. Having briefed the opposition, the government can simply ignore any objections.

Proscribing an organisation can be subject to review by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on ASIO, ASIS and DSD, but given that its membership comes from the two major parties, and that government has the numbers, the chances of an unfavourable review are slender.

If all else fails, a banned organisation can appeal to the High Court. However, the financial costs in such a move would be crippling for most organisations, and the chances of the court overturning a decision approved by the major parties would be relatively small. And even if the courts were to countermand a proscription order, the damage done to the organisation during the period of proscription could be critical.

For the government of the day,

the procedure for proscribing an organisation is relatively simple and quick, as the banning order is carried out by regulation rather than by legislation.

The Australian Democrats, who along with the Greens opposed the legislation, have pointed out that existing laws provided ample protection against people planning terrorist acts, without resorting to legislation that would undermine the civil rights of Australian citizens.

Democrats Senator Brian Greig commented: "The Democrats are opposed to the very concept of proscription. It does not enhance Australia's security but deviates seriously from the way in which our community has traditionally defined criminal behaviour.

"We do not need proscription laws, given that there are already mechanisms within criminal law to prevent and punish terrorist activities. As a community we should seek to punish criminal behaviour, not thought or association."

The ALP's position is an indication of the direction in which that party is now heading under the new leadership of Mark Latham. Crawlers rarely merit praise from those to whom they toady. Rather than exhibit any gratitude to the ALP, the Howard Government contemptuously dismissed the ALP leadership's about-face as a "cave-in".

The ALP is proposing a new federal Department of Homeland Security along the lines introduced in the US by the Bush Government.

This mega-department would blend ASIO, the Australian Federal Police, Emergency Management Australia, the new coastguard service, and various divisions of the Australian Customs Service, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, and the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The US Department of Homeland Security has been widely criticised for its terrible impact on those seeking asylum in the US. The latest example is its proposal to arm Customs Department helicopters with machine guns, which, it is said, "would further turn the Arizona-Mexico border region into a literal war zone – a war that is killing men, women and children for the simple act of trying to improve their lives or unite with family members."

The Australian organisation proposed by the ALP would be even more powerful than its US counterpart, which does not include a law enforcement component (i.e. the FBI). The combination of this new mega-agency and the ALP's proposed new proscription laws constitutes a major new threat to democratic rights in Australia.

As Greens leader Bob Brown stated last week, the ALP has sold out "a major safeguard for a democratic society".

The task now is to publicise and defeat the legislation before it is used against the very organisations that are capable of defeating it and challenging government policies in other areas. ✪

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Long live International Women's Day

International Women's Day (IWD), (March 8) originated as a day on which the working class and revolutionary movements marked the common struggle for social, political and economic rights for women. For many years IWD took the form of militant marches and other actions in support of equal pay, the right to work, rights of married women, the right to vote, for women's services and women's reproductive rights, and many other social, economic and political rights, and against the exploitation of women.

Some progress was made. Women won the right to vote; gains were won on pay rates; education, childcare, women's services, abortion, non-discriminatory legislation, and some "male" areas of work opened to women. Many more women gained some measure of economic independence.

Today many of the gains of years of struggle around women's rights are being wound back. The Howard Government, since its election in 1996, has implemented policies that discriminate against women. It has withdrawn funding from programs and services that were trying to deal with the consequences of already existing inequality. The result has been sharp cut-backs in services, the closure of rape crisis centres, and too few shelters for women and their children who have been made homeless through domestic violence, eviction, unemployment and poverty.

Legal advice, English as a second language classes and many other valuable services have also been hit. Migrant and Indigenous women who already faced the greatest disadvantages, have borne the brunt of many of these cuts. Muslim women are on the receiving end of the hatred and racist sentiments being fomented by leading politicians and some sections of the commercial media.

The population in women's prisons has increased, the highest percentage increase being in Indigenous women. Most are victims themselves of physical abuse and drug and alcohol dependency. Many are caught in a cycle of poverty perpetuated by the Government's punitive welfare regime.

The exploitation of women as sexual objects in the commercial media and advertising has reached levels that not so long ago would have been publicly unacceptable.

Why has the forward progress been stopped and even wound back on nearly all fronts in Australia and many other countries? The great leap forward in women's rights was in the period following WW2. That was when the socialist states (in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union) implemented and practiced equality between the sexes at a level never before achieved. The national liberation movements of the former colonial countries also took steps to end the oppression of women in some countries.

In Australia, the campaign for women's rights was led by the militant progressive organisations, such as the Union of Australian Women, with strong participation by the sections of the organised labour movement. The struggle for women's rights was given huge impetus by Communist Parties as they added theoretical substance and backing to the women's movement, drawing on such figures as Engels, Lenin, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxembourg.

Novelists and poets such as Katherine Susannah Prichard, Joan Williams, Mena Calthorpe and many more came to the fore. In the field were outstanding and dedicated activists such as our own Phyllis Johnson. But gradually the objectives of the women's movement were diverted. Certain trends emerged, such as the posing of women against men, targetting all men as "the enemy" and denying men any role in the struggle for women's emancipation.

In some quarters the struggle for "status" and breaking through the so-called "glass ceiling" has become the priority. These are essentially the aspirations of individual middle class women to move up in the bourgeois world.

These ideas weakened and divided the women's movement, removed the objective of ending exploitation. At the same time the ever-flexible ruling class moved subtly to divert and pretend to support the banners of the women's movement. Even John Howard appointed a women's issues adviser.

At the same time as these trends were being pushed by the capitalist ruling class, the socialist states of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were broken up and many of the gains made by women in those countries were lost.

However, the cause of women's emancipation and equality has not gone away. It will re-emerge strongly in the future as part of a new wave of struggle for socialism, a society that is alone capable of fulfilling not just the aspirations of women in society, but those of all its members.

PRESS FUND

The proposed US/Australia Free Trade Agreement would involve a "ratchet" agreement for Australian media programs, whereby the Australian content would be capped at its current level, with the cap reducing every year that the level dropped. *The Guardian* is totally opposed to this sell-out of our national sovereignty, and other equally appalling aspects of the agreement. If you share our view, why not help us by sending us a donation for the next issue. We offer our grateful thanks to the following, for their generous contributions this week:

Elke and John Atkinson \$25, Figment Productions \$12, C Markani \$52, "Round Figure" \$6

This week's total: \$97.00 Cumulative total: \$2377.

Progressive candidates challenge the pro-developer Auburn Council

Following a vigorous campaign last year in the Sydney suburb of Auburn to prevent the building of an obnoxious waste disposal dump by big developer, Collex, the members and supporters of the No Dump Group are running a complete list of candidates in the two wards that make up the Auburn Council area in the municipal elections on March 27.

They are challenging the pro-developer policies of the existing Council which has been supported all the way by the Carr State Labor Government.

Two local citizens, John Drake and Alan Brzozon, won a case in the Land and Environment Court defeating Collex only to have this court decision swept aside when the Carr Government introduced special legislation to force a foul smelling dump on the Auburn community.

A large community protest was held outside State Parliament last year when this legislation was introduced and rammed through Parliament.

The Council majority played a maverick role, pretending to side with the community while, at the same time, lending support in court to the developers.

At first the Council took up the fight against Collex pointing out that the dump would lead to pollution, traffic congestion, noise, and smell. Then the Council withdrew from the court case and its legal team spent \$238,000 of ratepayers' money to support the Collex case.

It is in these circumstances that community organisations have come together to defeat the sitting Council majority that is made up of Liberal and Labor Party members and supporters.

Allan Brzozon from the No Dump Group and a candidate in the



No Dump campaign management team

elections on the progressive ticket said: "There is a lot of PR spin-doctoring going on and a lot of flashy promises being made. Residents must decide for themselves how much substance is behind all of those election promises.

"Being a councillor is all about ethics, responsibility and proper debate of important issues, so that the right decisions can be made. Hiding from the residents and not facing the real issues will only show the major parties for what they really are. This is why we are sending out this challenge. If they want the residents to vote for them, then Labor and Liberal should have the guts to front up and earn their votes.

"Both the Labor and the Liberal party candidates have been given a number of opportunities in recent weeks to explain their record and their policies to concerned residents

in a public forum, however they have consistently failed to show up", said Mr Brzozon.

Campaigning is well under way with supporters rallying to handout leaflets at shopping centres, railway stations, mosques; leafleting door-to-door and talking to people on the issues that concern them.

The leaflets have been published in Arabic, Chinese and Turkish as well as in English, reflecting the diversity and large migrant population in Auburn.

The No Dump Group is actively co-operating with other progressive groups such as the Resident's Action Group for Auburn Area (RAGAA) and the Greens.

"We are committed to stopping the major parties, the wealthy property developers, and large transnational corporations such as Collex from ruining Auburn", the Group's campaign manager Mike Newman told *The Guardian*. ☺

Sydney

Bougainville Welcome Gathering & Film Night fund-raiser

Thursday, 18 March

UTS Students Association, Level 3A, UTS Tower on Broadway, Room 318

6.00pm: Welcome back Sam and Jossie Sirivi from Bougainville

7.00pm: *TUKANA* - a feature film tells the story of a university dropout in Papua New Guinea returning to his native village in Bougainville.

All welcome. Cost: \$5.00 or gold coin donation.

Funds raised will assist Sam, Jossie and other Bougainville people to travel to Canberra and Melbourne to launch the book "...as MOTHERS of the LAND", a unique account of one of the deadliest conflicts in recent decades, told not by the military or political chiefs, but by those caught in the middle of the fighting: Bougainville women.

Contact: Bougainville Freedom Movement Phone: 02 9558 2730

Correction

In the issue of February 18, in *Labour Notes* (page 4) John Sutton was incorrectly reported as National Secretary of the CFMEU. He is the Secretary of the Construction Division of the CFMEU. John Maitland is the National Secretary of the CFMEU. Our apologies to the CFMEU and both Johns for the error.

International Women's Day

Sydney

International Women's Day 2004

Women create a better World

March to Hyde Park
Saturday 13 March

Assemble at
Sydney Town Hall 11.00am

Speakers, Stalls & Entertainment

For more information
Go to www.women.nsw.gov.au

Adelaide

International Women's Week

March 7 - 13 inclusive

March

Saturday 13 March 10.30am
from Victoria Square to Adelaide Uni

FESTIVAL

12 - 2pm on the Maths Lawns
via Gate 6 (off Frome Road)

After the march, relax with women friends, bring your lunch or buy some, visit stalls for information or products, all women are welcome to participate; book your turn at the microphone in speakers' corner!

Want more info? Want your group to be more involved?
Ring Fliss 08 8379 5104 or 0411 655 104

For details on conferences, fun run and other exciting events during the week contact Women's Information Service, Adelaide on 08 8303 0590 or 1800 188 158

Another funding bonanza for private schools

In a blatant piece of vote-buying, the Howard Government has announced it will grant Australia's Catholic schools an extra \$362 million over four years from 2005. The extra funding does not kick in until after the Federal elections – a big incentive for Catholic parents to vote for the Howard team!

During the 19th century, when the nation was in the early stages of development, the demand was for "free, universal and secular" public education.

However, all three of these principles are now being fundamentally violated as public schools are progressively squeezed of funds, while the private schools are showered with booty from the nation's coffers. (See actions by Victorian teachers, page 4.)

The aim is to create a two-tier system – where parents who can afford it, can "choose" to send their children to first class schools and the remainder be left with a run-down, struggling second class public school system.

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The federal education funding system is stacked so that every extra enrolment in a private school results in the transfer of funds from the public to the private school sector.

Commonwealth funding for the poorer Catholic schools (the majority) is based on a "flat rate" formula – 56 percent of the cost of educating the average public school student times the number of students.

Funding for the wealthier Catholic schools, such as Sydney's St Joseph's, Loretto and Riverview, is determined by a formula similar to the "socio-economic status" (SES) model used for most of the non-Catholic private schools.

This formula is ostensibly intended to iron out inequalities in funding between various schools. In practice it does no such thing.

Since its introduction in 2001, it has resulted in a huge bonanza for the richest private schools.

The Church has now agreed to Catholic schools currently under the "flat rate" formula shifting to the SES formula. The Church has

demand – and has been granted – a special deal (known as "funding maintained") which guarantees that none of the Catholic schools will receive less than they would have under the "flat rate" formula.

Even without the extra \$362 million, under the new regime, funding for the Catholic schools can only get bigger.

The Church authorities say they will distribute the funds "according to need" – if past practices are anything to go by, the wealthiest Catholic schools will not go short.

It seems that with the Church in power, "the poor you have with you always", at least in Catholic schools. As one commentator noted: "Parents of Catholic school students are still no closer to knowing exactly how much of the public funding they have allocated is actually reaching their child's school, and it is still not clear how much control each school has over its own resources."

The size of the benefit that the private schools are reaping from government funding is becoming obscene in scale. The Catholic schools alone are expected to receive some \$12.5 billion in the next four years. The Government is showering money over other religious, often fundamentalist schools of various persuasions. It is fostering and funding the destruction of an excellent public education system that is central to a secular society.

Whether some Catholic or other private schools are poor in compari-



son with public schools is not the issue. The government should NOT be funding such schools at all!

Those who wish to have their children privately educated are entitled to do so, but not at the expense of the taxpayer.

Under successive conservative governments quality education is changing from "free, universal and secular" to a privilege for the better-off. It is time to halt the process, phase out government funding of private schools, starting with the

richest, elitist schools, and allocate those funds to the public school system where it is needed and will benefit the whole of society.

"To him that hath much shall much be given; from him that hath little shall be taken away even that which he hath." How ironic that the Bible, which is used to underpin and justify the operation of most private schools, should contain such a neat description of the slow destruction of public education in Australia. ✪

Bracks attacks nurses' conditions

Victoria's public sector nurses are determined to defend the gains they have made, in particular nurse-patient ratios, and to improve and extend minimum nursing levels throughout the public health system. The Bracks Government is pushing to abolish nurse-patient ratios that were won over a long campaign of struggle.

In the past year public hospital admissions have skyrocketed by an additional 60,000 patients. This was 25,000 more patients than expected.

The campaign's "5 nurses for 20 patients" message explains the ratio principle and why it is so important to the community.

The Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) stresses that improving and extending safe minimum nursing levels will allow for the provision of a public health system that can care for patients, not just cope with patients.

Since the introduction of ratios over 3000 nurses have returned to the public health system. However, nurses at the coalface are saying ratios have made an intolerable situation barely tolerable. This is why the ANF has developed the "5-4-20" community awareness campaign.

The campaign's "5 nurses for 20 patients" message explains the ratio principle and why it is so important to the community.

On March 2 nurses across

Victoria voted unanimously to reject the wages and conditions offer made to them by the State Government and the Victorian Hospitals' Industrial Association (VHIA).

Nurses will be meeting again on March 31 to decide on a state-wide campaign if there is no satisfactory response to their claims.

The ANF has put the Bracks Government on notice that nurse-patient ratios are an essential mandated minimum and that minimum nursing levels are non-

negotiable. Nurse-patient ratios are the reason Victoria is the only state in Australia not experiencing a severe nurse shortage.

"Nurses are extremely angry that the Government and VHIA have proposed to decimate the working conditions that have lured thousands of nurses back into the public system", said ANF Branch Secretary, Lisa Fitzpatrick. "Nurses have not even got to the point where we can negotiate improvements to the current wages and working conditions."

"Instead we are facing a fight to maintain current working conditions, including the key nurse-patient ratios which ensure nurses can care for their patients safely."

The Government has offered a

measly 2.75 percent wage increase – \$19.94 a week before tax. The ANF is seeking eight percent per annum over two and a half years.

A few facts:

- Before ratios about 400 public hospital beds were closed across Victoria on any given day.
- Since ratios were introduced an additional 3300 nurses have returned to the public health system.
- Ratios mandate a safe minimum number of nurses per ward.
- Patient dependency systems that tell management more nurses were needed for the previous shift, or that there weren't enough nurses last week, are useless.
- Ratios ensure there are adequate numbers of nurses on the roster six weeks in advance.
- Ratios help management break its reliance on expensive nursing agencies to fill permanent vacancies rather than unplanned vacancies.
- Victoria has proven that ratios mean safe patient care and the ability to recruit and retain nurses during a global nursing shortage.

If ratios stay:

- ✓ Reasonable workloads
- ✓ High quality care
- ✓ Safe health system
- ✓ Nurses stay
- ✓ Adequate beds
- ✓ Healthy future

If ratios go:

- ✗ Impossible workloads
- ✗ Compromised care
- ✗ Unsafe health system
- ✗ Nurses leave
- ✗ Beds close
- ✗ Back to the bad old days ✪

Theft continues

"First it was our lands that governments stole with no intention of ever returning them, then our cultures and identities – now it's our hard-earned wages", said the Acting ATSIC Chairman Lionel Quartermaine in a statement issued on March 1.

Mr Quartermaine was referring to reports that the governments in Queensland and NSW had had long-standing and detailed knowledge of the wages withheld from Aboriginal workers by welfare bodies for decades.

These are unpaid wages that had been earned, not welfare benefits.

The wages were stolen, not by some individual crook, but by the state itself.

"In Queensland the courts are hearing claims for compensation for wages withheld from 1500 residents of the Wujal and Hope Vale communities. This is in addition to the ongoing dispute with the Beattie Labor Government over wages withheld from communities across the State. Altogether, the government's liability could run to hundreds of million of dollars", said Mr Quartermaine.

"Meanwhile, the NSW Government faces a potentially massive action for compensation for up to 11,500 Indigenous people if it doesn't hand over the wages it allowed state welfare authorities to withhold for over a century."

Prime Minister Howard is no better than the Queensland

Government. Despite all his rhetoric about treating people the same, his actions amount to a total denial of the dispossession and suffering of Indigenous Australians. His is a policy of assimilation, of burying a people and their culture

Since coming to power Howard has consistently failed to show any respect Indigenous peoples. His government's policies have only aggravated the situation. His government would have us believe that too much money is spent on Aboriginal people.

The government spends 25 percent less per capita on Aboriginal health compared to the rest of the population. Trachoma, a disease that has been almost completely wiped out in some third-world countries continues to blind Indigenous people.

All the social indices continue to show the terrible price Indigenous Australians pay for this. There are few countries where life expectancy and health rate lower than amongst Indigenous Australians.

It is not a question of an individual not looking after his or her health – it is a state policy which denies people a right to shelter, health care and education.

Howard shows no shame, not even over the fact that World Vision, an organisation which normally deals with the poorest of the poor in third world countries, has set up a program for Aboriginal people in Western Australia. ✪

Four Blair Athol mineworkers reinstated

On February 27, 2049 days after being unfairly dismissed, mining transnational Rio Tinto was forced to open the gates for the return of some of the victimised Blair Athol coal miners it sacked.

A group of four coal miners who were found to have been among 16 Union members unfairly dismissed by Rio Tinto at its Blair Athol coal mine in Central Queensland on July 21, 1998, on March 1 finally walk back on the job.

Rank and file mineworkers from operations throughout Central Queensland marked their return to work with a Guard of Honour in what their union, the Mining Division of the CFMEU, hopes is a move to finally end Australia's longest running industrial dispute.

The mining union's General President, Tony Maher, welcomed

the return of the four to Blair Athol and the re-employment of two of the other victimised workers at Rio Tinto's neighbouring new Hail Creek coal mine. "Hopefully, this brings us to the final stages of not only ending Australia's longest running industrial dispute but also ending the suffering and hardships the families of these miners have been subjected to for well over five years", said Mr Maher.

On July 25 last year, a full bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission ruled that the 16 coal mineworkers who were unfairly dismissed by Rio Tinto should be given preference of employment by the company.

"While the company is appealing the decision, it has at least complied with the re-employment of six of the original 16 but that still

leaves 10 of the victimised mineworkers out the gate", Tony Maher pointed out.

"Rio Tinto should go the whole hog and get them all back on the job. These men and their families have suffered more than enough. It's time Rio did the right thing and get them all back on the job so their families can finally rebuild their lives and look to the future with the confidence they deserve."

Summary: Blair Athol unfair dismissal cases

21 July 1998 – 16 Blair Athol mineworkers sacked. Union launches unfair dismissal application.

9 April 2001 – Commissioner Hodder rules that the 16 were unfairly dismissed and were the victims of "unfair and unjust treatment" because of their Union membership. The Commission also confirmed the existence of a "secret black list" used to victimise the 16 and ruled that their retrenchments were not merit-based.

It describes management treatment of blacklisted employees as a "blood sport". Commissioner Hodder orders the reinstatement of the 16 with full back pay. Rio Tinto appeals but continues to pay the men while refusing to allow them back to work at Blair Athol.

12 December 2002 – By a majority of 2-1, the full bench of the Commission upholds Commissioner Hodder's finding that the 16 men were unfairly dismissed. In their decision the full bench said: "We find for ourselves that the terminations were harsh, unjust and unreasonable."

However, because the Workplace Relations Act provides for only six months' pay as compensation for unfair dismissals, and the



men had been paid more than this, the full bench declined to order their reinstatement at Blair Athol.

7 February 2003 – Union lodges exceptional matters application under Section 120A of the Workplace Relations Act for an order requiring Rio Tinto to re-employ the 16 unfairly dismissed Blair Athol mineworkers at the company's new neighbouring Hail Creek mine in Central Queensland.

25 July 2003 – Full bench

orders that the 16 unfairly dismissed mineworkers be given preference of employment at Rio Tinto's new Hail Creek coal mine. Rio Tinto announces it will appeal the decision.

1 March 2004 – Four of the 16 victimised miners to return to work at Blair Athol.

8 March 2004 – Two more of the victimised workers to commence employment at the Hail Creek mine. ☼

LABOUR NOTES

The Howard Government's Building Industry Taskforce has been rapped over the knuckles by a NSW District Court Judge after failing with 35 of 36 prosecutions against the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). The judge found there had been an "element of provocation" by the Taskforce in events surrounding an inspection at Sutherland Hospital in October 2002 when workers walked off the job because the water had been cut off to the site. The judge was also highly critical of Taskforce inspector Greg Alfred, who gave sworn evidence and then changed his testimony after being contradicted by a company witness. The judge said he hadn't seen anything like Alfred's performance in his six years on the bench.

A 19-year-old Sydney woman who suffered a serious fall at work was forced to sign a disclaimer before her employer would offer first aid. The incident happened at the Sydney University Village Cafeteria. "I slipped over because the floor wasn't matted properly." "I was lying crying on my back. The first thing the owner said was 'it's all your fault'. Then the manager said 'I'll get you something' and returned with a disclaimer form." Workers at the Cafeteria were underpaid for "almost the whole time" they were employed last year said the injured woman.

Members of the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU) covering childcare launched their national childcare rights campaign on International Women's Day (March 8). The campaign is asking all Federal and State politicians to sign up to the Childcare Workers' Charter of Rights for Quality Childcare leading into the Federal Election later this year. Federal politicians were greeted with signs saying "Running for election this year? Childcare better be your priority" as they made their way to Federal Parliament House.

"Too many people suffer both physical and mental strain at work because many don't report this strain and pain – for fear of reprisal or even loss of their jobs – the extent of the problem is hidden", Unions Tasmania Secretary Lynne Fitzgerald said at the Tasmanian launch of the ACTU's Health and Safety Campaign. The Tasmanian union movement is calling on the State Government to acknowledge that workplace factors such as long working hours, job insecurity, work loads and heavy lifting and carrying are key contributing factors in work strain. Occupational Physician, Dr Peter Sharman called for improvements in the workers' compensation system to better educate employers and insurers about the negative effects of work-related injury and illness in Tasmania.

Organisers of this year's Sydney May Day Celebrations have called for the day to be made a national public holiday. Sydney May Day Committee Secretary Warren Smith said the day should commemorate the great contribution that Australian working people have made to the advancement of Australian society and has called upon the whole trade union movement to actively participate in this year's march on May 1. "As this is an election year the committee sees this year's May Day march as an opportunity to make a strong stand in opposition to the Howard Government's attacks upon health, education and workers' rights", said Sydney May Day Committee President George Gotsis.

Mass action by Vic teachers

Last week more than 15,000 striking teachers from Victoria's public and Catholic schools marched on State Parliament in Victoria's biggest ever joint education strike that involved more than 30,000 teachers statewide. At stop work meetings on March 3, members of the Australian Education Union (AEU) Victorian Branch unanimously endorsed a range of actions.

The meeting expressed its "anger and dismay at the Bracks Government's negotiating position over a new certified agreement for schools". It called on Education Minister Lynne Kosky to personally intervene in the negotiations "to ensure they are consistent with the Government's claim that education is a number one priority".

The Government was put on notice that if an agreement were not reached by the end of the first school term the AEU would embark on a series of half day regional rolling stoppages that target Labor MP offices, commencing in the second week of term two.

Adding fuel to the dispute, teachers were incensed when it was

revealed last week that the Bracks Government has an operating surplus of \$1.8 billion.

The surplus confirms that the Government's failure to make a serious commitment to public education is not based on financial grounds. It is part of an ongoing process taking place in all states and federally whereby funding for public education is being wound back, and parents are increasingly expected to make up the shortfall. Parents are also being encouraged to shop around, and consider private schools, as overstretched state schools are unable to meet needs of all students.

Taken in the context of attempts by the AEU for the past 14 months to get the Government to the negotiating table, and the fact that the Government wants teachers to trade away their working conditions for a miserly 2.25 percent pay increase (an extra 91 cents a day), it was not surprising they were furious.

"We have heard the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister all explain that any pay increase to teachers was unsustainable", said

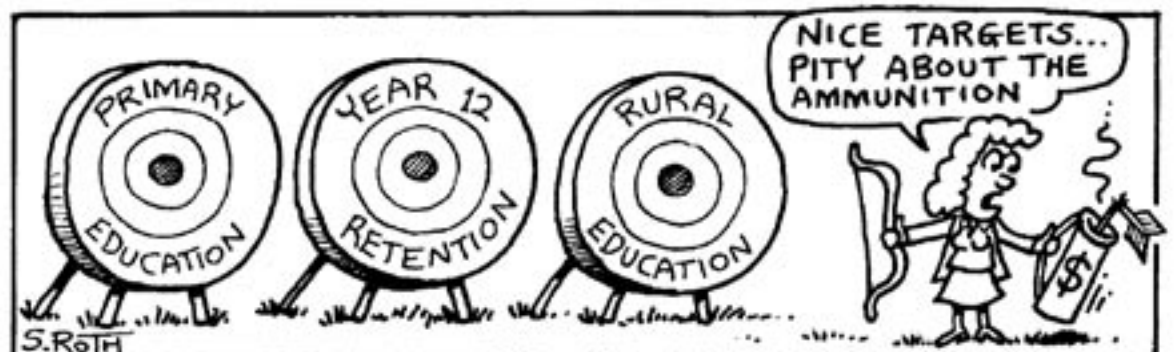
AEU State President, Mary Bluett, "that the State could not afford to match the pay outcomes of NSW, WA and the ACT."

"Today's announcement of an operating surplus of \$1.8 billion does not only contradict the Government's position, but shows that they are not prepared to continue to invest in education at this vital time."

Ms Bluett said now that the Government's argument has collapsed it should sit down and negotiate outcomes to reduce class sizes, address the teachers' pay claim of 10 percent per year for three years, and the use of contract teachers.

Tony Keenan, the General Secretary of the state's Independent Education Union branch, which represents Catholic school teachers, also rang out a warning to the Government during the joint action.

"This is unprecedented and the Bracks Government should recognise the strength of teacher determination on this issue in both sectors." ☼



Labor's Sydney Council power-grab backfires

Andrew Jackson

While sackings, boundary changes and forced amalgamations of local councils have been standard political fare for years, NSW Labor's desperate attempt to grab control of a new Super-Sydney Council has been among the most outrageous. However, just four weeks out from an apparent victory Labor's plan appears to have backfired badly – Clover Moore, a progressive independent and Labor's inner-city arch-nemesis has announced she is running for Mayor.

Local Councils have long been used by the major parties as breeding grounds for future state and federal candidates and often become bases for factional warfare and branch-stacking.

In more recent years the real attraction in controlling local councils is the power to control development and the lucrative political donations flowing from developers.

In NSW alone over the last five years developers have donated a massive \$7.6 million to the state Labor and Liberal Parties, with the bulk of donations going Labor's way by 4:3.

The Carr Government in particular has been especially bold in bull-dozing local councils on development.

Staunchly anti-development councils have been sacked or planning controls removed from councils and given to state-controlled bodies such as the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA).

Using the Foreshore Authority legislation the Carr Labor Government grabbed development control of huge sections of Leichhardt Council – in Balmain, Rozelle, and Glebe – to override what the Government considered “developer-unfriendly” planning decisions. It also grabbed control of

the contentious Luna Park site from a hostile North Sydney Council.

In mid-western Sydney the Labor-Liberal-controlled Auburn Council ignored strong community opposition and gave approval for Collex Pty Ltd to build a major garbage processing plant in the suburb of Clyde. (See article page 2)

Two community members contested the decision in the Land and Environment Court and had the Council approval overturned. Always looking out for its mates, the Carr Government jumped in and passed special legislation to overrule the court, and gave Collex the go ahead.

At the time *The Sydney Morning Herald* revealed that Collex “has paid at least two prominent Labor Party figures for consulting work [and] has donated close to \$89,000 to the NSW Labor Party”.

With Sydney enjoying booming tourist numbers, rampant construction and skyrocketing real estate prices over the last 20 years the Sydney City Council is surely the jewel in the crown of Australian local government.

To seize this jewel the Carr Government forced the amalgamation of the Sydney and South Sydney Council once again in the face of strong community opposition. The Government hoped that the amalgamation would bring with it a rich pool of Labor voters from South Sydney.

Clover crashes the party

That was the plan. Clover Moore saw red.

“Sussex Street wants a tame council because they see it as a cash cow and they are prepared to go to great lengths to get it”, she stated.

Ms Moore's progressive and community-minded policies are legendary. She held the balance of power along with two other

independent during the first Carr Government, and used the position to force a number of progressive Bills through Parliament.

Her State Member's office is famed for its assistance to constituents at all three levels of government – assisting residents to prepare submissions for local council development proposals, state environmental impact statements, and the complex federal documentation to make claims on the Sydney airport flight paths compensation scheme.

In her tilt for Mayor Ms Moore has promised a council “by and for the people”.

“Developers who are prepared to conform with council planning and guidelines have nothing to fear. But those who want to come with ambit claims and do deals behind closed doors have everything to fear.”

Antony Green, election analyst for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and ABC TV, has extrapolated the votes from previous state, federal and local election and predicts Clover Moore will win a comfortable 38 percent of primary votes to Labor's 27.

Preferences

Ms Moore has secured a preference deal with the Greens, and when sacked Mayor Lucy Turnbull realised she had no hope of winning under the new boundaries she threw her public and financial weight behind her as well.

With the “enemy of my enemy is my friend” maxim in full play Ms Moore can expect to pick up a swathe of Liberal preferences also.

This year's council election elicits a strong sense of déjà vu.

Ms Moore's political career began in 1980 as a local councillor – a position that was terminated when, surprise, surprise, a State Labor Government sacked the Sydney City Council. ☘



Developers beware - Clover Moore (centre) with other candidates



State of crisis #1: The Job Network is spiralling down into chaos as the private agencies contracted by the Government to operate the system demand more federal funding in order to turn a profit and stay afloat. At the same time the privatisation of social security has opened the way for some body hire companies to make a killing. Job Access is an example. Contracted to the Job Network, the owner of Job Access, Sarina Russo, has become a millionaire, with 30 offices and 38,000 “clients”. Such is the entrepreneurial nature of the system, while other agencies are facing bankruptcy Russo has been busy writing her autobiography, *Meet me at the Top*.

State of crisis #2: The far western NSW town of Broken Hill is taking a class action against the State Government for neglecting its citizens. The townspeople can't drink the local water because of high levels of salinity. So, for more than 12 months the people have been forced to buy bottled water. Their TAFE college has suffered severe cutbacks, effecting access to employment in a town with a high level of jobless, and there is no dental service. Now, the Broken Hill Council intends to sue the Carr Government and is demanding that the Federal Government step into the breach and provide funding to overcome the crisis. “The electors of Broken Hill have endured many hardships over the last 120 years and we are a resilient people”, said Mayor Ron Page. “But enough is enough and we have to resort to legal action to get some help.”

State of crisis #3: The Howard Government last year attacked non-government organisations, accusing them of political lobbying i.e. criticising government policies. The Government hit some of them by taking away their tax-deductibility status and is now threatening more with the same. Since its election in 1996, it has also cut direct funding to many not-for-profit NGOs which have been providing basic and crucial services, such as women's refuges and rape crisis centres. Such services form the backbone of the deregulated, free market set up imposed by the Government. As it has cut funding to all services across the board, NGOs have had to take on an enormous and unmanageable workload. There are 700,000 non-profit organisations in Australia, 35,000 of which employ 600,000 staff, about six percent of the workforce. These contribute three percent of gross domestic product – more than the communications industry and equivalent to agriculture.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is the Reserve Bank, which has the brief of fiddling with the economic crisis, an exercise not unlike switching deckchairs on the *Titanic*. Here is a sample of its board members: Jillian Broadbent, formerly Bankers' Trust, now director Coca-Cola Amatil; Robert Gerard, industrialist; Frank Lowy, head of Westfield; Donald McGauchie, board member Telstra, National Foods, Rural Finance Corporation of Victoria, Ridley Corporation; Hugh Morgan, former head of Western Mining Corp and Alcoa.

Whitewashing the lies

Bob Briton

Last week John Howard announced that former chief of the Office of National Assessments, Philip Flood, would conduct an inquiry into the alleged failings of Australia's intelligence agencies.

The Government had previously rejected the idea of a further investigation into its spy organisations but quickly agreed to it when the report from Federal Parliament's Joint Committee inquiry into pre-war intelligence found that the Government had indeed exaggerated (“sexed-up”) the case for war on Iraq and that “covert” pressures exist for spy agencies to give the Government the intelligence it wants.

The new inquiry will NOT examine the “spin” that the government put on the intelligence supplied. Clearly, its objective is to let Howard, Downer and others off the hook and to heap the blame for the scandal surrounding the lies used to justify the war on Iraq onto the intelligence agencies.

Philip Flood – also a former head of the Department of Foreign Affairs and ambassador to Indonesia – will have full access to intelligence material which was denied to

the Parliamentary Committee. His report will be secret. The public will have to be satisfied with a “declassified” version.

From Howard's point of view and that of the Coalition, the former spy chief is “eminently qualified” to do the job set for him. Few others would agree. Labor Senator Robert Ray – former Defence Minister and member of the committee that produced the Parliamentary report – dropped some of the Labor Party's “bi-partisan” understanding shown for the Government's problems – and criticised Howard's choice. “...Philip [Flood] would have been at the bottom of the list” had the Opposition been consulted about the appointment, Ray told the media.

Terms of reference

The Greens and the Democrats, focused on the narrow terms of reference and the obvious attempt to bury the startling revelations revealed by the Parliamentary Joint Committee's inquiry.

The Australian people can expect nothing but whitewash from the new inquiry in just the same way as the Hutton inquiry in Britain covered-up for Tony Blair.

Slowly but surely Bush, Blair and Howard are being strangled by

the web of deceit they spun to justify their illegal war, invasion and occupation of Iraq.

The rock of truth is that Iraq did not and had not possessed any weapons of mass destruction for a number of years and was not in the process of preparing to manufacture them despite the existence of “plans”.

It passes belief that the intelligence agencies of the US and Britain did not know this given their highly sophisticated intelligence organisations, their possession of “spies in the skies” and the ability to scoop up every phone conversation, fax or email message in any part of the world.

Another truth is that the invasion of Iraq had been planned a number of years ago and its objective had nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction but the seizure of Iraq's resources, particularly oil, and the opportunity to establish military bases on Iraq territory.

Even as the Iraqis are slowly moving towards a democratic and sovereign government, the US is building military bases which are intended to stay long into the future.

These are the real objectives: the rest is “spin” and lies. ☘

US-Latin Accord on GM crops a timely warning for Australia

Scientists in the US are suggesting that it may soon be impossible for the US to guarantee that any portion of its food supply is free of genetically modified organisms. The following article by the ETC Group* serves as a timely warning as the Australian Government pushes ahead with its plans for a Free Trade Agreement with the USA, under which Australia may well have signed away its right to control the entry of US food products.

In January 2004 Monsanto announced that it would abandon genetically modified (GM) seed sales in Argentina because farmers were illegally saving patented seed, making it difficult for the company to collect royalties on proprietary seed.

Over the past decade, Argentina has been presented as the biotech industry's shining success story in the global South because Argentine farmers were early adopters of Monsanto's Roundup Ready soybeans. Today, Argentina devotes more area to GM crops than any other country except the United States.

Argentina is the world's third largest producer of soybeans, and Monsanto's GM seed technology accounted for an estimated 96 percent of the total soybean area planted in Argentina last year. But now Monsanto complains that widespread "seed piracy" (seed saving) has pilfered the company's profits and soured the Argentine success story.

One seed industry executive in Argentina warned that Monsanto's action was an important message for the entire seed sector: "This is the first warning sign that all new technologies will abandon us if intellectual property rights are not respected."

It may soon be impossible for the US to guarantee that any portion of its food supply is free of genetically modified organisms, a situation that could seriously disrupt the export of US foods, seeds and oils (and sound the death knell for organic farmers).

Govt offers handouts to Gene Giants

Argentina's government is offering to ease Monsanto's pain by creating a "royalties fund" to help Monsanto and other companies recoup investments in biotech crops that are threatened by "black market" sales.

The Argentine Government proposes to create a "global royalties" fund by levying a tax on soybean and wheat sales that will generate an estimated US\$34 million annually.

The proposal must first be approved by the Argentine Congress. "It's a dream come true for Monsanto because the government of Argentina is enforcing monopoly patents by taxing seed sales, shifting all of the burden and expense to farmers and the public", said Silvia Ribeiro of ETC Group.

In Kuala Lumpur, Adolfo Boy de Grupo de Reflexión Rural, who

has been monitoring the impacts of Monsanto's GM soybeans asks, "Why should public resources be used to protect the patents of transnational seed companies like Monsanto? Governments should protect farmers, not penalize them!"

In North America, Monsanto is vigorously prosecuting seed-saving farmers, but that approach is costly and the company is widely perceived as a corporate bully for suing its customers. To avoid messy lawsuits, high-priced lawyers and bad publicity, Monsanto and other Gene Giants hope to see the Argentine model adopted everywhere they do business.

This is a prime example of New Enclosures", explains Hope Shand of ETC Group. "Patent monopolies are unnecessary if the State is willing to act as the gene police and collect royalties from farmers.

"The Argentine proposal is a dangerous precedent because the Gene Giants are pushing hard to open new markets – especially in the developing world. The Argentine model means that Monsanto could even sell GM seeds in countries that don't recognize patents or don't enforce them – as long as the government can be convinced to collect fees for Monsanto."

Paying the high price of Monoculture

There are many unanswered questions. Why is the cash-strapped Argentine Government willing to go to the mat for Monsanto? Is dependency on GM soya so overwhelming that the Argentine Government is bending to biotech blackmail?

In January Brazil announced that it would also bow to biotech industry pressure. In 2003 the Brazilian Government over-ruled popular opposition and legalised

the planting of GM soybeans for the 2003-04 season. Following the announcement, Monsanto threatened to sue Brazilian farmers who were planting black market GM soybean seed.

Under an agreement negotiated in January 2004 between farmers in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul and Monsanto, royalties will be charged by the purchasers of harvested GM soybeans, both exporters and crushers.

As if to lessen the blow to Farmers' Rights, Monsanto has pledged to donate one percent of the seed royalties it collects to crop research in Rio Grande do Sul – a cheap way for Monsanto to further

"Why should public resources be used to protect the patents of transnational seed companies like Monsanto? Governments should protect farmers, not penalize them!"



GM crops sound the death knell for organic farmers

influence agricultural research in Brazil.

Biosafety Protocol threatened

The issue of State-subsidised GM monopolies set off alarm bells for governments meeting in Kuala Lumpur at the end of last month for the first-ever meeting of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety – the UN agreement governing cross-border trade in genetically modified organisms. The Protocol has been ratified by 86 countries and the European Union (notably, the US Government has not joined).

Not surprisingly, the US and other exporters of GM seeds were lobbying vigorously in Kuala Lumpur to eliminate any references to the social and economic impacts of GM seeds, or liability for damages caused by GM contamination.

But despite their best efforts, the Gene Giants and pro-biotech governments have been unable to avoid bad news about GM contamination.

Last month in Kuala Lumpur, civil society activists and farmers' organisations reminded governments that it is over two years since traces of DNA from GM maize seeds (illegal to plant in Mexico) contaminated traditional maize varieties grown by Mexican farmers.

The genetic pollution caused by GM maize in Mexico is especially alarming because Mesoamerica is a major centre of genetic diversity for maize. Rather than stop contamination and demand accountability from the Gene Giants, the Mexican Government recently entered into an agreement with the US and Canada that condones high levels of GM contamination in food and grain shipments.

A Trilateral Agreement between the US, Mexico and Canada allows shipments to contain up to five percent of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) before they are

considered transgenic and subject to regulations being developed under the Cartagena Protocol.

"The US-inspired Trilateral Accord makes a mockery of the Cartagena Protocol", warned Silvia Ribeiro of ETC Group. "To accept levels of contamination up to 5%, in

DNA from genetically engineered crop varieties.

Although levels of contamination were not high, the findings suggest federal regulations are not working and that it may soon be impossible for the US to guarantee that any portion of its food supply

A Trilateral Agreement between the US, Mexico and Canada allows shipments to contain up to five percent of genetically modified organisms before they are considered transgenic and subject to regulations being developed under the Cartagena Protocol.

effect, allows imports of transgenic products without any evaluation of risk. This type of Accord, which is now being promoted as a model for the entire Western Hemisphere, is designed to benefit the Gene Giants and accelerate GM contamination worldwide."

Mexico announced in Kuala Lumpur the ban of releases into the environment of maize manipulated for non-food uses (such as pharmaceutical or industrial). "But this is meaningless if Mexico allows five percent GM presence in the imports, which are the main source of contamination", Ribeiro added.

Seed contamination raises new patent issues

A new report released this week by the US-based Union of Concerned Scientists, suggests why the US Government is so anxious to relax standards for shipments of GM products and thwart trans-boundary regulations for GMOs. The new study, *Gone to Seed*, reveals that non-GM seeds in the United States have become widely contaminated with engineered DNA. (The study is available on the Internet: www.ucusa.org)

Laboratory tests revealed that more than two-thirds of 36 conventional (non GM) maize, soy and canola seeds contained traces of

is free of genetically modified organisms, a situation that could seriously disrupt the export of US foods, seeds and oils (and sound the death knell for organic farmers).

If governments agree to accept high levels of GM contamination in world trade, then the Gene Giants are given free licence to contaminate farmers' fields with foreign DNA protected by proprietary patents. The Gene Giants are then positioned to demand that governments collect taxes from farmers who are illegally using black market seeds – or permit introduction of the controversial Terminator technology – genetic seed sterilisation.

This is biotech's triple whammy: 1) high contamination tolerance; 2) government's tax farmers to generate patent royalties; and 3) governments are forced to accept Terminator to avoid patent policing.

The triple whammy scenario underscores the need for governments to firmly reject the Trilateral Accord and press for a ban on Terminator technology.

* ETC, the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration – formerly RAFI – is an international civil society organisation headquartered in Canada. The ETC group is dedicated to the advancement of cultural and ecological diversity and human rights. www.etcgroup.org ☘

Successful Bicentenary of Battle of Vinegar Hill

Tom O'Gliasain

On Sunday February 29 the Friends of Vinegar Hill held a ceremony to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Castle Hill Rebellion in NSW and the subsequent Battle of Vinegar Hill.

On Sunday night, March 4, 1804, the convicts at Castle Hill Government Farm rose in rebellion. Predominantly, though not exclusively Irish, many of them were victims of the ruthless suppression of the 1798 rebellion in Ireland. A state of Martial Law was declared and troops of the New South Wales Corps were dispatched to suppress the uprising.

The rebels' aim was to join with other convicts along the Hawkesbury (River), advance to Sydney via Parramatta and commandeer ships to return to Ireland. The troops confronted the rebels at what later became known as Vinegar Hill, from the site of the 1798 battle in Ireland.

Since 1996 the Friends of Vinegar Hill have held a ceremony at the battle's site in Castlebrook Lawn Cemetery to honour the men who fell and were executed; to emphasise Australia's origin as a penal colony which became a nation, initially by the work of convicts, Irish, British and Native Australian; and to celebrate the links in kinship and culture between Australia and Ireland.

The commemoration, opened by Mike Bailey, began with a Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country by Aboriginal Elders, Uncle Wes Marne and Auntie Edna Watson with grand-daughters Krystal and Alyce Mervyn who spoke in the Dharruk language and English.

This was followed by an address by Aboriginal MLA, Linda Burney, who compared the similarity of the fates of the Irish and Indigenous peoples and stressed the Irish ancestry of many Aboriginals, especially well-known leaders in the Indigenous community.

The Mayor of Blacktown, Alan Pendleton, spoke of the spirit of these Irish rebels and their influence in moulding the Australian characteristics of mateship and love of justice and liberty, before presenting the Australian Flag. This was followed by a speech and presentation of the Irish Flag by the Wexford County Chairman, Lorcan Allen.

A children's choir sang the Australian National Anthem and the Irish National Anthem in Irish as the two flags were raised. This was followed by the song, "Oro se do bheatha bhaile", which dealt with the Irish struggle.

After a brief speech by author Thomas Keneally in which he stressed the Irish commitment to the struggle for liberty in Australia which continues to this day, John Dengate sang the old convict song "Moreton Bay" and the Voices of Vinegar Hill Choir sang "BooLavogue", the song of the 1798 rebellion.

The main speaker, Al Grasby, spoke of the multicultural nature of Australia and the great part played by the Irish in it. He contrasted the position of democracy and the Aboriginal people today with their position in 1804. Many present realised that these struggles are still going on.

Mr Denis O'Flynn, President of the Irish National Association, made a presentation to Tomas and Christine O'Gliasain (aka Gleeson) for their work in organising the Commemoration over each of the last eight years. Their persistence, he said, has culminated in this occasion and the story of Vinegar Hill and its meaning being told across the wider community.

On the monument to Vinegar Hill, an Aboriginal and an Irish-Australian child then unveiled a plaque bearing the names of the men who were executed as leaders of the uprising. As they draped and moved off with the 1798 flag (also presented by Wexford County) they symbolized both the past and the future.

Bishop David Cremin then spoke about the role of Father Dixon and how the Catholic Mass was banned for 15 years as both it and the Irish language were seen as sinister means of plotting against the British rule in the colony.

Anne Webster, Irish Consul-General, after laying a wreath on the memorial, told of how she was born and brought up under the shade of the Irish Vinegar Hill, in the town of Enniscorthy. She paid tribute to the Friends of Vinegar Hill and recounted how when she arrived and began sifting through the correspondence the first letter she found was from Tom O'Gliasain and the Friends of Vinegar Hill.

The function closed with the singing of "Set Us Free", which was written and composed by Paul Jarman for the occasion.

Among the crowd of over a thousand were some 90 visitors from County Wexford – and one from Newfoundland! They found the ceremony very emotional.

The ceremony was part of a 10-day program from February 29, culminating in a re-enactment of the Battle at Rouse Hill Regional Park on March 7 which considerable support from Blacktown and four other city councils and many other government and non-government organisations and individuals. ☘



Ireland's Consul General Anne Webster with Tomás O'Gliasain of the Friends of Vinegar Hill group



Original battle in Ireland – 1798



Australian battle – 1804



Guard of honour at commemoration carrying the flags of all 32 counties of Ireland

BooLavogue

*At BooLavogue as the sun was setting
O'er the bright May meadows of Shelmaliar
A rebel hand set the heather blazing
And brought the neighbours from far and near.
Then Father Murphy from old Kilcormack
Spurred up the rocks with a warning cry
"Arm, arm", he cried, "for I've come to lead you
For Ireland's freedom we'll fight or die".*

*He led us on 'gainst the coming soldiers
The cowardly yeoman we put to flight
'Twas at the Harrow the boys of Wexford
Showed Bookies' regiment how men could fight
Look out for hirelings, King George of England,
Search every kingdom that breathes a slave
For Father Murphy from the County Wexford
Sweeps o'er the land like a mighty wave.*

*At Vinegar Hill o'er the pleasant Slaney
Our heroes vainly stood back to back
And the yoes of Tullow took Father Murphy
And burned his body upon the rack.
God grant you glory, brave Father Murphy,
And open heaven to all your men;
For the cause that called you may call tomorrow
In another fight for the green again.*

*For the cause that called you may call tomorrow
In another fight for the green again.*

Written by P J McCall
Adapted by Pat Clancy, Tom Clancy,
Liam Clancy and Tommy Makem

Message from Lorcan Allan MCC Wexford County Council

I am pleased as Chairman of Wexford County Council to lead a delegation from County Wexford and further afield to participate in the Friends of Vinegar Hill Commemoration Service.

Sunday, 21st June, 1998 marked the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Vinegar Hill in Enniscorthy.

Ten thousand men, women and children, mostly from County Wexford had gathered on Vinegar Hill under a committee of rebel leaders. This now became the focal point for the insurgents and the opposing English Army comprising 20,000 regular troops, yeoman cavalry and considerable heavy artillery under the command of five Generals. The insurgents were poorly armed, mostly with pikes and muskets and very little ammunition.

Having fought against the onslaught for four to five hours, the rebels were forced to retreat having suffered severe losses. Although the leaders of the rebellion managed to escape and continue fighting battles for months to come, the decisive battle had been fought and lost at Vinegar Hill.

It is fitting that we now also commemorate Vinegar Hill with you at the memorial in Castlebrook Cemetery. We congratulate you on your efforts and thank you for having us here.

Argentina

Kirchner defies IMF, World Bank

Bob Briton

Heartrending news continues to pour out of Argentina. A recent television program in the country showed once-unimaginable scenes of children scavenging through rubbish for food and interviews with a group of women, all over 50 years old, who have resorted to prostitution in order to survive. Employers are exploiting the country's grim circumstances to extend the working day and impose "flexible" working conditions. Nowadays 58 per cent of Argentina's population lives below the poverty line with 30 per cent living in what is described as absolute poverty.

Elsewhere, people have undertaken remarkable self-help projects. They have set up popular assemblies and alternative currencies. They have seized and run abandoned factories and established all sorts of self-help institutions in order to survive.

Something else quite remarkable has happened. President

Nestor Kirchner, the left-Peronist former Governor of Patagonia, has emerged as a leader of a stiff resistance against the demands of the G7 group of wealthy countries, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. He is also sticking to his guns in maintaining good relations with Cuba and, with others, delaying the conclusion of a Free Trade Area of the Americas by insisting on better terms from the US.

Little was expected from the new President after his election in May last year. He emerged at the end of a chaotic period during which Argentina had three Presidents in a week. The collapse of the economy and the powerlessness of governments in the face of the crisis caused widespread apathy. Kirchner was elected in a second round after receiving only 16 per cent of the ballots of the registered voters in the election's first round.

Since then, he has achieved an approval rating of 85 per cent in opinion polls while 63 per cent



Predictably, international capital has struck back. Foreign investment in Argentina has slumped. However, rather than slamming into reverse, the Argentinean economy grew for the first time in five years last year – by a healthy seven percent.

Venezuela

US funds assault on Chavez Government

Bob Briton

Last week saw an upsurge in political violence on the streets of the Venezuelan capital of Caracas as opponents of leftist President Hugo Chavez gave vent to their frustration. Since his election in 1998, Chavez has survived a short-lived coup in April 2002, many violent protests and four national strikes led by the pro-business National Union of Workers (UNT). There was a management lockout of the national oil industry last December aimed at choking off funds to the popular government.

All of these highly disruptive efforts failed and it appears that the latest attempt – a petition for a referendum to recall the President – will also fall over. The petition was organised at the prompting of the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the US-based Carter Center in May last year and has been directed by the so-called Democratic Coordination (DC). This organisation is made up of representatives of mostly right-wing organisations but includes some ultra-left grouplets opposed to the Chavez Government.

During one of his weekly radio and television broadcasts in February, President Chavez revealed some home truths about the organisations behind the current attempt at a constitutional coup.

Documents obtained by the US Venezuela Solidarity Committee under Freedom of Information show that, since the failed takeover in 2002, US government sources have ploughed considerable funds into the opposition in Venezuela. [These can be seen at www.venezuelafoia.info]

One document shows that US\$1 million was paid by the State Department and the National Endowment for Democracy to opposition groups immediately after the April 2002 coup. Another shows an amount of US\$53,000 paid to an organisation called Sumate to carry out "electoral education" in Venezuela between September 2003 and September 2004. Sumate was behind a similar recall petition in February last year in which the majority of the signatures were shown to have been gathered fraudulently.

A long list of recipients of US largesse is displayed on the solidarity group's web site. The role of the US embassy in Caracas in destabilising the Chavez Government is also there for all to see.

The Bolivarian revolution underway in Venezuela clearly is not in US corporate interests. The programs that have given housing, food and clean water to millions of citizens have few fans in the Bush Administration. They do not like the new constitution endorsed by over 70 per cent of voters that outlaws the sale of social services and the national oil industry. Neither do they like the tightening of controls over foreign currency, which have slowed the flight of capital from the country.

At the Special Summit of the Americas held in Monterey, Mexico in January, US President George W Bush called on the heads of state gathered there to ban "corrupt" governments that have maintained relations with Cuba and that have slowed down the US push for a Free Trade Area of the Americas. Representatives understood the slur and thinly veiled

support his government's uncompromising stance on foreign debt. Argentina was saddled with a US\$140 billion debt after a decade of privatisation and deregulation during the presidency of Carlos Menem in the 1990s. Over 300 utilities and government services were privatised in those years.

President Kirchner has angered debtors in Europe, Japan and the US by refusing to budge from his plan to repay only 25 cents in the

dollar to purchasers of bonds with a total value of US\$88 billion. Kirchner responded to a public chastisement from Bush during a visit to Washington last year, saying that the arrangement is better than investors in Enron could expect. He is further threatening to default on US\$30 billion-worth of loans from the IMF and other multilateral institutions.

Kirchner has also upset the architects of globalisation by refusing to allow French and Spanish-owned electricity generators Edesur and Edenor to increase their charges to consumers by up 37 per cent. In fact, his Government is threatening to fine the suppliers for the massive blackouts that struck Buenos Aires recently. He has accused the companies of failing to reinvest in the infrastructure that failed during the summer rains. The government has a similar conflict with Aguas, the French owners of the water and sewerage utility.

Predictably, international capital has struck back. Foreign investment in Argentina has slumped. However, rather than slamming into reverse, the Argentinean economy grew for the first time in five years last year – by a healthy seven percent.

Official unemployment has shrunk from 24 percent to 16 percent.

The government has set up funds for loans to prevent the repossession of homes and small businesses. The economy has been stimulated by road and railway rebuilding investment. Scholarships totalling US\$1 million are available to students undertaking research on how to rebuild Argentina's economy.

A welfare payment worth US\$50 per month has been made available to the head of struggling households. However, the future direction of the government has been thrown into doubt by a recent decision concerning this payment. On the eve of a trip to by Economics Minister Roberto Lavagna to Washington to renegotiate the release of a loan worth US\$8 billion from the IMF, the Argentinean Government withdrew the benefit from about 250,000 families by changing the eligibility criteria.

The support that Kirchner currently enjoys could quickly evaporate if he is seen to concede too much to the IMF and fails to carry on with further progressive change to the economy. ☛

Russians test new weapons

The Russian armed forces have conducted military exercises which, according to Russian First Deputy Chief of Staff Yury Baluyevsky, "are aimed at training in new usages of strategic arms, and troops incorporated in strategic nuclear and conventional forces".

Among the new weapons tested during these war games was a hypersonic space vehicle that could lead to weapons capable of penetrating missile defences.

Yury Baluyevsky said the vehicle was capable of moving at more than five times the speed of sound and could manoeuvre in orbit.

"The flying vehicle changed both altitude and direction of its flight", Baluyevsky said at a news conference. "During the experiment ... we have proven that it's possible to develop weapons that would make any missile defence useless."

Mr Baluyevsky refused to comment on what kind of engine the vehicle had, how long its flight lasted, how it manoeuvred and what combat load it might carry in the future. ☛

Russian President Putin had claimed a day earlier that Russia could build unrivalled new strategic weapons.

Russia's announcement comes after the US withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 to develop a missile shield.

President Putin wants to rejuvenate Russia's military power and re-establish Russia as a world power.

Russia-USA relations deteriorated markedly after the US attack on Iraq last year. Continuing NATO expansion will see US troops presently stationed in Europe move eastward to Bulgaria and Romania.

Several Central Asian countries, former Soviet republics, are negotiating a long-term stationing of US troops on their territory and the situation in the Caucasus continues to be volatile.

In short, Russia perceives itself to be under threat and the latest war games are aimed at demonstrating that it can protect itself and inflict damage if needs be. ☛

It's George W who's destroying families

Jessica Marshall & Sam Webb

President Bush has announced his plan to save us all from the new evil of the world: same-sex couples seeking the right to get married. Apparently, a proposed amendment to the federal constitution limiting marriage to heterosexuals will protect us all.

Protect us from what, exactly? Until now we haven't heard one concrete example of how the institution of heterosexual marriage and the integrity of our society are threatened when two people of the same sex marry and build a family together based in love, mutual respect, and a lifetime commitment to one another.

The argument that rupturing traditional concepts of marriage would somehow destroy American society is not true now and it wasn't true in past decades when state laws and cultural norms forbade inter-racial and inter-religious couples from marrying.

The truth is, when we hear Bush talking about the "sanctity" of traditional marriage what he really is talking about is sending women back to the home and returning same-sex couples to the shadows of our society.

Bush claims that non-traditional family structures, including single-parent households, are the root of all societal problems and thus somehow less honourable. Tell that to the millions of single parents in this country who are struggling to provide stability and love for their families.

If Bush is really concerned about the stability of family life, we would be better served if he restored welfare rights and funding for day care and other social services that have been slashed through his eco-

nomie policies including drastic tax giveaways for the rich. Perhaps he might do something to restore the three million jobs that have disappeared on his watch.

The truth is that our nation is facing many urgent problems, yet they have absolutely nothing to do with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered people demanding the right to marry. Since the '80s and '90s, pro-corporate policies of successive administrations have thrust millions of American families into poverty and economic desperation. Is that not more devastating to the stability and health of the American family?

The timing of Bush's announcement about pushing through a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage is not coincidental. This is nothing more than a mean-spirited, calculated attempt to break up the growing anti-Bush sentiment heading into the coming elections.

Not since it was written into the original Constitution that African Americans were to be counted as three-fifths of a human being has language been added to abridge the rights of an entire group of people.

In fact, people have fought and died to extend our constitutional rights and expand human freedom. If Bush really wants to defend the morality and stability of our families, why isn't he proposing an amendment that would guarantee education, health care and a job to every person living in the United States? Instead he has begun a campaign to demonise same-sex couples whose only demand is to be treated equally under the law.

According to Bush, a tiny number of "activist" judges are somehow using their powers to change the entire face of American society. He didn't oppose certain

"activist" judges who changed the outcome of the 2000 elections. In fact, Bush has worked during the last three years to appoint activist judges who would take away rights won after decades of struggle, including women's reproductive rights, affirmative action and the rights of workers to organise.

We applaud those "activist" judges who have opened the doors for thousands of same-sex couples in recent weeks to file for marriage licenses in the face of local and state laws that would prohibit them from doing so.

We applaud those couples, who take inspiration from the heroic demonstrations of young people in the South in the 1950s and '60s against Jim Crow segregation laws.

President Bush ended his speech last week with these words: "Let us match strong convictions with kindness and good will and decency". What hypocrisy, when his actions create an environment that makes anti-gay violence and hatred acceptable.

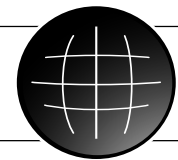
Bush's opposition to legislation that would classify violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people as hate crimes shows his disregard of even the most fundamental rights of people to live free of discrimination and violence regardless of their sexual orientation.

The truth is that this is not just about whether or not same-sex couples are afforded the same rights as heterosexual couples to marry. This is about guaranteeing the right of all of our people to dignity, respect and equality under the law, and protection of what is enshrined in our nation's Constitution – the guarantee of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

People's Weekly World ✪



Love and respect – Kelli Carpenter and Rosie O'Donnell were married in San Francisco



Global briefs

POLAND: Poland's Prime Minister Leszek Miller will be stepping down as the head of the country's governing Democratic Left Alliance. Support for Mr Miller's party has slumped as the government pushes ahead with unpopular spending cuts in preparation for joining the European Union in May.

AFGHANISTAN: A top US defence official played down hundreds of desertions from the Afghan national army, predicting that the force would exceed 10,000 troops by the year's end. Visiting Pentagon budget chief Dov Zakheim claimed that the Afghan army was emerging as a well-trained and professional fighting force. President Karzai has little control in the provinces of Afghanistan, where warlords with private militias hold sway. Army recruitment has been eroded by the desertions and by meagre pay and poor conditions. Since the army was set up nearly two years ago only about 7000 out of a target of 70,000 soldiers are under arms.

BRITAIN: Furious green campaigners attacked the government after leaked Cabinet documents revealed plans to approve the growing of GM maize in Britain despite mass opposition from scientists and the public. Former environment minister Michael Meacher stressed that there was no "moral, scientific or political authority" for the decision. "Why is the government going ahead?", he asked. "It is not because of the science. It is because of the Bush administration applying pressure and because of big companies like Monsanto who want to make a big profit out of cornering the world's food supply. It has nothing to do with feeding the world", said Mr Meacher.

JAPAN: Japan announced an estimated \$2 billion deal for a Japanese consortium to develop an Iranian oil field despite opposition from the United States, which believes that the money could go towards nuclear proliferation. The deal with Iran grants the government-backed consortium development rights in the Azadegan oil field. With reserves of up to 26 billion barrels, it is believed to be one of the largest in the Middle East. It could offer a key resource of energy for resource-poor Japan, which is also pursuing similar arrangements in Russia and other countries. The agreement gives the Japanese consortium a 75 percent stake while Iran's national oil company retains the remaining 25 percent in the project. Iran uses a "buy back" arrangement in which foreign companies participating in energy projects are repaid for their investment in oil or gas revenues.

NAMIBIA: Namibia's President Sam Nujoma has announced that Namibia is to start taking land back from white farmers. He is committed to keeping expropriations fully legal. Whites make up only 5 percent of the 1.8 million population, but they own 92 percent of Namibia's 32 million hectares of agricultural land.

Iraqi women demand "US out"

Susan Webb

As Iraq moved to take back political sovereignty, Iraqi trade unionists and women's organisations condemned bloody terrorist attacks that killed some 300 people and wounded many others at religious observances in Baghdad and Karbala.

"These are acts of violence against innocent people, terrorist acts of mass murder", said Abdullah Muhsin, Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions international representative.

The attacks are aimed at destabilising the situation in Iraq, Muhsin told the *People's Weekly World*, speaking by phone from London. They can be used by the US occupation to suggest that Iraqis are not capable of self-government, providing "a pretext to stay longer", he said. In fact, Muhsin said, the US occupation has failed to provide security. "Let us do this by ourselves", he said. "We will prove that we are capable."

The bloodshed is "the responsibility of the occupiers", Clair Meshal, a leader of the Iraqi Women's League, Iraq's oldest women's organisation, told the *World* in a phone interview.

Meshal, a longtime political refugee living in London, charged that the US has freed top-ranking "Ba'ath fascists" including Saddam Hussein's propaganda chief, without trials, allowing them access to media and putting many in important administrative positions. The deadly attacks came one

day after the Iraqi Governing Council announced agreement on an interim law to govern a transitional Iraqi administration after the US occupation hands over power June 30.

The Transitional Administrative Law guarantees a broad range of civil rights and liberties, including freedom of expression and opinion and the rights of assembly and due process. Although it terms Islam the official religion, it guarantees freedom of religion and says Islam is "a source" of the country's laws rather than the sole source.

It also guarantees social and economic rights that many Americans would like to have, including health care, education, and the right to strike.

The interim constitution is a compromise among the widely varying political trends represented on the Iraqi Governing Council. It sets forth a federal structure for Iraq, giving significant authority to individual regions, but leaves many details to be ironed out later. It makes Kurdish and Arabic official languages. Between now and June 30, in a process yet to be worked out, an interim Iraqi administration will be formed.

The transitional law says elections for a new government must take place by January 31, 2005. That elected government will oversee the drafting of a permanent Iraqi constitution. The transitional law sets a goal of having women comprise at least 25 percent of the new legislature.

Muhsin welcomed the new law as a positive step, giving "a chance of rebuilding a new sovereign Iraq". Building trade unions and other civil society organisations are crucial to building democracy, he said.

Two key challenges face Iraq's union movement in the coming period, said Muhsin. One is waging "an enormous struggle in the face of uncontrollable market forces".

The other is educating Iraqi workers about the need to build a powerful trade union movement. "After 34 years of oppression most Iraqi workers don't know what a union is", he said. Today, they suffer mass unemployment or wages that do not even cover rent.

In order to move forward, Iraq needs new technology, re-skilling of workers, new kinds of jobs, Muhsin said. "For this we welcome foreign investment." But, he emphasised, "foreign investment does not mean privatisation".

Iraq's public sector, which includes the country's oil riches as well as water, electricity, health and education through university level, should be off-limits to privatisers, he said.

Iraqi women are continuing to organise for their rights and for greater representation in the new Iraqi government. The Iraqi Women's League, which worked underground during the Saddam Hussein regime, has branches in every town and village.

People's Weekly World, Communist Party USA, (abridged) www.pww.org ✪

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Socialism today challenges – challenged

The speech that you reprinted in *The Guardian* of February 18 from Sitaram Yechury of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of India (M) on “Socialism today – challenges”, must be challenged.

The basic ideas the speech reveals are Anti-Leninist and contravene the basis of Marxist philosophy which is Dialectical-Materialism.

To assert as this speech does that the uniqueness of Socialism is that it

was first conceived in the human mind is to run back to a view of world development that thought is primary (i.e. that it creates the world and in this case socialism). The use of the word transcend in the speech is also no accident.

Marx, Engels, Lenin and all other Communists thinkers of importance derived their thoughts and theories from the material world i.e. real life events such as the struggles of workers, the Paris Commune and the revolutions of 1848 in Europe, 1905 and 1917 in Russia. They drew rich lessons and developed the theories of scientific socialism from these real events and struggles.

They did not seek a “transcendental” i.e. an innate super natural, not based on experience approach but one developed from the real life experiences of the real classes in society and the experiences of real revolutionaries.

The attack made on Socialism

in this speech that it produced an extreme centralism, that the only escape from bureaucratic distortions is capitalist restoration or that Socialism can't be built into a world system apart from Imperialism.

That the revolutions in Europe and Asia were not enough flies in the face of the actual experience. The views expressed by Lenin in *State and Revolution* International Publishers New York 1994 are well worth a study in this regard.

To suggest that we have no theory and that we can develop a socialist revolution without theory reeks of revisionism. I would suggest that *The Guardian* feature a more thorough analysis of this speech as the contents of this speech render its author onto the road of opportunism. Those who reprint it without comment are also equally betrayed.

David Matters
Brisbane, Qld

As I thought of the words I found myself choking back the tears. It is so hard to sing the words and know we are doing the opposite. How can I rejoice when so many little children are not free? How can I sing the second verse about ‘plains to share’? when there are people behind electric fences in the desert, and families fenced into a football field for the third year on Nauru.

I have come to know so many of these people. I hear the news about the baby's first words as well as the mother sobbing.

So I took a deep breath and thought I would sing in the spirit of hope, that we could one day again be proud of our country's moral leadership. “Advance Australia Fair”

Elaine Smith
West Haven, NSW

– or better still, average HEART BEATS! You are actually moving forward about 25 metres every time your heart beats once.

So, how many beats are you away from that vehicle up front? How many from the side of the road and that big tree? If that one coming towards you at the same speed – well! – just halve the heart-beats.

In summary, the “speedometer” message can distort your thinking and can rob you of your heartbeat – FULL STOP!

Les Bromfield
Gosford, NSW

Govt signs away our future

Today we learn that the Howard Government has signed away the economic well-being of Australians for many years. How? They have signed on the dotted line to spend \$16 billion on a new United States “joint strike fighter”. American or Australian dollars they didn't say.

They were pressured into this as Vaile was negotiating the Free Trade Agreement and given a deadline to decide.

I recall, on TV in 2003, Defence Minister Robert Hill making the acceptance speech at the Boeing Plant. He couldn't have been more ingratiating. I didn't hear the details, but I have been looking for them ever since. It is such dynamite for Howard's lap dog government, that it has been kept strictly under wraps till now.

Your great grand kids will be paying this off, as well as many other bad deals with the USA.

Denis Kevans
Wentworth Falls, NSW

Sydney

First anniversary of the invasion of Iraq Global Day of Action – Saturday 20 March

Vigil & collection for medical aid to Iraq 10-11am

George Street, just outside Town Hall Square
organised by Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition
(contact Hannah on 0418 668 098 if you can help)

Community memorial service 11 am - 12 noon

Pitt Street Uniting Church, 264 Pitt St Sydney (near Park St)
Speak out our grief, our vision and our commitment
organised by Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition
(contact Ann at annw@nsw.uca.org.au or 8267 4280 if you can help)

March & Rally – assemble Hyde Park North 12 noon

March through the city back to Hyde Park for rally
Speakers include John Pilger, Andrew Wilkie, Senator Kerry Nettle,
Saif Abu Keshk Music: MC Wire, Urban Guerillas
Organised by Stop the War Coalition

A question of moral leadership

I recently attended the Rural Australians for Refugees second National Conference in Albury. There were over 300 representatives there from around Australia.

We were inspired by doctors, lawyers, farmers, politicians, priests and nuns, and the average country person, all working to provide support for refugees in and out of our detention camps. Of course we were harrowed by their years of suffering before they arrived at our shores as well as the years of suffering at Australia's hands.

At the closing ceremony we tied a ribbon to the wire for each person we prayed for, and then we sang the National Anthem.

Culture & Life

by
Rob Gowland

Benevolent commands

Who made the following remarkable statement? “I become very resentful when I hear people affecting to sneer at American imperialism.

“The benevolent commands of a great nation should be good for mankind. If that is American imperialism, let's have more of it.”

No, it's not anyone on John Howard's front bench, although the reference to US imperialism's “benevolent commands” would certainly fit in with their craven thinking.

The comment was made over half a century ago, in September 1952 to be precise, by that icon of the Liberal Party, Robert Gordon Menzies.

Now, does that mean that Menzies was surprisingly modern in his thinking, or that Howard is positively antediluvian in his? Give you one guess.

Menzies, of course, was better known to the Australian working class as “pig iron Bob”, a reference to the time he invoked special legislation to force wharfies to load pig iron bound for Japan to be turned into armaments, to be used against the people of China and later Australia.

At that time, the late '30s, it was the benevolent commands of Japanese imperialism that appealed to Menzies (along with those of

Hitler's Germany, which he also admired at the time).

But in 1952 it was American imperialism whose praises he was shouting. Since *before* the end of WW2, the US had been interfering in countries all around the world to prevent the advent to power of left-wing governments (a policy Menzies would most definitely have approved of).

From Italy to Belgium, Greece to the Philippines, the US financed post-WW2 Christian Democrat parties on an anti-Communist pro-US platform, organised murderous urban terrorism to smear the Left and scare the voters, and supported the assassination of Communists and progressive union leaders.

It also fomented sabotage and urban “unrest” in Eastern Europe.

In Greece and the Philippines, in fact, the post-war US program to “roll back Communism” involved the US military engaging in actual warfare with the very movements that had resisted the Nazi and Japanese invaders.

And what was US imperialism doing in 1952, to earn Menzies' fulsome praise? Why, waging war, what else?

It had been waging war in Korea since 1950, after having unsuccessfully tried to have the remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's army invade “Red China” from bases in Burma and Thailand (they preferred to set themselves up in the drug trade rather than take on the Chinese Red Army again).

But as well as stopping the “march of Communism”, the Korean War had very usefully boosted corporate profits, another reason for someone like Menzies to be grateful to a “benevolent” US imperialism.

In fact, war mongers in the 1950s were so bold about their

endeavours that they did not even bother to dissemble or disguise what they were doing with sophisticated spin doctoring.

They came right out and told everyone how good war was for business. In fact, the war in Korea was only one month old when *US News and World Report* happily told its business readers “It's really a made-to-order situation to keep business at a high level....

“The Korean outbreak lays the ghost of a depression that has been haunting business in the US since the end of World War 2.... Outlook is for an extended boom.”

In February, 1950, *before* the war began, the same journal advised that: “Armaments always can be pushed if private [business] activity slows. War scares are easy to create, are nearly always sure-fire producers of money for more and more arms.”

The candour here is appalling rather than refreshing, I think you will agree.

But of course, even then, they were talking big money. United Press reported in June 1951 that “ten large [US] corporations got more than one-fourth of all the government's multi-billion-dollar defence business during the first nine months of the Korean war”.

So lucrative was the war business that the Korean War had scarcely begun before US imperialism was becoming agitated lest do-gooders and peace-lovers bring it to an untimely end. “Sudden peace could work havoc with business”, said the *New York Times* in May 1951.

And this, remember, was during the supposed “post-war boom” of the decade after WW2. But without arms spending and war profits, the big capitalist corporations saw little joy in the peace-time economy.



And then their worst fears were realised: a ceasefire was proposed in Korea.

The National City Bank of New York commented, in its *Monthly Letter* of August 1951: “The Korea ceasefire proposals, coming at a time when business in many lines was already experiencing indigestion, have intensified the feelings of uncertainty that have been spreading throughout the community.”

Never mind, however. The ceasefire was successfully held at bay for another two years, while profits continued to mount.

In fact, as *US News and World Report* noted: “Armament ... is a vast and permanent new business that will transform the business outlook of this country.

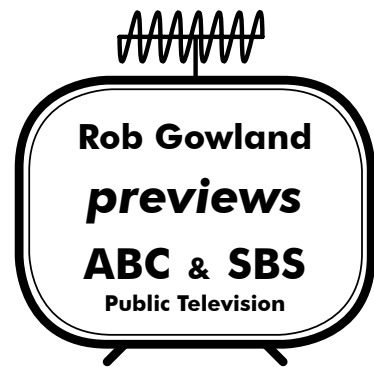
“Good profits. Lots of business; no hard times. Defence spending will see to all that.”

Indeed it will. But in the process it distorts and deforms the economy.

Peaceful industry creates jobs by manufacturing useful goods. Defence industry creates less jobs while producing things that contribute nothing to society.

A tractor tills the soil, makes roads, harvests crops. A tank, on the other hand, sits around waiting to be destroyed in a war, until it becomes obsolete and sold for scrap.

Big corporations, however, are less concerned with producing things that are useful than with producing profits. And military spending, as the *US News and World Report* notes, will definitely do that. ☺



Sun March 14 ~
~ Sat March 20

At the beginning of the 1970s, the US ruling class was trying to cope with a growing rebellion against the war in Vietnam and rampant political corruption. The country was heading into recession, while suffering an energy crisis.

Hollywood's money men found that the formulae that had worked in the previous two decades were now out of step with large segments of the audience. There was great concern over how best to retain their profit levels.

As veteran low-budget action producer Roger Corman says in *A Decade Under The Influence* (ABC 2.00pm Sunday), Hollywood's bosses adopted a variant of the dictum "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em": they "bought in" the rising generation of new, young filmmakers who, it was assumed, would be able to reach the sex-drugs-&-rock'n'roll audience.

While this window of opportunity was open, Hollywood turned out a succession of original, varied and in many ways ground-breaking films. They made films that starred actors who looked like people in your street, some at least of the films dealt with serious issues, others turned genre conventions on their heads.

I found English actress Julie Christie the most interesting of the large array of talking heads in the program. But there are so many short snippets it's rather like listening to an extended array of cocktail party chatter. A lot is said but it

does not gel into a coherent whole of much depth, although there are some illuminating moments now and then.

The brilliant thriller *State Of Play* continues (ABC 8.30pm Sunday). With three people murdered already, the journalists and the police are vying with each other to find out the exact nature of the connection between the murders.

In this week's episode, there is another killing, but this one is unexpected and in many ways inexplicable. Then things become oily, and the fact that rising politician Stephen Collins (David Morrissey) chairs the Energy Select Committee becomes very significant.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Emperors of Japan were rulers in name only. The real ruler was the Shogun or military leader.

The first Shogun, Tokugawa, brought the various warlords under his single control, fusing them into one unified feudal empire, but in so doing laid the groundwork for the country's eventual transition to capitalism in the 19th century. In 1868, after a brief period of civil war, the Shogunate was overthrown with the Meiji Restoration.

Japan, which the Shoguns had kept isolated from the outside world, now embraced Western life (crinolines even became fashionable!) and set about conquering its neighbours.

Japan: Memoirs Of A Secret Empire, screening on *Lost Worlds* (SBS 8.30pm Sunday), examines the history of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

You have to feel sorry for the US Public Broadcasting System's current affairs programs these days. They labour under the decided disadvantage of taking whatever the Bush administration says at face value.

This lends a strangely surreal quality to *Beyond Baghdad*, this week's *Cutting Edge* documentary (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday).

Martin Smith, correspondent for the PBS *Frontline* program, "travels the length and breadth of Iraq for five weeks, interviewing everyone from tribal sheiks and



Some very atmospheric recreations (*The Great Escape: The Untold Story, The Big Picture*)

ayatollahs to politicians and Iraqi soldiers", as the program notes so succinctly put it.

Poor Martin is trying to find what it will take to "stabilise" this "volatile" nation and "accelerate the transfer of power to the Iraqi people".

"As impressed as I was with the American military and the efforts they are making, Iraqi expectations are extraordinarily high", says Smith. "Even if the Americans do everything right, the problem is it may not be enough. The whole experiment can still fail."

Well, duh!

In 1944, 200 Allied airforce officers tried a mass breakout from Stalag Luft III POW camp in Sagan on the borders of Poland and Germany. Seventy-six escaped before an alert guard saw the entrance to their tunnel, which had been dug short and came up too close to the camp's fence.

German camps for British and American POWs were run by the Luftwaffe for captured aircrew and the Wehrmacht for captured soldiers. In the main, the camps were run

in accordance with the Geneva Convention and the "rules of war".

While prisoners could be, and were, shot while actually in the act of trying to escape, if they were recaptured, they were either returned to the camp or sent to a more secure one. Colditz, for example, was filled with officers who had escaped more than once from other camps.

However, the fate of the 76 who escaped from Stalag Luft III would be starkly different. Only three of them made it home, but this was not unexpected.

Indeed, one of the aims of the large breakout, rather than getting to Britain, had been to create chaos on the German homefront. In this it was certainly successful.

What distinguished this "great escape" however, was the cold-blooded murder of 50 of the recaptured prisoners by the Gestapo. As an atrocity it barely rates compared to the death marches inflicted on POWs by the Japanese or the automatic murder of captured Soviet officers, and numerous other atrocities against Soviet POWs.

But it was an atrocity, for all that, and after the War the British hunted down 18 of the perpetrators and either hanged or jailed them.

The Great Escape: The Untold Story, screening on *The Big Picture* (ABC 8.30pm Wednesday), uses reminiscences by a few survivors or their relatives, old photos and some very atmospheric recreations, to tell the tale again.

But this time, the emphasis is on

the murder of the 50 and the interrogation and hanging of one of the German Gestapo men.

There are curious omissions: we learn nothing, for example, of the three who made it home. Their take on the escape (or that of their relatives) would have been quite different from that of those who were unsuccessful but did at least get returned to prison.

One of the escapees recounts how, after his recapture, he was taken to a new prison. He was greeted by another British officer, who, in response to the question "is this Colditz", informed him grimly that they were in fact now in the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

Concentration camps, of course, were run by the SS, and assuredly not according to the Geneva Convention! "The only way out is up the chimney", said his British colleague.

The Germans routinely imprisoned Soviet POWs in concentration camps, but this is the first time I have ever heard of British or US POWs being so treated. Regrettably, this matter is not explored further.

Most disturbing about the program, however, is its revisionist approach to the doctrine that "I was only following orders" is not sufficient excuse. The program's makers clearly mean us to feel for the young Gestapo officer who is hanged: "he was not to blame", we are meant to say to ourselves; "he was only following Hitler's orders".

Fremantle, WA
Public meeting

Juan Pozo

Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP)

Juan Pozo will speak on recent developments in Cuba
As part of its work ICAP organises the program of the ACFS Southern Cross annual brigade, and builds solidarity and friendship between the Cuban and Australian peoples

Sunday 14th March 2pm

Maritime Union of Australia
MUA Building in North Fremantle
Cnr Kwong Alley and Queen Victoria Street
North Fremantle (opposite the Swan Hotel).

For more information contact Michele on 0419 942 045 or Vinnie on 0419 812 872
Entry by a gold coin donation. Coffee and tea provided.

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

12th March

An evening with John Pilger:
Power, Danger, the Media and Conscience...

March 19

Divide and Rule - Return of the Wedge
Professor John Warhurst, Politics ANU (to be confirmed);
Phil Glendenning, Director Edmund Rice Centre

March 26

Reining in Economic Inequality
Louis Haddad, Economics, Uni of Sydney
Frank Stilwell, Prof. Economics, Sydney Uni

Inq: Pat Toms 9358 4834 pbtoms@bigpond.com; Janet Fischer 9398 8891;
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65 Campbell Street
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Phone: (02) 9212 6855
Fax: (02) 9281 5795

Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Anna Pha

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Remove the Howard Government from office

The following statement was adopted by the Central Committee Executive of the Communist Party of Australia at its meeting on February 14-15.

The removal of the Howard Government from office in the coming Federal elections would represent a defeat for the extremely conservative social and economic policies of the Howard Government and its role as US "Deputy Sheriff". It would signal the rejection of the Government's support for the Iraq war and US missile defence, its lies about weapons of mass destruction and the attacks on public health and education, and social welfare.

Since the last election in 2001, the US has launched its "war on terrorism" followed by the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, actions enthusiastically supported by the Australian Government. It has pushed forward to unprecedented levels the militarisation of the nation, is equipping the armed forces with tens of billions of dollars of technologically advanced weaponry and has embraced the Bush Government's "pre-emptive strike" and "failed states" ideology. It has turned its back on the United Nations.

To bolster its position and enforce its war policies, the Government has adopted legislation turning ASIO into a political police with far-reaching and undemocratic powers. It has intensified its attack on Medicare, public health and public education. Industrial legislation has been enacted which seriously restricts the rights of working people and the trade unions and more attacks are in the pipeline.

Many voters are once again hopeful that a Labor Government would reverse the policies of the Liberal-National Party Coalition but previous experience does not encourage this hope.

It is now pushing the adoption of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States which is advantageous to the US corporate interests but not to those of the Australian people despite the claims of government leaders.

Militarisation is the armed wing of imperialism while the Free Trade Agreement is the incorporation of the Australian economy into that of the US as corporate globalisation is enforced.

All these policy issues are at stake in the coming Federal elections and the defeat of Howard will signal a demand by the Australian people for substantial changes to the course that has been implemented since the election of the Liberal Government in 1996.

In this election the defeat of the Liberal Coalition Government means that it would be replaced by an ALP Government. In addition

to the removal of the Howard Government, the Communist Party of Australia calls for the election to both the House of Representatives and the Senate of many left and progressive candidates who wholeheartedly, and as a matter of principle, support more far-reaching social and economic changes and a change in the direction of Australia's foreign policy.

There is already a "balance of power" situation in the Senate that has to some extent restrained the objectives of the Howard Government. The Senate, for example, refused to be browbeaten on the full sale of Telstra and has rejected the more savage aspects of the Government's industrial legislation.

Break up the two-party system

If this situation can be both maintained and strengthened by the election of a number of more left and progressive candidates, it would be a step towards the break up of the cozy two-party system that has held back the development of Australia's political life for many decades.

More progressive members in the Senate and House of Representatives would act as a break on right-wing excesses by either a returned Liberal Government or a Labor Party Government. They would pose no threat to a Labor Government that was implementing progressive policies.

Left and progressive members of parliament would also use the parliamentary platform to put real alternative policies to the Australian people.

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

That is why it is important to support left and progressive parties and candidates wherever they stand in the coming election.

Many voters are once again hopeful that a Labor Government would reverse the policies of the Liberal-National Party Coalition but previous experience does not encourage this hope.

It was the ALP Governments



The Government is militarising the nation at an unprecedented level

of Hawke and Keating that first introduced the economic rationalist agenda, which brought in the privatisation of publicly owned enterprises such as the Commonwealth Bank and Qantas, deregulation and "competition policy". They started the process of dismantling the Award system in favour of decentralised Enterprise Bargaining and opened the door to the introduction of individual work contracts. Their foreign policies were also based on support for the US alliance including the 1991 war on Iraq. They re-introduced university fees and failed to increase payment of rebates to doctors, thereby undermining bulk-billing.

The present policies of the ALP leadership have not changed significantly from those of the previous Hawke and Keating governments. A Latham Labor government will, at best, pursue moderate reforms entirely within the scope of economic rationalism and the capitalist system.

In the course of the elections the CPA will publish a number of leaflets for widespread distribution on important topical issues and will put forward its call for the defeat of the Liberal Coalition Government and its call to support those candidates with the most progressive policies. CPA members will be active in support of CPA and other left and progressive candidates.

Election policies

During the election campaign the CPA will advocate:

1. opposition to the militarisation of Australia and the withdrawal of Australian forces from Iraq and abandonment of the policy of pre-emptive strike; priority support for the United Nations and the repeal of the ANZUS treaty; and the maintenance of Australia's political, economic and military independence and sovereignty;
2. opposition to the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement that is

neither free nor fair but would substantially integrate the economy of Australia into that of the US;

3. the extension of democratic rights. This means the encouragement of participation by people in political life;

4. support for the return of the Commonwealth Bank, Qantas and other privatised public enterprises to public ownership;

5. the maintenance of Medicare with universal bulk-billing, adequate funding for public hospitals and defence of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS);

6. the diversion of government monies from private schools to the public education system;

7. the abolition of university fees;

8. the repeal of anti-democratic and anti-trade union industrial legislation.

The Communist Party will nominate candidates in its own name wherever this is possible and appropriate.

Voting in Federal elections is compulsory and the voting system is preferential. We advise everyone to vote and exercise their preferences.

The Communist Party supports left and progressive candidates who have people-centred policies and whose election can help challenge the two-party system and the Liberal-Labor grip on political power.

In the coming Federal election, The Greens have the possibility of winning seats in both Houses of Parliament and so undermining the two-party system. They have many progressive policies committed to peace social justice, democratic rights and more.

On this occasion, in most electorates, they are therefore likely to be the best choice among any progressive candidates.

The CPA's preference policies

We propose the following preferences for House of Representative candidates:

- ✓ A No. 1 vote for CPA candidates where they stand;
- ✓ In electorates without a CPA candidate, we call for a No. 1 vote for one of the left and progressive candidates in your electorate, particularly The Greens;
- ✓ Next, vote for any other left and progressive candidate(s);
- ✓ Next, vote for ALP candidates;
- ✓ Always put Liberal, National Party and other right-wing candidates last.

For the Senate, vote 1 above the line where candidates of the CPA stand, otherwise vote for The Greens.

This is the best way by which to defeat the most conservative, dangerous and warmongering Government that Australia has ever had.

It is the best way to advance Australia's political, social and economic life on to the course of progressive policies genuinely in the interests of the working people and all who contribute to the wealth of the Australian nation.

Another priority in our electoral work is for every branch to give detailed attention to increasing the membership of the Party and the circulation and use of *The Guardian*. ☘

**OUT WITH THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT!
ELECT LEFT AND PROGRESSIVE CANDIDATES TO THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**



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 Email: cpa@cpa.org.au