

Racism and rip-offs on rail project

In a return to the bad old days of "coloured" labour, Aboriginal and Kanaky-descended workers have been shipped from northern Queensland to Victoria to work under colonial conditions.

Unions on the Traralgon-Melbourne arm of the State's Very Fast Rail Project have discovered that at least 19 of the workers have been short-changed by labour hire outfit, Skilled Engineering.

Gippsland Trades and Labour Council leader John Parker said that when the project delegate came across the Queenslanders, they were sharing pies and sandwiches, unaware they could use smoko rooms or toilet facilities.

The Queenslanders were sleeping in cars or bunking in caravan parks. One was wearing size nine and half work boots although his foot size was 11.

Many had been hired by Skilled Engineering under the terms of Federal Government's STEPS program, providing employers with \$4500-a-head bounties. "It's the Government's way of getting them off the dole", John Parker noted ruefully.

Investigations by the rail project unions – the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union; Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union; and the Rail, Tram and Bus Union – revealed they had been underpaid at least \$4 an hour on the project rate and, worse, had spent three weeks with no incomes at all.

Contrary to the project agreement, they had been laid off and not offered work for at least eight days when they made contact with unions. Another group, apparently, had been flown south, put through medicals, then told they were not wanted.

"You imagine hungry construction workers who haven't been paid for three weeks. They were fairly hostile and there was talk of them going into Traralgon to have it out with Skilled", said Mr Parker.

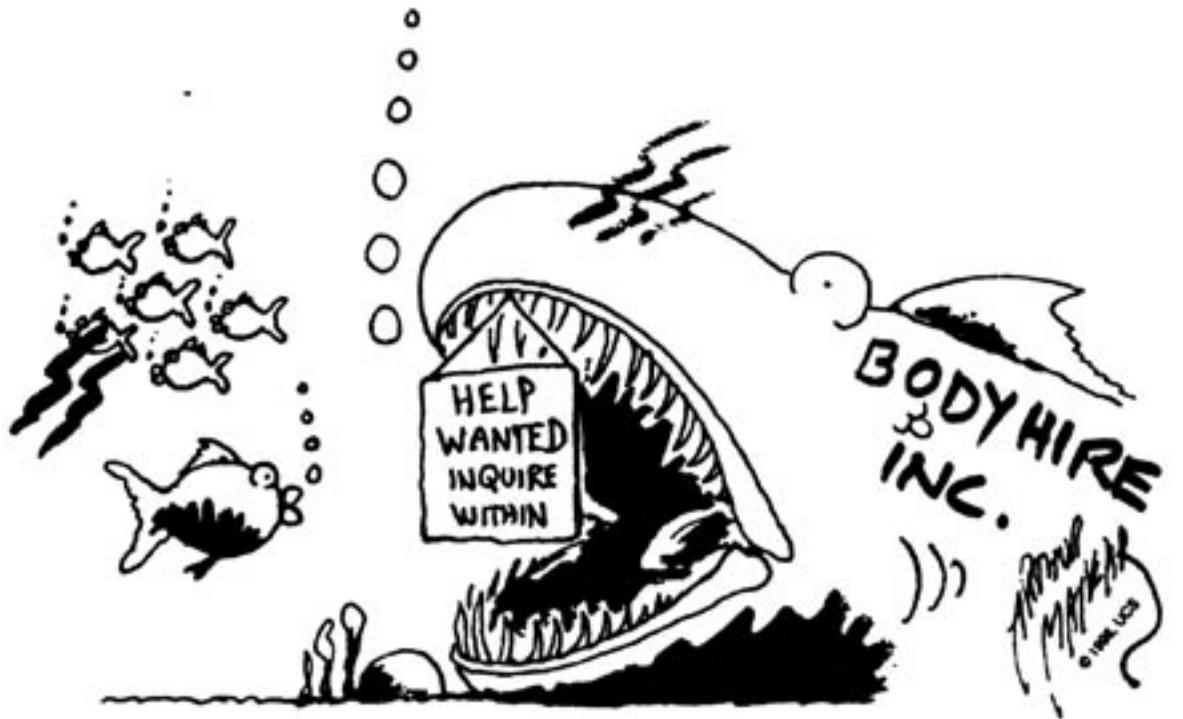
The unions have won back pay for the Queenslanders, including a living away from home allowance of around \$400 a week; guarantees

of at least six weeks on full pay; as well as commitments to fly them home at the end of their contracts.

Officials said while unions were fighting for local jobs in the La Trobe Valley, where unemployment is still 17 percent, there was "no way" they were going to stand aside and see the Queenslanders "exploited and discriminated against".

AMWU organiser, Steve Dodd, called their treatment "outrageous". "It was a throwback to the racism of the past", he said. ✪

Aboriginal and Kanaky-descended workers have been shipped from northern Queensland to Victoria to work under colonial conditions.



Latham's commitment to bring the troops home welcome

"ALP leader Mark Latham's commitment that Australian troops in Iraq will be returned to Australia by the end of this year reflects the feelings of a very large number of Australians", Peter Symon, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), said in Sydney on March 28, after a meeting of the party's Central Committee.

"The majority of Australians believe that the invasion of Iraq was wrong and illegal, that the Howard Government is carrying out the interests of the US not those of Australia, and that the first responsibility of any Australian government is the protection of Australia and not overseas military adventures.

"While categorically opposing all acts of terrorism, we reject the hysterical statements of Government leaders that the withdrawal of Australian troops is a victory for al-Qaida or that it is "unAustralian", said Mr Symon.

The opposite is the truth. The real crimes are Australia's participation in the invasion and occupation of Iraq and the Government's support for the Israeli Government's denial of sovereign rights to the Palestinian people together with its assassination of Sheik Yassin.

"We call for other measures in addition to the withdrawal of Australian troops from Iraq. They include withdrawal of any commitment to participate in the US 'star

Wars' project, the closure of Pine Gap as a spy base and the scaling back of the huge military equipment purchases that the Howard Government is undertaking", said Warren Smith, CPA Assistant General Secretary.

"Australia's foreign policy needs to be changed from complete subservience to the policies of the United States to the promotion of friendly and peaceful relations with all other countries, particularly those in the Asia-Pacific region."

"Our Party also condemns the remarks by US Ambassador Tom Schieffer. His criticism of Mr. Latham's statement is a flagrant interference in Australia's internal affairs", Mr Symon said.

"Mr Schieffer's remarks are not made out of any genuine concern for the Iraqi people but concern that support for the Iraq war is falling apart.

"He is a cheerleader for war and a stand-over man, demanding that Australia submit without question to the interests of the United States and the Bush government.

"We call on the Australian Government to demand his recall", Mr Symon concluded.

In a statement issued by the Central Committee the CPA also called on the Howard Government to withdraw immediately all Australian troops from Iraq and end all participation in the illegal war and occupation of Iraq. ✪

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Exploiting retired workers

“Work until you drop” is the derisive comment that has greeted the Federal Government’s plan to extend the working life of older workers. And people have a right to be suspicious as the high-sounding good intentions that accompanied the announcement have little to do with the real motives behind the Government’s scheme.

The Government has three main aims: to wind down the public, centrally funded age pension and transfer pension responsibility to the private sector (the super funds); to create a massive pool of savings which will be a major source of investment capital available to the private sector; and to create a pool of reserve labour.

The claim that it is becoming more and more difficult for governments to continue to pay the aged pension and other support payments for retired workers was behind the introduction of compulsory superannuation.

The Keating Labor Government legislated in 1992 for compulsory superannuation. It was intended to slowly replace the taxpayer funded, federal government administered and equitable aged pension. To introduce superannuation, workers at the time gave up a four percent wage increase that had already been awarded.

Before compulsory superannuation was introduced, the official retirement age for male workers was 65 years and women workers 60 years. They would then draw an age pension, subject to a means test.

While workers remain at work they not only continue to pay taxes but employers continue to make contributions (foregone wages) – in effect funding their own retirement. The superannuation levy is now up to nine percent of wages and will continue to rise.

The promotion of super schemes was only a first step towards the goal of replacing the public pension by private self-provision schemes, at best leaving a safety net for the most desperately needy. Bringing an end to government welfare obligations was the ultimate objective.

Having people work for longer will see many thousands delay drawing the aged pension. This, then, is in part another welfare cutting measure. To win acceptance of its nefarious scheme the Government has offered a carrot. Workers who stay at work will be permitted to draw out some of their accumulated superannuation.

As was intended, superannuation has become a huge reservoir of investment capital to be used by the big corporations to fund their business ventures, takeovers and mergers and take up the opportunities provided to them through privatisation.

Super funds are dependent on the performance of the capitalist economy which has become increasingly unstable. Over the last few years the annual returns of funds went into the red as a result of declining profit returns as corporations used workers’ retirement money to gamble on the markets.

The Federal Government’s scheme also aims to provide a pool of trained and experienced workers who would be available to work on a part-time, casual basis and on more flexible hours. It would become an employers’ delight.

With such work becoming a second source of income (over and above superannuation), many would be prepared to take lower wages. The situation would be used by employers to push down the wages and conditions for other workers, to deunionise and further casualise the workforce.

The longer term objective is to completely privatise Government social responsibility to the aged, part of the drive to deregulate and privatise all services across the board, be they child care, education, transport, health or telecommunications.

Security in old age – like other basic social needs – should be guaranteed, not left up to the greed and anarchy of the markets. Workers who toil all their lives, pay taxes and make by far the biggest contribution to the economic and social well being of the nation are now being told “work until you drop”, while those who do not have the savings necessary to live in dignified retirement (and there are many) are to be left to scrape by on a poverty level “safety net” pittance.

There is only one fair and equitable scheme – it is an aged pension that is universal, government-run and funded out of taxation where all contributions are pooled and used for the common benefit.

PRESS FUND

Mark Latham has made a commitment to pull the troops out of Iraq. The task now is to see that he holds to that promise and extends it to ending all other involvement in the illegal occupation of Iraq, in particular, that of the US spy base at Pine Gap in South Australia. If you agree, then help us to end Australian involvement in the US’s dirty work by sending a contribution now to the Press Fund. *The Guardian* does not receive donations from Halliburton or any other corporations. We depend on you, our readers. Our thanks go to the following two contributors for their generous support this week:

T Forbes \$20, M H \$50.

This week’s total: \$70. Progressive total: \$2660.

Progressive unity delivers results in Auburn

Peter Jarvis

Residents who turned up to watch Auburn Council meetings last year were given a sharp lesson in the nature of local democracy in Sydney’s Western suburbs. There are 12 councillors in Auburn – two of them, Barbara Perry a State Labor MP, the other a Liberal, rarely attended. The remainder spent about 90 percent of their time working on development applications.

There was a fairly set rhythm to council meetings. Developers would put up plans that any sane person could see were unacceptable – extra units getting squeezed in by lowering ceilings, parking spaces barely thought of, inadequate services and facilities. Developments like these would be passed by the council with a sole voice – Residents Action Group’s (RAG) Irene Simms – calling for her objection to be recorded.

Thus, before the March 27 elections Auburn had only one councillor who would stand up to the greedy property developers queuing up to wreck Auburn’s low-rise suburban heritage.

Three progressive groups stood candidates for the March 27 election. The Resident Action Group stood candidates in both Auburn wards and the Greens in one ward. The third group – No Dump Group – was made up of Green party members, local activists and residents and Communist Party members. It decided to stand in both wards.

The No Dump Group was closely allied to the team that defeated Collex Waste Management Corporation in the Land and Environment court only to have Bob Carr pass “special” legislation to impose a waste dump on Auburn.

Issues

Tony Oldfield, the lead candidate of the No Dump Group in ward 2 said, “...obviously the dump was an important issue. Here we have the Land and Environment Court ruling against the dump, saying it was unacceptable to build this facility in Auburn.

“On the other hand, Collex the operators of the dump, are making big donations to the NSW branch of the ALP. And finally we see Bob Carr and the Labor Party deciding

that they know what is best for our multi-ethnic suburb and he passes legislation to impose the dump on residents. Frankly it is a huge issue.”

There were other issues in addition to the dump. Tony commented, “Residents want to stop the dump, but we also want to stop greedy developers running amuck in our suburb. We are sick of desperately needed services getting chopped back by State and Federal Governments.

“We want to see a council that will bring ordinary residents into the decision making process. Residents must be consulted with and given the right to veto development that they strongly object to.

“Overriding everything is the desperate need for a clean council that puts residents and communities before big-business and property developers.”

The No Dump Group decided that they would only preference

to work with RAG and the Greens during the election campaign – we shared information, particularly when anti-Muslim and similar rumors were being spread in the community. We helped each other give out how-to-vote information and worked to persuade voters to follow the how-to-vote instructions and exercise their right to preference.”

Paid off

This strategy appears to have paid off, with possibly three progressive councillors elected.

Tony Oldfield said, “This is excellent proof of the Communist Party’s position that encourages left and progressive alliances. We went into this election with an isolated individual standing up to the property developers. Now, there will be three progressives working together for the benefit of ordinary working residents.”

Tony thinks that getting people

“Residents want to stop the dump, but we also want to stop greedy developers running amuck in our suburb.”

other groups where they had a good record on council and correct policies towards the dump, development and political donations. On this basis the No Dump Group could only really work with RAG and the Greens.

Campaign Manager, Mike Newman, said “beyond just sorting out who the decent people were and preferencing with them – we brought a new level of cooperation and alliance building to the campaign. We weren’t preferencing just to give ‘our’ candidates the best chance possible. Our sole interest was trying to get as many progressives onto the council as possible, even if that meant we sacrificed our own chances.”

Mike says that “At first this idea appeared a little too novel for the other groups. But we continued

onto the council is important, but is only part of the jigsaw. He says, “We need to look beyond the council election. There is now a pool of people from different groups who have worked together and learnt to trust each other.

“This means that No Dump activists are plugged into parts of the community who had not been reached before. The same goes for the Greens and the Resident Action Group.

“Getting decent people to pull together, work co-operatively and start to trust each other has been a major plus coming out of this campaign. We now need to concentrate on working in an alliance on the council and making this co-operation an everyday reality for our community’s fight against the dump and the developers.” ☺



No Dump campaign management team

Vanstone moves to soften tough-on-refugee image

Bob Briton

Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone was working the media for all it was worth last week, trying to sell her recently announced increase in Australia's refugee intake for 2004-5 as a grand humanitarian gesture.

Evidently, most of the mainstream press bought the line being peddled. "Intake of refugees to rise by 50pc", read the headline on top of a report carried in last Wednesday's *Australian*. "Refugee intake lifted in major policy shift", said the *Hobart Mercury*.

As the government attempts to manipulate and bolster its international image and dwindling election prospects, behind the scenes the same old anti-refugee agenda grinds on.

At the same time, Vanstone was making much of what she says is a letter writing campaign by young school students about the situation of refugees. She told the John Laws radio show that the children appear to be simply rehashing phrases being given to them by teachers, who are using the children for base political purposes:

"They called me racist more than anything else and (they) draw little pictures of pigs and things,

you know, 'You are a racist pig' ... I think how dare these teachers teach the kids that their country is racist and unwelcoming when we are a world leader and they should be teaching the kids to be proud of what their country is doing."

Senator Vanstone was desperately trying to appear the victim in the refugee and detention centre debate after months of projecting a tough "we'll fight them on the beaches" kind of image. The Howard Government may well be thinking that the asylum seekers issue is losing its election-winning appeal.

However, while the PR approach has changed – and contrary to what sources in the bosses' media are saying – there has been no major policy shift in favour of refugees seeking safety in Australia. The latest changes are not so generous on closer examination.

First of all, there will only be 1000 additional new refugees accepted into Australia next year – not 2000. The other 1000 places mentioned have been pinched from

another government program. The number of special humanitarian places will actually drop from 8000 to 7000.

So, while the number of refugees being accepted by Australia may well be going up from 4000 to 6000 next year, overall numbers to be given sanctuary will only rise from 12,000 to 13,000. This will have a negligible impact on the various refugee crises afflicting the world's people right now and is way below the capacity of a developed country like Australia.

The decision in advance to take approximately 75 per cent of the additional applicants from Africa is also sending out a message. It hangs out the "Not Welcome" sign to the thousands of people from the Middle East, Afghanistan and elsewhere who have been queuing for years in places like Indonesia for consideration.

Last year Australia took 84 of these people, the year before they took 39 and just two (!) in 2001. Even in these cases, as Jack Smit of Project SafeCom points out, Australia takes from one to two years to resettle the refugees after the granting of UNHCR approval. New Zealand manages the same process in a matter of weeks.

Senator Vanstone still plans to have the Navy intercept the frail boats carrying those asylum seek-



The victims – detainees climb the fence at the Woomera detention centre

ers who cannot bear their situation any longer. They will still be turned around or taken for the "offshore processing" program called the "Pacific Solution".

The paltry increase announced last week will not make up for the ongoing abuse of basic human rights and the mental anguish being suffered by those in detention in Australia and offshore.

Senator Vanstone was using the announcement to head off another potentially embarrassing confrontation over Australia's treatment of asylum seekers. Ruud Lubbers, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, was making a rare visit to Australia. Mr Lubbers has criticised aspects of the Australian Government's behaviour towards refugees.

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer chimed in with news

of a \$12.6 million grant to the UNHCR's annual program budget and another \$4.6 million to help with the repatriation of Afghan refugees to their strife-torn homeland. "Sometimes there are extraneous outside events that help focus the mind of your colleagues", Vanstone told John Laws in explanation for the flurry of good news stories coinciding with Mr Lubbers' arrival.

As the government attempts to manipulate and bolster its international image and dwindling election prospects, behind the scenes, the same old anti-refugee agenda grinds on. The Coalition party room recently approved plans to reintroduce time limits for the consideration of migration cases in the courts and to further restrict the number of appeals available to refugee applicants. ✪

Howard Government attacks Poverty Report

John Gardener

Predictably, the Howard government has attacked the long-awaited *Senate Report on Poverty and Financial Hardship*, released earlier this month. The report, which has been called "the most wide-ranging inquiry into poverty in Australia since the 1975 Henderson Report", was two years in the making.

More than 250 separate submissions were made during the investigation. These submissions came from as diverse a range of sources as the ACTU, St Vincent de Paul, Mission Australia, the Aboriginal Cultural Centre, Anglicare, Lifeline, the National Tertiary Education Union, the Salvation Army, the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Disability Action and the Australian Federation of Deaf Societies.

Howard dismissed one of its central recommendations, the estab-

lishment of a national taskforce into poverty, almost immediately after it was released. This key measure was supported by the ALP, the Greens and almost all trade union, religious and welfare organisations that took part in the Senate inquiry.

Kay Patterson, the Family and Community Services Minister, dismissed the need for a National Taskforce as well, saying that poverty summits were useless.

One of the two Liberal Party Senators involved in the inquiry, Senator Sue Knowles, also slammed the report, saying the ALP had merely used it as a political tool to attack the Government.

Senator Knowles later published her own dissenting views, questioning most, if not all, of the report's recommendations. She effectively ignored all of the major findings of the inquiry, claiming that "there was no hard evidence that poverty had increased over the last decade".

The report has certainly been damning for the Howard

Government. Amongst its findings were:

- Poverty affects 4.1 million Australians
- There has been a massive increase in the so-called "working poor". The report states that 1,000,000 Australians are now in poverty despite living in a household that has one or more regular incomes. This contrasts with the *Henderson Report on Poverty* that found only two percent of households with an adult in full employment could be classified as poor
- The drive to casualisation and the weakening of the industrial relations system have been the major causes of the increase of the "working poor"
- There are now 700,000 children living in homes where no adult is working
- 21 percent of households – 3.6 million people – live on less than \$400 a week
- The disposable income of the lowest paid 20 percent of Australians has decreased by 12.6 percent over the last 20 years
- There are an estimated 100,000 homeless people on any given night in Australia
- 22 percent of the homeless were couples or families
- There is a national shortage of 150,000 units of affordable housing
- In most States, there is a waiting list of four to five years for public housing
- The increase in poverty has pushed many welfare agencies almost to breaking point, where they are unable to meet demand for their services. ✪



Tackling the asbestos "cowboys"

Failure by authorities to police safety in the asbestos removal industry is threatening the lives of construction workers and members of the public. Last month members of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) called for the re-establishment of NSW WorkCover's specialist Asbestos Demolition Units.

"These units should never have been closed down", said CFMEU State Secretary Andrew Ferguson. "These units had specialist inspectors. They were experts. Since the closure of the units safety has deteriorated."

This was shown at the beginning of the month at St Peters, in Sydney's inner west, when a developer conducted unlicensed demolition next door to a public school. Concerned parents contacted the CFMEU after material from the demolition spilt into the street.

The site, which was unsecured and allowed children to "play" on it after hours, contained asbestos components.

A WorkCover inspector who attended the site was allegedly threatened by the developer.

"The CFMEU has been very militant in its view of protection of the public", CFMEU organiser Marty Wyer said.

Illegal dumping

He pointed to the problem of demolition cowboys who illegally dump asbestos into landfill as a cost cutting measure. This was recently highlighted with asbestos being found on a popular beach in northern Sydney.

"There are cowboys in the industry", said Mr Wyer. "You only have to pick up a copy of your local rag and see the demolition companies that advertise in the classifieds. They may be able to quote a demolition licence, but this doesn't mean they can remove asbestos."

More dangerous

Mr Wyer spoke of demolition contractors who would remove asbestos on weekends to avoid scrutiny, crushing the asbestos up and rendering it more dangerous. The union says that educating people about the deadly dangers of asbestos is also a problem.

"My job is to empower safety representatives. It's easy to explain safety if it's a harness to stop someone falling off a roof. But because it can take 20 years to take effect we tend to think we're bullet-proof, but death from asbestos is a very horrible death", said Mr Wyer.

The move by the industry to clean up the cowboys operating in it follows complaints by residents in Randwick and Centennial Park, in Sydney's eastern suburbs, about the practices of asbestos removalists.

At the Centennial Park site, next to Fox Studios, residents were concerned about dust blowing across the street into their homes from an asbestos removal job.

"We were given no warning", said local resident Josephine Wadlow-Evans. "Residents were absolutely horrified."

Ms Wadlow-Evans and other residents allege that workers on the site were initially working without

masks, asbestos sheeting was being dropped and broken and dust was blowing across the street into residents' homes, driven by "gale force winds".

Residents immediately contacted WorkCover but, despite their concerns, a WorkCover complaint register from the time notes that the incident "Does not warrant investigation as the company is licensed to conduct this work and has in the past demonstrated competency in same".

From January 1 this year, the last loopholes allowing the use of asbestos were eliminated, but that does not address the problem of the asbestos that already exists in buildings across the country.

The deadly fibre was a popular building material for decades. As a result it is found in buildings ranging from the Opera House right across to local primary schools.

Forty-five thousand people are expected to die from asbestos related illness over the next 20 years unless effective medical treatments are found.

The extent of the problem can be measured by the existence now of 8000 mesothelioma sufferers, 25,000 lung cancer patients with asbestos exposure and 33,000 asbestosis sufferers in Australia.

Peggy Trompf from the Workers' Health Centre in Lidcombe stresses the importance of dealing correctly with asbestos.

Domestic asbestos

"In a domestic situation asbestos is commonly found as fibro asbestos-cement sheeting [also



known as AC Sheeting] in homes built pre- the 1970s, also as asbestos lagging or roof insulation", says Ms Trompf. "If there's more than 200 square metres of AC Sheeting, or any amount of lagging or insulation, it must be removed by a licensed contractor."

"In a commercial setting a thorough audit should be done to determine levels of asbestos and an asbestos register established before any work commences on any strip-out or demolition."

Peggy Trompf says that people who suspect that they may have

asbestos in their home or workplace can contact the Workers' Health Centre and arrange to have materials tested. The Workers' Health Centre website also has a fact sheet on asbestos.

WorkCover NSW can be contacted for a list of licensed asbestos removal contractors.

Members of the public contact the CFMEU on 02 9267 3393 or the NSW WorkCover Demolition and Asbestos Hotline on 02 9370 5885, 02 9370 5881 or 02 9370 9220 to report any suspicious behaviour on demolition sites. ☘

LABOUR NOTES

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) have reached what they call a landmark agreement on pay and conditions for general staff at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). Staff will receive a salary increase of over 20.5 per cent over three years. The agreement also provides for 20 weeks parental leave, paid partner leave of two weeks, and an improvement on job security, redundancy and redeployment provisions. CPSU UTS Branch President Alan Barnes said, "This has been one of the hardest rounds of enterprise bargaining because of the Federal Government's interference in the bargaining process last year. It has been through the efforts of the CPSU Union members at UTS that we have been able to achieve an outcome that will improve the work-life balance of all staff at UTS."

The Australian Workers' Union (AWU) in New South Wales will approach the Chief Inspector of Mines to conduct a statewide audit of underground working hours after five recent deaths. AWU state president Mick Madden said mining companies are openly flouting laws governing hours of working underground. Under state legislation there is a legal limit for working underground of a maximum of eight hours per day, 48 hours per week. Some miners particularly those on Australian Workplace Agreements, are routinely being asked to work more than 12 hours at a time. The AWU is also asking that prosecutions proceed if the audit finds that employers are breaking the law.

The Queensland Council of Unions (QCU) has warned Brisbane's new Lord Mayor against attempts to sack Brisbane City Council workers in the wake of his election on March 27. QCU General Secretary Grace Grace said the comments made by Campbell Newman alluding to sackings within the council were of a concern to the union movement. "Mr Newman has said that any Council employee who will not work with him faces the sack. The Council's 7000 employees are a professional workforce and should not have this threat hanging over heads just because of a change in the position of Lord Mayor", Ms Grace said. "The union movement will not stand by and allow Mr Newman to unfairly sack any Council employee as current laws prohibit such discriminatory behaviour."

Day of mourning for workers killed on the job

Queensland LHMU (Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union) members will join the Queensland Council of Unions (QCU) on April 28 to mourn the deaths of all workers who died on the job in the last year.

April 28 is the International Day of Mourning, when workers from more than 100 countries will gather to commemorate those who were killed or injured at work, or who became sick from exposure to workplace hazardous substances.

LHMU Queensland Branch Secretary Ron Monaghan said the International Day of Mourning was an opportunity to recognise the workers who were killed at work last year and it was also time to look at our own workplace safety.

"Many of our members can be faced with dangerous situations in their workplace, whether that be danger from violence, such as security guards, or danger from disease, such as child-care workers and so on", said Ron.

"Other workers in our manufacturing plants also have to be careful, particularly around large processing machines that have caused numerous injuries to our workers in the last twelve months.

"I think the role of a union in these situations is to be responsible for making sure occupational health and safety legislation is being strictly adhered to and workers are being given a fair say in their safety at work."

Australia's workplace death rate is worse than Great Britain, Japan, Norway, the Czech Republic, USA, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia and Canada. We have the same number of deaths per 100,000 workers as Romania.

Ambulance workers

In 2003 the dangers of work were forced home for Queensland ambulance workers after a series of on-the-job accidents left a number of workers injured and even resulted in the fatality of an ambulance paramedic.

Ron said the tragic death of Queensland intensive care paramedic Craig Liddington, his pilot and another crew member in October year affected the whole ambulance service and served as a reminder of potentially dangerous situation ambulance workers face each day. The team died while attempting a helicopter rescue.

Strong unions: safe jobs

Studies show that unionised workplaces are safer workplaces. Unions continue to fight to prevent workplace deaths and injuries and for proper compensation for those who have survived. Queensland unions are lobbying for:

- Strict OH&S laws that are properly enforced;
- Elected workplace health and safety representatives with effective entitlements;

• The introduction of industrial manslaughter legislation in Queensland.

Queensland LHMU members are being urged to download and sign a petition from the Queensland LHMU website - www.lhmu.org.au/qld - in support of the creation of a law against industrial manslaughter.

Unions continue to fight to prevent workplace deaths and injuries and for proper compensation for those who have survived.

The petition states: "current Queensland legislation does not allow for corporations to be prosecuted successfully for manslaughter where they have created dangerous situations that have resulted in the death or serious bodily injury of a worker or member of the public, even where there has been gross negligence".

Worldwide at least 1.3 million workers, including 12,000 children, die every year from workplace causes. Over 160 million injuries and work-related diseases are reported each year.

In Australia about 400 workers are killed in workplace accidents each year and 500,000 suffer a workplace injury or illness. Another 2,300 die from occupational diseases such as asbestos-related cancer. In total, there are about 50 work-related deaths per week in Australia and more than 15 serious injuries every hour ☘

Clover Moore's long march to become Sydney's Mayor

The election of progressive independent Clover Moore as Mayor of Sydney City Council has been marked by successive manoeuvres by both Liberal and Labor Parties to keep her out and retain control of the Council which is the jewel in the crown of NSW Municipal electorates.

1968: The Askin Liberal Government attempted to loosen Labor's grip on Sydney City Council by shedding the surrounding working-class suburbs. The Government created the separate South Sydney Council where many workers reside.

1980: Clover Moore is elected as the first non-Labor councillor in the 12 years of South Sydney Council.

1982: Eyeing an opportunity to grab control of Greater Sydney City Council Labor re-amalgamates the two Councils. Moore is elected to the new enlarged Sydney City Council.

1987: Just as Moore is poised to win the position of Mayor the State Labor Government sacks Sydney City Council as "unworkable" and appoints an administrator.

1988: The Labor Government itself is sacked by NSW voters, with the Liberal Coalition storming to power. However, Moore's public support is stronger than ever and she steals an upset win in the

Liberal held State seat of Bligh. The Liberals de-amalgamate Sydney City once again, recreating the old South Sydney Council.

1991, 1995, 1999: Bligh is regarded as a plum election prize by both Liberal and Labor, yet despite boundary changes and generous funding of high-profile candidates they fail to unseat Clover Moore.

2000: Labor suffers an embarrassing defeat in South Sydney, losing control of the council to a coalition of Greens, Democrats and Community Independents.

2003: Frank Sartor the nominally independent but very Labor-friendly Mayor of Sydney resigns to run for Labor in the state election. The position of Sydney Mayor falls to independent Lucy Turnbull, wife of high-profile Liberal Malcolm Turnbull. Moore again romps home in Bligh.

2004: To oust the two independent Mayors and regain control of both Councils the State Labor Government once again forces the amalgamation of the Sydney City and the more working class South Sydney – a move that is opposed by many South Sydney residents. The Labor Party nominates former rightwing Federal ALP Minister, Michael Lee. The Liberal Party nominates former State Liberal leader Peter Collins.

Clover Moore saw red. "Sussex

Street [ALP headquarters] wants a tame council because they see it as a cash cow and they are prepared to go to great lengths to get it", says Ms Moore.

Clover Moore's unexpected announcement of her nomination as a Mayoral candidate for the re-amalgamated Sydney City Council while retaining her state seat of Bligh mightily upsets both Liberal and Labor Parties. They both waged a strong and underhanded campaign against her.

On election day, March 27, Clover Moore won 43 percent of the first preference votes and the ALP 23 percent. The Greens and a number of other candidates exchanged preferences with Clover Moore which enabled her to win the Mayoralty hands down.

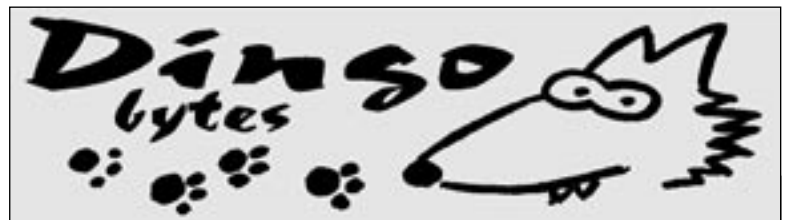
The shoddy manoeuvres of both Labor and Liberal Parties backfired.

Clover Moore said, "There is a rejection by the Sydney community of the thuggish sacking of a democratically elected [South Sydney] council and the attempt to install a candidate who moved into our area last September – there's been a real rejection of that".

Greens make be gains in elections:
see report next week



Clover Moore – Labor and Liberal manoeuvres backfire



Free the Miami Five

The following is a resolution carried unanimously by a National Consultation of Australia-Cuba Friendship Societies held in Canberra, March 5-7, 2004.

This National Consultation of Australia-Cuba Friendship Societies joins with others around the world to express its solidarity with the five courageous young Cubans – Gerardo Hernandez, Rene Gonzales, Antonio Guerrero, Ramon Labatino and Fernando Gonzalez – who entered the United States in 1998 to monitor the actions of extremist groups in Miami in an attempt to protect Cuba from invasion and acts of terrorism.

For more than 40 years, these groups have engaged in violent acts against Cuba and anyone who calls for a normalisation of relations between Cuba and the United States.

Between 1990 and 2000, there were 108 such attacks, both inside Cuba and against its diplomats abroad. In 1997, there were ten bombings in Havana alone. In June 1998, Cuba sent the FBI specific information about the activities of these Miami-based mobsters.

But instead of clamping down on the criminals, the FBI arrested the five Cubans claiming it had uncovered a "Cuban spy network" trying to "infiltrate" the US Southern Command.

From the moment of their arrest, the five were isolated and kept in solitary confinement for 17 months before being subjected to a politically motivated trial in Miami.

Twelve jurors were chosen from a pool of 150, all of whom were asked about their views on Cuba, and if any expressed opinions at odds with the prevailing anti-Cuban

ideology, they were automatically disqualified.

In June 2001, after a six-month trial, the Five were found guilty on all 26 counts after only a few hours deliberation by the jury which did not ask a single question despite the complexity of the case or make a request to review any of the testimony.

The prosecution brazenly held meetings with the Miami Mafia and was unable to prove that any of the five had carried out a single illegal act or had stolen any military secrets, whereas defence lawyers presented extensive evidence about the violent criminal activities of the US-based gangsters who had operated against Cuba since the 1959 Revolution and any who dared to stand up to them.

The presiding judge handed out horrific sentences, ranging from 15 years to double-life.

In an effort to break the Cubans' spirit, US authorities sent them to separate jails across the country – some of the very worst – refused to recognise them as political prisoners and prevented them from seeing their wives and families.

From February 28, 2003 to March 31, 2003, the Five were once again isolated in "holes" – punishment cells – cutting off all their communications with the outside world during a crucial stage of their legal process.

We condemn Washington's gross violation of international human rights and demand the sentences for the Five are quashed and that they are immediately returned to their country and their families.

We send greetings to the people of Cuba, with a special greeting to the families of the Five Cubans.

Signed by:
Australia-Cuba Friendship Society Branches: Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Western Sydney, Brisbane, Albury, Adelaide and Hobart



Juan Pozo (centre) at a public meeting in North Fremantle on March 14 organised by the WA branch of the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society. Juan Pozo, an executive member of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the People (ICAP) has just completed a whirlwind tour of the major urban centres of Australia informing people of the situation in Cuba. As the US steps up its efforts to block Cuba, so does global solidarity. There are 16 friendship and solidarity associations with Cuba in Australia and 1806 worldwide.

There is no doubt that the Federal Government – with the active support of the states – is in the process of killing off the nation's public education system. By the year 2010, if the current trend continues, Australia's teacher shortage will reach 30,000. By 2005 the demand for primary school teachers will increase by 31 percent and for secondary teachers by 85 percent! Access to teacher training in our tertiary education system is becoming more difficult as user pays policies bite. So, in Victoria alone 3330 people who applied for and were eligible for teaching courses missed out in 2004.

The WA Government has announced a ban on the growing of GM food crops. Its decision was influenced, no doubt, by public opinion and the findings of scientific research about the implications of GM crops for the environment and the unknown effect of GM food on humans. But there is another question people should be asking: Do we want a few corporations monopolising the global food supply? The GM transnationals such as Monsanto intend to ensure that everything we eat comes from and is owned by them. They are taking over seed companies worldwide and closing them down; introducing seeds that do not reproduce; making sure that crops cannot be grown without their patented chemicals. It's called monopoly capitalism.

In this election year the Howard Government is frantically trying to hose down the obvious conclusion people are making: that Australia is now a more likely target for terrorism as a result of joining the US in the war on Iraq. So desperate are the conniving PM and his lying ministers that they even jumped all over Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty when he said that the Madrid bombings were linked to Spain's support for the US war on Iraq. By inference the same threat applies to Australia. But not everyone's swallowing it. In a national Newspoll last week 65 percent of people surveyed said they believed an attack is more likely as a result of Australia's support of the US in Iraq.

The National Coalition for Gun Control has launched a powerful campaign of public awareness about the devastating impact of the growing number of handguns. The campaign includes an advertisement which shows three dug out grave sites with the caption, "If you support handguns place a cross below". NSW Premier Bob Carr and PM John Howard were invited to attend the launch of the campaign at the NSW Parliament, or provide a letter of support. Neither did so.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is Health Minister Tony Abbott. In what he described as just his "personal opinion", Abbott last week publicly declared his opposition to abortion. Abbott and his government are viciously anti-women and as Health Minister he is now in a position to take away Medicare access from women who decide to have a termination.

Maritime industry in crisis

The NZ experience

The Maritime Union of New Zealand has launched a campaign to save the NZ maritime industry. The goal of the campaign is, "To ensure a future for the New Zealand maritime industry with permanent, secure jobs for workers, through legislative change and active unionism". The following article outlining the crisis is acknowledged to *The Maritimes* (March 2004) which is the Union's official magazine.

The Maritime Industry of New Zealand has reached the point of crisis

Workers on the waterfront and in New Zealand shipping are being hit repeatedly by attacks in a cut-throat industry that is dominated by short-term profits at the expense of long-term stability.

The viability of this vital industry is in jeopardy, with continual shakedowns of the workforce leading to casualisation, contracting out, job losses and company unions.

Job security is non-existent, and the future of young people in our industry is bleak. The time has come to fight back. Unless we turn the maritime industry in a new direction, it will be destroyed.

It is important to understand how we have got to this situation.

Free market policies unleash chaos

The wave of free-market Government policies in the late 1980s and early 1990s began the process.

Some of these policies were aimed directly at our industry with the goal of boosting business profits, regardless of the effect on working people.

Waterfront workers got the full hit of Port Reform in 1989, with the reduction of workforce numbers by 50 per cent.

Seafarers were attacked by the removal of cabotage in 1994.

This let in foreign and flag of convenience vessels to domestic cargo shipping routes at cheap rates, which has resulted in the progressive collapse of the New Zealand shipping industry.

A major factor undermining the industry was the Employment Contracts Act of 1991, which sparked a series of attacks by aggressive, anti-union employers that have continued through the Employment Relations Act of 2000.

In the period from 1991 until now, maritime workers have experienced wave after wave of industry changes.

Many of our members who made the commitment to stay in the industry lost their entitlements and conditions through the restructuring of companies, contracting out, and casualisation.

Little attention to social cost

During this process, the increasingly aggressive competition between employers has reduced the workforce to the status of pawns, with an apparent lack of concern from Government as to the social consequences and the implications for the future of the industry.

The large number of ports (and stevedores operating within these ports) has contributed to the problem.

International shipping compa-

nies have used the situation to their advantage, playing port against port, with port companies offering all-in rates which are not commercially viable.

Local shipping companies have been pushed out of the market as Flag of Convenience shippers dump capacity on domestic cargo routes, and operate ships with Third World conditions for their crews.

Some recent case studies of the industry in the last twelve months clearly illustrate these concerns.

Disruption of port workforces

Toll Stevedoring purchased BHP Stevedoring and employed a new workforce at Marsden Point, Northland.

Toll employed 12 people from the area, then because of lack of work started transferring this labour to Mount Maunganui with the flow-on effect of seriously hurting our existing Mount casual members' income.

These casuals had in most cases been loyal to Toll and BHP for many

years, it was their sole income and they were all hoping to be offered full-time work.

The end result was that Toll had to make 8 of its Marsden new employees redundant.

Destruction of New Zealand shipping industry

New Zealand-owned and operated Pacifica Shipping has been a major employer of Maritime Union members.

In the last year Pacifica has withdrawn half its remaining fleet of ships operating on the New Zealand coastal trade, leaving only two in action, in the face of capacity dumping by Flag of Convenience ships that employ Third World crews in Third World conditions.

The New Zealand shipping industry is literally dying a death from a thousand cuts.

The Maritime Union has campaigned for a decade to reintroduce cabotage, or the reservation of New Zealand coastal shipping routes for New Zealand ships and New Zealand crews.

The Government's Shipping Industry Review noted in December 2000 that cabotage would increase New Zealand's participation in shipping.

The Government's own Transport Strategy aims at provid-



ing an affordable, safe, integrated and sustainable transport system by 2010.

Unless immediate action is taken, the New Zealand shipping industry will not be a part of this strategy, as it will no longer exist in any meaningful sense.

Contracting out rips away employees' conditions

CentrePort Wellington decided to set up a subsidiary company to handle its conventional ships, work covered by the Maritime Union and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU).

Local shipping companies have been pushed out of the market as Flag of Convenience shippers dump capacity on domestic cargo routes

Through a manipulated set of events and a contracting out exercise a new union was set up.

At that time CentrePort maintained a large list of casuals that worked on call.

The members of the new union encouraged some CentrePort casuals with little experience on the wharf to join their new union, resulting in a divided and hostile workforce and an ongoing legacy of bitterness.

CentrePort could not make a success of this operation and they facilitated the setting up of the Loading Company (which is supposedly autonomous of CentrePort).

The Company is owned by shipping company Quadrant and ISL (operated by Hans Axt) from Mount Maunganui – and operates its own in-house Union.

The problem here is that Maritime Union members were contracted out of work coverage by CentrePort.

The result is many faithful CentrePort casuals (some with service as long as 7 to 8 years) were never offered job interviews with the new company.

The other area of concern is [that] this company is operating unsafely.

In another major port, Toll Logistics successfully took a large stevedoring contract from P&O Stevedores at the end of 2003 in Auckland.

To service this contract Toll purchased 100 per cent of an existing Auckland Stevedoring Company, Leonard and Dingley.

The consequences of this takeover is that existing employees of P&O face redundancy, some may get a job with Toll and others face some form of casualisation.

Most of these affected P&O employees had already been laid off in the New Zealand Stevedoring (NZS) crash in 1997, when many lost in the vicinity of thirty thousand dollars in redundancy pay.

In another area, ANL has withdrawn from Auckland, leaving employees of Wallace Stevedoring with an uncertain future.

Following this major investment, both MSC and P&O announced they were reconfiguring to Port Chalmers.

Scab unions operating freely

ISO-subsiary Mainland Stevedores work log ships in a number of South Island ports, using a mobile casualised labour force that comes under coverage of a "union" that is not recognised by any other genuine union, undermining permanent local jobs.

Safety and security issues at forefront

Safety issues are not being addressed and the industry clearly needs to have legislation with some bite, not voluntary guidelines and other weak and compromised regulations.

The groundings of a number of vessels in recent times has led to action on tightening up one area of shipping regulations, but other areas have been left out of equation.

The recent collapse of cranes on-board flag of convenience ships in Bluff and Port Chalmers since November 2003 shows the multiple negative effects of the deregulated "open" maritime industry.

Waterfront workers are now effectively working in Third World environments when they go aboard these ships to operate machinery.

These ships endanger workers, the environment and ports themselves, as well as destroying the jobs of New Zealand seafarers employed under New Zealand conditions.

It is truly a bizarre spectacle, when massive biosecurity operations are carried out after the escape of insect pests onshore, and anti-terrorist hysteria imprisons individual refugees – yet at the same time our ports and maritime industry are left wide open to a range of hazards through a "hands off" mentality.

The situation has reached crisis proportions

The maritime industry has reached such a low ebb that the morale of the workforce has become crippled in an atmosphere of insecurity and fear.

The Maritime Union has drawn a line in the sand, and is launching a nationwide campaign to bring some stability back to the maritime industries. ☉

The US Global Empire

Laurence M. Vance

There is a new empire in town, and its global presence is increasing every day.

The kingdom of Alexander the Great reached all the way to the borders of India. The Roman Empire controlled the Celtic regions of Northern Europe and all of the Hellenized states that bordered the Mediterranean. The Mongol Empire, which was the largest contiguous empire in history, stretched from Southeast Asia to Europe.

The Byzantine Empire spanned the years 395 to 1453. In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire stretched from the Persian Gulf in the east to Hungary in the northwest; and from Egypt in the south to the Caucasus in the north. At the height of its dominion, the British

classification can be deceiving, however, because installations are only classified as small if they have a Plant Replacement Value (PRV) of less than \$800 million.

Although most of these locations are in the continental United States, 96 of them are in US territories around the globe, and 702 of them are in foreign countries. But as Chalmers Johnson has documented, the figure of 702 foreign military installations is too low, for it does not include installations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Qatar, and Uzbekistan. Johnson estimates that an honest count would be closer to 1000.

The number of countries that the United States has a presence in is staggering. According to the US Department of State's list of

Islands are likewise home to US troops. Guam has over 3200.

Regular troop strength ranges from a low of 1 in Malawi to a high of 74,796 in Germany. At the time the most recent "Personnel Strengths" was released by the government (September 30, 2003), there were 183,002 troops deployed to Iraq, an unspecified number of which came from US forces in Germany and Italy.

The total number of troops deployed abroad as of that date was 252,764, not including US troops in Iraq from the United States. Total military personnel on September 30, 2003, was 1,434,377. This means that 17.6 percent of US military forces were deployed on foreign soil, and certainly over 25 percent if US troops in Iraq were included. But regardless of how many troops we have in each country, having troops in 135 countries is 135 countries too many.

The US global empire – an empire that Alexander the Great, Caesar Augustus, Genghis Khan, Suleiman the Magnificent, Justinian, and King George V would be proud of.

Laurence M. Vance teaches Greek at Pensacola Bible Institute in Pensacola, FL. Website: www.lewrockwell.com/vance/vance8



Us troops are in 135 countries

Empire included almost a quarter of the world's population.

Nothing, however, compares to the US global empire. What makes US hegemony unique is that it consists, not of control over great land masses or population centres, but of a global presence unlike that of any other country in history.

The extent of the US global empire is almost incalculable. The latest "Base Structure Report" of the Department of Defence states that the Department's physical assets consist of "more than 600,000 individual buildings and structures, at more than 6000 locations, on more than 30 million acres."

The exact number of locations is then given as 6702 – divided into large installations (115), medium installations (115), and small installations/locations (6472). This

"Independent States in the World," there are 192 countries in the world, all of which, except Bhutan, Cuba, Iran, and North Korea, have diplomatic relations with the United States. All of these countries except one (Vatican City) are members of the United Nations. According to the Department of Defence publication, "Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths by Regional Area and by Country," the United States has troops in 135 countries.

This means that the United States has troops in 70 percent of the world's countries. The average American could probably not locate half of these 135 countries on a map.

To this list could be added regions like the Indian Ocean territory of Diego Garcia, Gibraltar, and the Atlantic Ocean island of St. Helena, all still controlled by Great Britain, but not considered sovereign countries.

Greenland is also home to US troops, but is technically part of Denmark. Troops in two other regions, Kosovo and Hong Kong, might also be included here, but the DOD's "Personnel Strengths" document includes US troops in Kosovo under Serbia and US troops in Hong Kong under China.

Possessions of the United States like Guam, Johnston Atoll, Puerto Rico, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and the Virgin

The United States has troops in the following countries:

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Afghanistan | Columbia | Hungary | Mongolia | Spain |
| Albania | Congo | Iceland | Morocco | South Africa |
| Algeria | Costa Rica | India | Mozambique | South Korea |
| Antigua | Cote D'Ivoire | Indonesia | Nepal | Sri Lanka |
| Argentina | Cuba | Iraq | Netherlands | Suriname |
| Australia | Cyprus | Ireland | New Zealand | Syria |
| Austria | Czech Republic | Israel | Nicaragua | Sweden |
| Azerbaijan | Denmark | Italy | Niger | Switzerland |
| Bahamas | Djibouti | Jamaica | Nigeria | Tanzania |
| Bahrain | Dominican Republic | Japan | North Korea | Thailand |
| Bangladesh | East Timor | Jordan | Norway | Togo |
| Barbados | Ecuador | Kazakhstan | Oman | Trinidad & Tobago |
| Belgium | Egypt | Kenya | Pakistan | Tunisia |
| Belize | El Salvador | Kuwait | Paraguay | Turkey |
| Bolivia | Eritrea | Kyrgyzstan | Peru | Turkmenistan |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | Estonia | Laos | Philippines | Uganda |
| Botswana | Ethiopia | Latvia | Poland | Ukraine |
| Brazil | Finland | Lebanon | Portugal | United Arab Emirates |
| Bulgaria | France | Liberia | Qatar | United Kingdom |
| Burma | Georgia | Lithuania | Romania | Uruguay |
| Burundi | Germany | Luxembourg | Russia | Venezuela |
| Cambodia | Ghana | Macedonia | Saudi Arabia | Vietnam |
| Cameroon | Greece | Madagascar | Senegal | Yemen |
| Canada | Guatemala | Malawi | Serbia and Montenegro | Zambia |
| Chad | Guinea | Mali | Singapore | Zimbabwe |
| Chile | Haiti | Malaysia | Sierra Leone | |
| China | Honduras | Malta | Slovenia | |

"They said it"

The pioneers of a warless world are the youth that refuse military service.

Albert Einstein

They wrote in the old days that it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country. But in modern war, there is nothing sweet nor fitting in your dying. You will die like a dog for no good reason.

Ernest Hemmingway

At least two thirds of our miseries spring from human stupidity, human malice and those great motivators and justifiers of malice and stupidity, idealism, dogmatism and proselytizing zeal on behalf of religious or political idols.

Aldous Huxley

O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire.

Mark Twain

The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact, non-Westerners never do.

Samuel P. Huntington

MUA goes on the net for schools

In what must be applauded as a splendid initiative the Maritime Union of Australia has launched an education package on its website (www.mua.org.au; select About Us on the main menu, then click Ships of Shame, pirates, pickets & ports) designed for use in Australian secondary schools where there are curriculum opportunities to teach and learn about Australian trade unions and unionism. The material would also assist tertiary students seeking basic Industrial Relations background knowledge.

A Note for teachers explains how the package can be used in the classroom. There is a brief history of the MUA and its parent organisations, the Seamen's Union of Australia and the Waterside Workers' Federation, written for readers who have no prior knowledge of the union. There is a series of questions that treat the whole MUA website as a text to be

researched and is designed to help students gain an overview of the functions of the union.

Rowan Cahill, who conceived and wrote the package, is a labour movement historian and journalist, and for many years was a classroom teacher. He is co-author of *A History of the Seamen's Union of Australia*,

justice. Some, like the maritime unions, grew out of the experience of living and working in the Australian colonies and are among the nation's oldest economic and political formations. Collectively trade unions have been a dynamic force in shaping Australia's social and cultural history.

www.mua.org.au

select About Us on the main menu, then click Ships of Shame, pirates, pickets & ports

1872-1972 (1981) and wrote the Study Guide accompanying the film *Wharfies* (1988).

Explaining why students should learn about trade unions, Rowan Cahill said: "Trade unions have helped shape the way Australians live, from their wages and working conditions to legislation protecting and advancing equity and social

"However this contribution tends to be overlooked, ignored, or forgotten, a process in which the collective spirit of the Australian 'character' is neglected in favour of individualism.

"Important facts with far reaching political, social, and cultural implications are sidelined. For instance, during the 1880s

and 1890s New South Wales and Victoria were probably the most unionised places in the world.

"It is fitting that students have some familiarity with them", said Rowan Cahill.

"If students are regarded as being suitable to be employees, then it is remiss of anyone to deny them the opportunity to learn about trade unionism, and about having some power over the determination of their wages and conditions and the quality of their working lives".

Other Australian trade union websites with material about trade unionism intended for student and teacher use include the ACTU **Worksite for Schools** (www.worksite.actu.asn.au) with its wide range of Fact and Activity sheets, and the **Labor Council of NSW** (www.labor.net.au/teach) education resource which provides insight into the historical and contemporary roles of unions in Australia.

PNG rejects immunity for Australian police, officials

The government of Papua New Guinea is standing firm against pressure from Australia to give legal immunity to more than 300 police and other officials to be sent to PNG as part of the so-called Enhanced Cooperation Program.

Australia has tied the approval of an \$800 million aid package to the granting of immunity from criminal prosecution to the Australian personnel. PNG Prime Minister Michael Somare has rejected the call, pointing to his obligation under the constitution not to permit such special privileges.

A report in *The [PNG] National* newspaper carried comments from unnamed PNG officials who were giving vent to the sense of outrage in the country:

"We have taken offence to the attitude of the Australian officials... Australia insists on its jurisdiction over criminal immunity for its personnel while Waigani (the PNG Government) maintains that PNG's jurisdiction should be applied because PNG is not in a crisis situation, or a failed or weak state."

The government of PNG is clearly worried that its Australian counterpart views their country as

another target for the sort of treatment handed out to the Solomon Islands last year.

During Operation Helpim Fren (Helping Friend), 2000 Australian troops and police were sent to the Solomons to restore order in what the Howard Government had declared a "failed state". Australia gave its first demonstration of its new, enhanced role as deputy sheriff for the US in the Pacific.

At the same time, Australia assumed the right to impose its commercial and strategic interests in the region. Since last year's operation, Australian officials have been busy on this agenda, which includes advancing Australian corporate interests in the Solomons.

Australian officials have co-ordinated a regime of outsourcing and privatisation and seen to it that nearly all the goods and services purchased for the country come from expensive Australian sources.

One example of the privatisation program involves the prison system. GRM – a prison managing outfit owned by media baron Kerry Packer – now supervises the prisons on the Solomon Islands.

Ex-pat GRM supervisors control the prisons and get paid AS\$13,900

The government of PNG is clearly worried that its Australian counterpart views their country as another target for the sort of treatment handed out to the Solomon Islands last year.

a month for their efforts. Local prison officers get paid about AS\$30 a week to work in decrepit facilities, without uniforms or such basic equipment as telephones.

Nick Warner – the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands administrator appointed by the Australian Government – intervened to oppose a demand for a pay raise from local prison officers.

Prisoners still do not get their most basic needs met. They do not have access to lawyers or properly trained medical staff. In a country where malaria and other serious diseases are common, prisoners are often left in the care of staff with no more than a first aid certificate. Meals are poor.

People working in the system



complain that, after the six figure salaries are paid to Australian appointed managers, there are no funds to make the urgently needed improvements.

Meanwhile, Australian managers live in the King Solomon Hotel in fully serviced rooms. The local

people see all this going on while they continue to live in shacks with cooking and washing facilities outside.

It is no wonder that the government of PNG is resisting the friendly embrace of its southern neighbour. ☺

How to win elections Taiwan style

The results of March 20 presidential election in Taiwan are still in dispute although the Electoral Commission has declared the outgoing President Chen Shui-bian the winner. A "judicial recount" has been agreed to after massive demonstrations took place in Taipei and other cities demanding a recount.

President Chen Shui-bian of the Democratic Progressive Party claimed victory over the opposition leader Lien Chan of the Kuomintang and People First Party, amid claims of ballot rigging and suspicions surrounding the alleged attempt on Chen's life.

The alleged assassination attempt is widely suspected of being a contrived event. It occurred only one day before polling day.

Magic bullet

Chen sustained a minor flesh wound across his stomach while his Vice-President is said to have sustained a slight wound in an ankle. If this is credible the Taiwanese must have invented a bullet that is able to change course in flight.

Police said they believed two assailants were involved and authorities offered US\$390,000 reward for information leading to their capture.

What may have significantly influenced the ballot outcome is the fact that immediately after the attack Chen activated a national security protocol which meant that 200,000 military and police – traditional supporters of the Kuomintang Party – could not vote.

"It's obvious this violent incident [the alleged assassination attempt] reversed the outcome of the election", said Wayne Lin, a political analyst at Fu-Jen Catholic

University in Taipei. "All the information had indicated the opposition would win by 400,000 to 500,000 votes."

There were 12.9 million votes cast and Chen claimed to have won by just 29,000 votes, or 0.2 per cent.

Furthermore, the number of invalid votes are said to have leaped to 337,297, a number almost triple the 122,278 votes rejected in the 2000 election. This number is also 11 times Chen's claimed margin of victory.

What is clear is that Chen, who is now under a cloud of suspicion and faces angry speculation about the assassination attempt, will preside over a divided and volatile electorate – if he is finally proclaimed to have won.

The USA has now given recognition to Chen's claimed victory. The US gives huge behind the scenes support to Chen's attempts to establish an "independent" Taiwan although the US has repeatedly declared to the People's Republic of China that it adheres to a "one China" policy.

In massive demonstrations thousands of supporters of the Kuomintang candidate demanded: "Examine the ballots, examine the wound".

Referendum defeat

An extremely important outcome of the election was the defeat of a referendum initiated by Chen which sought approval to boost military expenditure directed against China. This referendum was described by Chen as a "lynch-pin" of his campaign. The defeat of the referendum has been almost totally ignored in media reports of the Taiwanese elections. ☺

Mercury risk rising in US

David Zink

I'd like you to meet a young family: Angela, Jerry, and their little girl Becky. Angela cares about her family's health and tries to provide them with a healthy diet, including fresh fish a couple times a week. Jerry loves the outdoors and fishing. Becky was born and developed normally, and was a happy baby.

Things seemed to be on the right track until about Becky's 16th month, when things mysteriously started to go wrong. By 18 months, she had entirely lost the six or seven spoken words she had started using earlier. She started avoiding eye contact with her mother, and became uncoordinated, inattentive, irritable, and withdrawn. Angela and Jerry would often find Becky staring vacantly into space and biting her hands.

Nobody knew what to make of this. Becky's doctor was perplexed, and ran Becky through some tests. The results confirmed autism and revealed the likely culprit: mercury.

Becky's not alone. The number of children with mercury-caused problems is growing. According to new estimates from the Environmental Protection Agency, 16 percent of women of childbearing age have dangerous levels of mercury in their bodies, putting more than 600,000 children at risk each year.

Where is this stuff coming from? Coal-burning power plants are the single largest source of mercury pollution. They release over 100,000 pounds (50 tons) of mer-

cury into the environment annually in the US.

Once released into the atmosphere, it soon gets into streams, lakes, and the sea, where it forms methyl mercury – a potent neurotoxin. It targets the developing fetal brain and nervous system. Even tiny amounts can cause serious developmental problems, reflected in humans as difficulties in walking, talking, hearing, and writing. Fish are often found with high levels of mercury in their tissue.

President Bush's "Clear Skies Initiative" will allow power plants to increase mercury emissions by 520 percent by 2010. In December, Mike Leavitt, Bush's new EPA administrator, said that it is "not feasible" to determine how much mercury the chemical and power plants are emitting, nor to enforce tougher standards. (Power corporations' generous contributions to Bush and lobbying efforts to avoid installing improved emission control equipment have apparently succeeded.)

The EPA proposed allowing power plants to spew more mercury into the air longer. Leavitt's favoured "free market" approach includes "emissions trading" that will likely create toxic "hot spots." Environmentalists fear this will delay substantial mercury reductions by a decade.

At the same time, the EPA is planning on exempting coal combustion waste from regulation as hazardous waste, ensuring that more than 100 million tons of mercury-laden waste will be dumped into the environment each year.

The federal Food and Drug Administration currently recommends that all women of childbearing age, especially pregnant and nursing women, avoid eating swordfish, pollock, mackerel, tilefish, or shark. Four ounces of white canned tuna maxes out EPA guidelines for a 120-pound person.

Forty-three states have issued warnings against eating fish species that tend to have high mercury concentrations, including bass, trout, and other fish caught in over a thousand lakes and streams across the country. And any vaccines containing thimerosal, a preservative containing mercury, should be avoided by pregnant and nursing women and young children.

Persistent toxic bio-accumulative chemicals (PBTs) like mercury are a serious problem in many parts of the country. To address this threat to our health and the environment, the Washington State Department of Ecology developed a plan to phase out PBTs, which build up in the food chain and are known even in trace amounts to cause birth defects, cancer, and mental retardation.

Faced with a budgetary shortfall created by tax exemptions and cuts for the corporations and wealthy, the Washington State Legislature eliminated funding for vital public health programs like the PBT phase-out plan.

Environmental and public health, our food supply – is nothing safe from capitalism?

People's Weekly World, paper of Communist Party, USA ☺

White House insider says Bush lied

Susan Webb

In explosive revelations this week, former White House counter-terrorism chief Richard Clarke charged that the Bush administration had little interest in the September 11 terrorist attacks except for how they could be used to promote war on Iraq.

"US soldiers went to their death in Iraq, thinking that they were avenging 9/11, when Iraq had nothing to do with it," Clarke told Good Morning America.

"They died for the president's own agenda which had nothing to do with war on terrorism. In fact, by going into Iraq, the president has made the war on terrorism that

involved. Just look. I want to know any shred."

On the 60 Minutes news show, Clarke told reporter Lesley Stahl, "Now he never said, 'Make it up.' But the entire conversation left me in absolutely no doubt that George Bush wanted me to come back with a report that said Iraq did this. 'I said, 'Mr. President. We've done this before. We have been looking at this. We looked at it with an open mind. There's no connection'. He came back at me and said, 'Iraq! Saddam! Find out if there's a connection.' And in a very intimidating way. I mean that we should come back with that answer".

The White House did not deny this report, saying only it "cannot

set about using 9/11 – exploiting it, really – to advance an agenda which had, in fact, been largely discredited by 9/11. They shoehorned everything they'd been trying to do before the attacks into the new boots of 9/11. And the fit was so bad they had to deceive the public and themselves to do it."

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) has released a report citing "237 specific misleading statements about the threat posed by Iraq made by the five administration officials most responsible for providing public information and shaping public opinion on Iraq" – Bush, Vice President Cheney, Defence Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Powell, and National Security Advisor Rice.

The report, "Iraq on the Record," has a searchable database. See www.house.gov/reform/min/features/iraq_on_the_record/.

MoveOn.org has launched an online campaign for congressional censure of Bush for misleading the country about Iraq's WMDs, charging that Bush and his administration "hyped and distorted" the Iraq threat to take the US to war.

At a March 22 press conference, Kyle Hence, of 9/11 Citizens Watch, representing family members of Sept. 11 victims, charged that the commission investigating the 9/11 attacks has experienced "a pattern of stonewalling and slow walking" by the White House and federal agencies. Hence other 9/11 family members demanded that the commission compel cooperation and public sworn testimony from top officials.

Meanwhile, the special panel named by Bush to "study" pre-war intelligence has not been heard from.

The author can be reached at suewebb@pww.org.
From *People's Weekly World* ☘

"Your government failed you. Those entrusted with protecting you failed you. And I failed you". Richard Clarke, former US counterterrorism chief.

much harder."

"While the World Trade Centre was still smouldering," he said, "while they were still digging bodies out, people in the White House were thinking:

"Ah! This gives us the opportunity we have been looking for to go after Iraq."

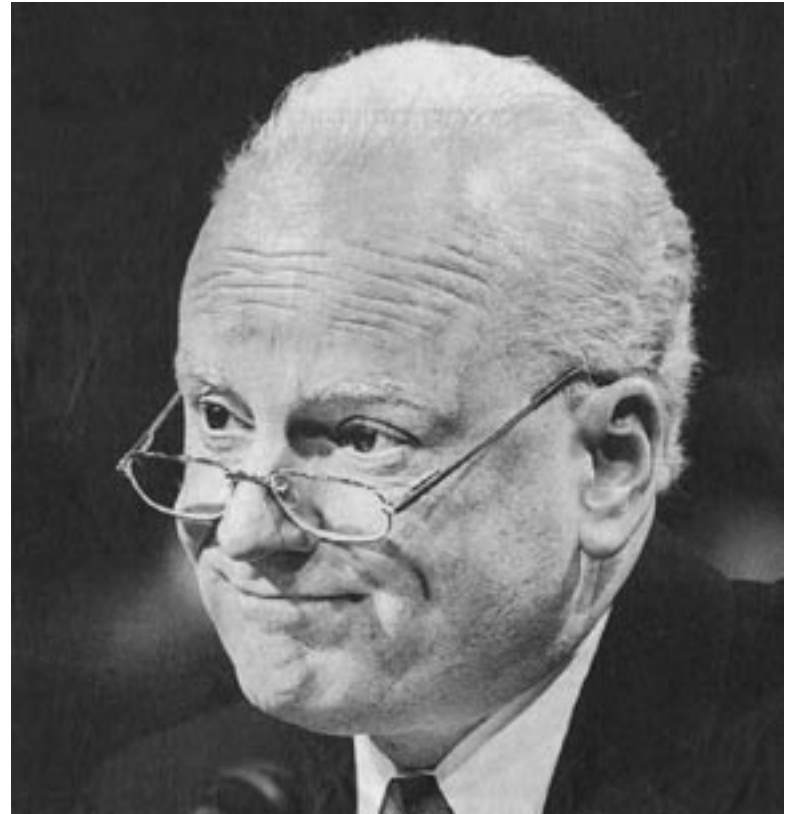
In his just-released book, *Against All Enemies: Inside the White House's War on Terror – What Really Happened*, Clarke relates that on September 12, 2001, Bush pulled him and a few aides aside, telling them, "Go back over everything, everything. See if Saddam did this". When Clarke replied that "al-Qaida did this," and reminded Bush that the CIA, FBI and White House staff had failed to find any link to Iraq, Bush "testily" replied, "I know, I know, but ... see if Saddam was

find evidence that this conversation between Mr. Clarke and the president ever occurred". However the exchange has been confirmed by others.

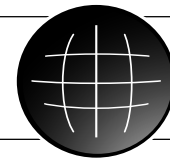
Clarke, a Republican security hawk, held senior security positions under Presidents Reagan, Bush I and Clinton. After two years in the George W. Bush White House, he resigned last March.

Another former top Bush official, ex-Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, said in January that top Bush advisers began planning to attack Iraq as soon as they got into office.

The shocking core of these revelations was summarized by Washington political commentator Josh Marshall in his widely read Talking Points web log: "On September 12, the Bush war cabinet



Richard Clarke – "US Soldiers went to their death thinking that they were avenging 9/11"



Global briefs

BOUGAINVILLE: Bougainville public servants have threatened to stage a sit-in protest that would involve 3,000 public servants if the provincial administrative structure is not put into action by April 2. "Public servants in Bougainville continue to serve under deplorable conditions and to continue to delay the implementation of the approved restructure is injustice to them", said Mr Noro, Public Employees' Association Bougainville branch president. "The union feels that there has been a breach of labour laws, not merely arising from contractual obligations but also under the constitution relating to the employer and employee relationships, governing aspects of wage reviews and the determination and other aspects of employment conditions", Mr Noro said. The union leader pointed out that the current Bougainville structure was outdated – "Public servants in the administration continue to occupy and act on positions they last won in 1988, before the Bougainville crisis".

SOUTH AFRICA: The South African Communist Party condemned and expressed its concern about a shooting that took place outside the Cape Town house of former President Nelson Mandela. The SACP passed condolences to the family of the man who died from the shooting. The SACP warned criminal/s that the people of South Africa would not be intimidated and that they would do everything in their power to defend Mandela and everything that his life represents.

UGANDA: King Solomon I of the Bunyoro kingdom in western Uganda plans to sue the British government for 3.4 trillion pounds compensation for Victorian colonial terrorism. "The British burned down our houses, destroyed crops and introduced syphilis to my people", he said. "They were responsible for the deaths of 2.4 million people. Moreover they stole my grandfather's cattle and ivory. It is not what we expected from civilised people. What they did then is no different to what al-Qaida is doing today", the king said.

BRITAIN: The British Trade Union Council warned that employers were increasingly monitoring the whereabouts of workers through signals from their mobile phones. Bosses also eavesdrop on telephone calls, time toilet breaks, monitor e-mails and Internet use and use close-circuit television and hidden cameras. TUC general secretary Brendan Barber warned that this not only breaches workers' rights to privacy, it is also bad for business. "Big Brother bosses do not get the best out of their employees", he said. "Staff who are being snooped on are less productive and less healthy." He also attacked "an unregulated boom in intrusive and ineffective drug, drink and health testing of employees". Speaking for the civil rights organisation Liberty, Barry Hugill said: "The use of this technology to track the movements of workers is reprehensible. It's a very scary development".

JAPAN: Japan has paid \$95 million dollars to Iraqi tribesmen to have their contingent in Iraq protected from attacks.

The Assassination of Sheikh Yassin

In a statement on the murder of Sheikh Yassin by the Israeli army the Communist Party of Israel (CPI) described it as an "act of state terrorism serving the occupation, sabotaging the chances for a negotiated solution, and a step likely to intensify the bloodbath of Israelis and Palestinians.

"By murdering Yassin, the Sharon government once again exposes the destructive purpose of its policies, disguised behind talks of "pullout" and "disassociation" for what they really are – the

perpetuation of the occupation, continuation of the war to eliminate the national rights of the Palestinian people including the suppression of its right to self-determination, and the prevention of any possibility of negotiations.

"These policies are against the real interests of the people of Israel and endangers more and more the personal safety of all Israelis.

"The CPI condemns the Sharon policy of war and terror in its attempt to displace the Palestinian people from their land while simul-

taneously bringing disaster to the people of Israel.

The CPI calls on all supporters of peace, Jews and Arabs, to intensify the struggle against the occupation and (illegal) settlements, against the apartheid wall and road blocks, and for a just and stable peace based on the establishment of a Palestinian state, whose capital is East Jerusalem, alongside the State of Israel, as well as a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem in accordance with the decisions of the United Nations. ☘

Iraq is for keeps – US builds bases in Iraq

Any thought that the US intends to quietly get out of Iraq after "democracy" has been restored is blown away by the fact that the US is already building a number of "enduring bases" in Iraq. It is appropriate to recall that the US has occupied South Korea ever since the early 1950s and shows no signs of pulling out. Its many other bases in the over 130 countries (see article page 7) are also there to stay as the US imposes its global empire.

Christine Spolar, of the *Chicago Tribune* writes:

"US military engineers are overseeing the building of an enhanced system of American bases designed to last for years. US engineers are focusing on constructing 14 "enduring bases," long-term encampments for the thousands of American troops expected to serve in Iraq for

at least two years.

"As the US scales back its military presence in Saudi Arabia, Iraq provides an option for an administration eager to maintain a robust military presence in the Middle East and intent on a muscular approach to seeding democracy in the region.

The number of US military personnel in Iraq, between 105,000 and 110,000, is expected to remain unchanged through 2006, according to military planners.

"The US plans to operate from former Iraqi bases in Baghdad, Mosul, Taji, Balad, Kirkuk and in areas near Nasiriyah, near Tikrit, near Fallujah and between Irbil and Kirkuk.

"There also are plans to renovate and enhance airfields in Baghdad and Mosul, and rebuild 70 miles of road on the main route for US troops headed north".

Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space
www.space4peace.org
globalnet@mindspring.com ☘

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Unhealthy provocation

I offer a few comments about the report by Sitaram Yechury published in *The Guardian* on February 18, 2004.

Speaking about socialism, Sitaram Yechury says it is the rule of "exploited classes". This is wrong. It is the rule of the working class supported by its allies.

He claims that one of the "defects" of socialism was the "centralisation of power". This is not a defect but a necessity. Under socialism you cannot afford to have more than one centre of power. Such a situation would open way for counter-revolution.

He speaks of the "dictatorship of the Party" as being a "defect" of socialism. Communist society is built through the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Party is the political leadership of the proletariat.

There is a dialectical connection between the two aspects. It is wrong to separate them as Sitaram Yechury does. To separate them would certainly be a defect of socialism. However, the socialist system that was built following the 1917 revolution up until Stalin's death did not have such a defect.

The revisionist period which followed had the defect of replac-

ing the dictatorship of the proletariat with a state of the whole people and replacing the Party of the working class with the Party of the whole people.

Sitaram Yechury says that "depoliticising the working class" was also a "defect".

This was not a defect of socialism but a crime committed by the revisionists. But Sitaram Yechury doesn't make reference to this.

He goes on to say that under socialism there was "inadequate development of ideological consciousness" but does not make the point that this was a feature of the revisionist period and not of the period when Stalin was General Secretary of the Party.

Sitaram Yechury claims that the "uneven development of capitalism" was responsible for the fact that socialism was achieved in Russia but not in the western capitalist countries.

This is not so. The reason was that Lenin and the Bolshevik Party prepared the Russian proletariat for socialist revolution whereas in the west opportunism was dominant.

Our Indian comrade suggests that, through "political decolonisation", capitalism removed the "moral stigma of being an oppressor of other nations". I don't think that capitalism has ever removed the moral stigma of being an oppressor of other nations.

Sitaram Yechury goes on to say Leninism was "Marxism in the era of imperialism", but today communists need to "define the contours of the socialist revolution".

I think this is misleading. Lenin not only dealt with imperialism but

he gave us an outline of socialism.

To suggest that Communists have yet to define socialism is to reject Lenin's ideas as well as those of Marx.

Towards the end of his statement, our Indian comrade suggests that up to now, there is no fully "coherent and comprehensive theory for socialist revolution".

Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin gave Communists a coherent and comprehensive theory for socialist revolution. To suggest otherwise is to open the way for revisionism. And it is revisionism on an international scale which is hampering the development of Communist theory and practice.

In conclusion, I have met Sitaram Yechury and I was impressed by his Marxist-Leninist capacity. I am rather disappointed by his contribution published in *The Guardian*.

He calls his report a "healthy provocation". It is a provocation all right but an unhealthy one.

Alan Miller
Adelaide, SA

Name calling

Is Rick Hendry seriously suggesting (*Guardian* 24/3/04) that Sitaram Yechury's speech to the World Social Forum was "revisionist nonsense"?

Name calling is never enough. For his assertions to have any credibility, Rick must indicate exactly which of Yechury's propositions are "revisionist" and which Marxist principles Yechury has revised.

Eddie Clynes
Woodford, NSW

Beware when praying

Just a short note to share a beautiful remark by Desmond Tutu: "When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, 'Let us pray'. We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land".

Eyes open
Sydney

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Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

It's a crime

What well known public figure in the US, in an interview with *Liberty* magazine, said: "Bolshevism is knocking at our gates. We can't afford to let it in."

Can't guess? Here's some more, from the same interview: "We have got to organise ourselves against it and put our shoulders together and hold fast. We must keep America safe, whole and unspoiled."

Still no luck? Here's one more sentence then: "We must keep the worker away from Red literature and Red ruses and we must see that his mind remains healthy."

Well, I'll stop teasing you; it was that stalwart exponent of the free enterprise system, Al Capone. Yep, none other than Big Al himself.

But why, I hear you ask, would a notorious and very wealthy gangster be concerned about keeping the Red menace away from the American worker?

Capone was a mobster, a killer, a vice lord and white slaver, an extortionist, a corrupter of police and public officials, and much more. But among the most profitable of the many rackets he was involved in was labour racketeering.

Organised crime quickly woke up to the profits to be made from the protection racket, creaming a cut off the top of the income of a shop, café or theatre in return for *not* sending some thugs around to smash the place up.

The income from that racket, however, was insignificant compared to the income a mob could

cream if they got control of a union (generally through bribery, violence and ballot rigging).

There were members' dues, to begin with. By breaking a few slow payers' legs, all workers on the job quickly joined and paid up – or left the industry.

Then there was a variant of the protection racket: getting employers to pay for industrial peace. Employers paid up big for this one, for once they had paid, the gangsters forced the workers to accept whatever conditions the employer imposed.

There were union pension funds to be misused, wholesale pilfering to be organised and enforced, union labour to be used for "private" orders, and more.

In these conditions it is understandable that Al Capone would want workers kept away from "Red literature and Red ruses", for the Reds had the regrettable habit of identifying the mobsters as the workers' enemy. They would organise workers in union elections to reject the Mob's candidates, and they had the courage and organisation to stand up to the hoodlums.

In other words, Capone was protecting his class interests. His businesses may have been illegal, but they were (and indeed still are) an integral part of the capitalist system.

After all, where did Capone's profits go? They were invested in "legitimate" businesses, of course.

Like laundered drugs money today, they provided a splendid source of capital for takeovers, expansion, political donations (a legal form of bribery), and the like.

With the defeat of Fascism in WW2, and the subsequent revolutionary upsurge in Eastern Europe and Asia, to be shortly followed throughout the colonial world, came a reactionary upsurge in the struggle against the "Red Menace".

The power of the Mafia on the New York waterfront had been more

or less legitimised during the War, "in the interests of keeping the ships moving". Then the OSS (forerunner of the CIA) had obtained the help of the New York Mafia to secure the co-operation of its Sicilian counterpart during the US invasion of Sicily.

The Mafia's main contribution appears to have been the ambushing and massacre of the Communist-led Sicilian partisans, part of the process of clearing the way for the US-backed reactionary Catholic party the Christian Democrats.

Back in the US however, not just workers but professionals and business people who had been involved in the war against Hitler and Fascism were more than a little miffed to find the phenomenon alive and well – even flourishing – in their own backyard.

The Ku Klux Klan waged racist terrorism to rival Hitler's Stormtroopers. Besides Blacks and Jews, they also targeted union organisers and Communists.

Gangsters arrogantly bossed whole sectors of the country's economy – the East Coast waterfront (the West Coast was protected by a Communist-led union under Australian Harry Bridges), road-freight, warehousing, meat-packing and many others.

Attempts by non-mobster business interests and legislators (like the anti-Mob Senator Kefauver) to deal with the gangster menace tended to shed unwelcome light on the extent of the problem but proved ineffective in putting a stop to it.

As a book reviewer with the initials SJB put it in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in May 1952, "Little short of a social revolution in America will check the cancerous growth of crime and corruption which is gnawing at her vitals". [If any reader knows the identity of SJB, please drop us a note.]

In December of 1952, the British *Daily Worker* reported that evidence



"Another good thing about our company: we're family-owned and operated."

had been given before the New York State Crime Commission showing that "major stevedoring companies on the New York Waterfront are using paroled criminals to fight progressive members of the dockers' union".

In Elia Kazan's greatly overpraised film *On The Waterfront*, the dock workers defy the mobsters only because Marlon Brando stands up after being bashed. In reality, the mobsters were defeated on the New

York waterfront as elsewhere (to the extent that they *were* defeated) by a sustained campaign within the union itself.

Today, however, with organised crime co-operating with covert government agencies in the exploitation of the massive profits from the drug trade, the nexus between crime and capitalism seems to be stronger than ever.

Which is only to be expected, of course. ☹



Sun 4 April ~
~ Sat 10 April

All right, I'll confess at once: I am not a fan of Fellini. I find his films shallow, grotesque and tedious.

Of all the bright young filmmakers who began their careers in the glory days of Italian neo-realism following WW2, Fellini drifted from it faster – and further – than any of his peers.

His first couple of films, although beautifully made, were already trying to put a sentimental spin on neo-realism. Soon after, he revealed himself to be an artist with nothing to say.

Fortuitously, this suited the bourgeois critics of the time, desperately searching for a new aesthetic to replace the social consciousness espoused during and after the War, under the influence of the anti-Fascist coalition.

With the help of young middle class French and American critics (and later filmmakers) they found their new aesthetic in the concept of the director as *auteur* and in the elevation of style over content, indeed often to the exclusion of content altogether.

Fellini, with nothing to say but a very distinctive style, was made to order for them, and they lauded him to the skies. He has been a "creator of cinematic masterpieces" ever since.

Personally, I find only Antonioni to be more consistently boring. However, *The Magic Of Fellini* (ABC 2.00pm Sunday) takes the contrary view.

Someone should tell the BBC that the whizz-bang technical wizardry and state of the art computer imagery of programs like *Lion*

Battlefield and *Shark Battlefield* are no substitute for uncluttered images and clarity. That's what you want in a wildlife program.

The recent *Shark Battlefield* was an irritating parade of visual effects, some of them useful, most of them apparently there for no other reason than that the computer could do them.

Now we have *Polar Bear Battlefield* (ABC 7.30pm Sunday) with every technical gimmick under the sun getting in the way of what could have and should have been a very interesting program.

The Sahara desert was not always as big as it is today. In fact, the lands that now form its fringes were once the granary of the ancient world. They were destroyed in the Roman era by overcropping with goats.

The French made documentary *Lost Worlds: Libya's Rock Art* (SBS 8.30pm Sunday) deals with an even earlier time. Exploration for oil in what is now the desert of Messak, Southwest Libya, has unearthed one of the most important archaeological deposits ever to be brought to light in northern Africa.

As far as the eye can see are the relics of prehistoric camps, tools, domestic containers, bones...of thousands of sites. Engraved in the stone of waadis are 6000-year-old reproductions of elephants, giraffes and human silhouettes.

The new series of *Bedtime* (ABC 10.00pm Tuesdays), the acclaimed half-hour comedy-drama written and directed by Andy Hamilton, introduces new neighbours on either side of Timothy West and Sheila Hancock (retirees Andrew and Alice Oldfield).

Bedtime is a Hat Trick production, and to my delight, two of the new neighbours (one on each side) are played by a pair of excellent actors from an earlier Hat Trick serial also written by Hamilton: 1997's splendid *Underworld*. The actors in question are Alun Armstrong and Kevin McNally.

Andy Hamilton's writing, whether back in 1997 or now, is incisive, quirky and engrossing. In *Underworld* he managed to be comic while dealing realistically with psychopathic violence, rape and casual murder. In the new series, his themes include the fear of Alzheimer's disease, racism, gutter

journalism, sexism, even germ warfare.

It is the measure of his skill as a writer, that these assorted topics are raised in a way that is dramatically satisfying while deftly comic.

In the years immediately following WW2, the US enjoyed a nuclear monopoly. But even then, US and British scientists were striving to perfect weapons of mass destruction that would kill the enemy but leave the enemy's economic wealth unscathed, ripe for the plundering.

German and Japanese research was added to their own to produce new generations of chemical and biological weapons. Early versions of the latter were tried out in Korea.

Undaunted, US and British scientists went on developing ever more virulent biological agents and stockpiling tonnes of nerve gas, but the USSR kept abreast of their activities and the "free world" could never manage to get sufficiently ahead to be able to risk launching any kind of "germ war".

Nowadays, two lines are put forward about this subject: one is the old Cold War line that these terrible weapons had to be developed purely as a defence against the Soviet germ warfare program for world conquest, or something like that.

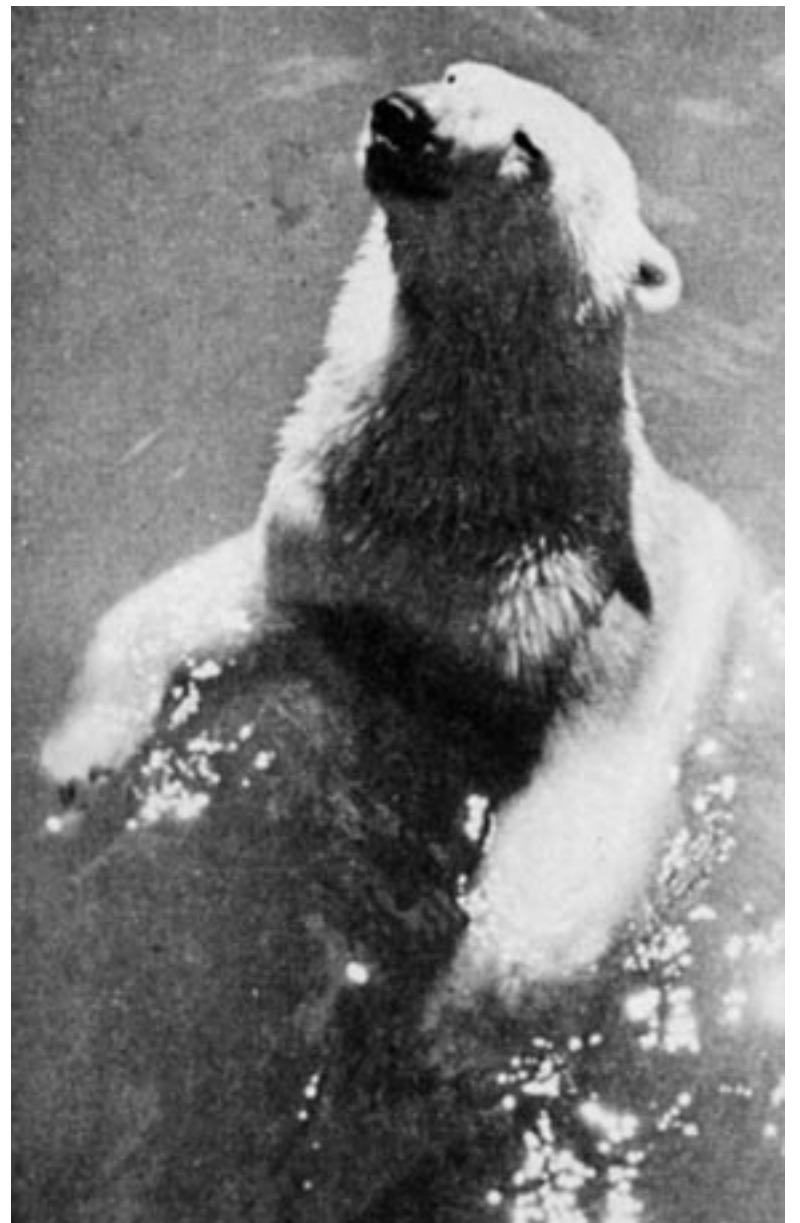
The second line is more sophisticated and says the development of biological weapons was "Cold War madness", indulged in equally by both sides. This is more subtle, but still anti-Soviet propaganda.

Deadly Enemies, screening on *Untold Stories* (ABC 9.30pm Wednesday), is an ABC production, written and directed by Susan Lambert, which follows the second line.

I was struck by the former Soviet scientists who worked in this field and who were interviewed for the program. Dr Kanatjan Alibekov and Dr Serguei Popov both cleared out to the USA after the overthrow of socialism in the USSR.

Alibekov is now the vice-president of a major biotech company and heads the US National Centre for Biodefence. Popov now also works for a private US biotech company.

As recently as the 1950s, no less than thirty US states enforced laws that prohibited or



Too much technical gimmickry (*Polar Bear Battlefield*)

restricted the sale of contraceptive devices. Without an effective means of controlling their fertility, young women faced the prospect of three decades of child bearing.

In 1953, birth control advocate Margaret Sanger, 71, teamed up with heiress Katharine McCormick, then 78 years old, to develop a simple birth control pill. Sanger's own mother had been pregnant 18 times, had 11 children, seven miscarriages, and died at age 49.

Sanger and McCormick engaged a brilliant but discredited biologist, Gregory Pincus, to do the research.

McCormick would eventually contribute millions of dollars towards the project.

But in the end, Pincus would be able to persuade pharmaceutical company G D Searle to manufacture the Pill. Within five years, six million American women had made it a part of their daily lives.

The Pill (SBS 10.00pm Friday) explores the story behind the development of this revolutionary contraceptive and features personal accounts from the first generation of women to have access to the Pill. ★

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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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April 2
It's Our ABC – What Do We Do To Save It?
Prof Ken Inglis: Visiting Fellow, History Program, Research School of Social Sciences, ANU, author of *Aunty at Seventy – A Health Report on the ABC*;
Robyn Williams: Science Program ABC;
Gary Cook: President Friends of ABC

April 9
Good Friday

April 16
The Australian Health System – The hot issues
Con Costa: National President, Doctors' Reform Society;
Ged Cowin: Assistant Federal Secretary, Australian Nurses Federation

April 23
**Development Plans for Sydney's Ports – Views for the rich few:
Failing Infrastructure for the many**
Gary Blaschke - Chair of the Botany Bay and Catchment Alliance;
Noel Child, environmental scientist and engineer.

April 30
Playing the Fear Card – The Politics of Insecurity
Stuart Rees: Director of Peace and Conflict Studies Sydney Uni,
Cameron Murphy: President Council of Civil Liberties

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Locking up the peacemongers

Felicity Arbuthnot questions the sanity of a world in which protestors for peace are locked up yet war criminals roam free.

"Individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience. Therefore, (individual citizens) have the duty to violate domestic laws to prevent crimes against peace and humanity from occurring". **Nuremberg war crime tribunal, 1950**

In a little-noted trial two days before Whitewash Wednesday – the day that the Hutton report was published – three-times Nobel peace prize nominee Kathy Kelly, founder of the Chicago-based Voices in the Wilderness, was sentenced to three months in prison for silent and, as always, non-violent protest outside the notorious School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia.

The peacemaker was jailed. The people at Fort Benning, which has trained some of the world's most ruthless dictators, military thugs and torturers, were left free.

Kelly, a theology graduate, is a serial offender for peace. She spent a year in a US prison for planting corn seeds at a missile silo. She has played peaceful witness and drawn attention to the world's worst trouble spots.

She witnessed the terror that the US-backed Contras wreaked upon the peoples of Central America in the 1980s.

In San Juan de Limay, Nicaragua, where the Contras had slaughtered and kidnapped 25, she stayed and fasted with Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto. He was urging non-violence in the face of US-sponsored violence.

They were joined by thousands of the same persuasion. "Diplomacy would have worked", said Kelly. It was not to be.

In 1990, she joined hundreds of people from numerous countries who camped on the border between Iraq and Saudi Arabia in a desperate bid to halt the war.

When the carpet-bombing started, the Iraqi authorities arrived with buses and drove the camp members

Kelly stood outside the building crying.

Suddenly, a small child appeared and put her hand in Kelly's. Her mother was standing nearby. "I am American and I am sorry", was all that she could muster. "No, no", said the woman: "It is not you, you are not your government".

Thus, the idea of Voices was formed.

Since 1996, when the Iraqi bureaucracy was finally convinced of the sincerity of Voices in the Wilderness and let it into the country, Kelly has led or initiated 50 delegations to Iraq. She has taken in numerous consignments of medicines, toys and sweets.

"A pitiless siege" is how Kelly described sanctions. A generation grew up knowing only the terrors of the ongoing, illegal US and British bombings and the grinding misery of life under the embargo.

"I would rather die of bombing than sanctions", remarked nine-year-old Fatima on one visit. A four-year-old asked: "Are they going to kill me?" But she had a worse worry. "Will they kill my little sister?", she asked.

Voices' members have been threatened with 10 years in jail, a US\$1 million fine and a \$250,000 fine for each breach of the travel ban that was imposed on US citizens before the invasion. For taking medicines, toys, "tootsie pops" and for making children laugh, they have already had a US\$10,000 fine imposed on them.

In the searing summer of 1999, Kelly and a group of anti-war activists spent three months living in private homes in the beautiful, relentlessly bombed southern city of Basra "to share embargoed life – the power cuts and the hunger".

They demonstrated the other side of the US to the Iraqi youth, who know only the suffering that Washington has brought, heralding almost inevitable enmity and further conflict later.



Desperation – a protest outside the occupation headquarters

military grudgingly admitted that it was "a mistake".

In another hot summer in New York in August 2001, Kelly was arrested, along with three priests and other campaigners, for fasting outside the United Nations and inviting those in the UN mission to share their one daily meal with them.

They had brought water from the East River to "remind ourselves of how vulnerable Iraqi civilians are to water-borne diseases".

During last year's attack and invasion, Kelly stayed in Baghdad. "All of us learned to adopt a poker face, hoping not to frighten the children, whenever there were ear-splitting blasts and gut-wrenching thuds", she recalled.

"During every day and night of the bombing, I would hold little Miladhah and Zainab in my arms.

water and sewage systems, of the food distribution on which 70 per cent of the population were entirely dependent, was cataclysmic.

Cholera, typhoid and encephalitis ran rampant in Basra. The military was apparently unable to repair vital infrastructure.

Kelly went to the US Civil Military Operation Center (CMOC) to outline the extent of the catastrophe.

She explained that there were people in the UN development program and the Red Cross, plus numerous talented Iraqi experts who had been cobbling together Iraq's crumbling systems for 13 years. They could have patched things up to a tolerable level if not perfect level within weeks.

She was told never to attempt to speak to a member to the CMOC again and never to attempt to return to the Palestine Hotel. For all the ongoing official assurances, services have been down for almost a year.

Kelly now awaits the bureau of prisons' summons to tell her which prison to "self-report" to.

Former UN Assistant Secretary General and UN co-ordinator in Iraq Denis Halliday, himself a Nobel nominee, is appalled.

He commented: "To learn that Kathy Kelly has been sentenced to three months imprisonment for her stand against the criminal training provided by the School of the Americas is an outrage.

"Such aggressive action in respect of US citizens who care – who are truly patriotic – demonstrates that so-called US values and what passes for US democracy adds up to little more than fascism.

"For a citizen and Nobel peace prize nominee to be hog-tied, abused and then jailed is astounding, but not surprising under the current right-wing regime in Washington. Kathy

is the most courageous person I know. Kathy – along with millions, I salute you."

In her statement to the judge, Kelly concluded: "In Iraq during the US bombing in March and April of 2003, I saw how children suffer when nations decide to put their resources into weapons and warfare rather than meeting human needs.

"Judge Faircloth, we have experienced and seen the deadly effect of US military policy on mothers and children, on families. We have held the children and tried to comfort them under bombs.

"Sometimes I think we face a wilderness of compassion in this country. But when I think of the many voices that have tried, in this court, to clamour for the works of mercy rather than the works of war, I feel at home, I feel grateful and I feel a deep urge to be silent and listen to the cries of those most afflicted.

"Their cries are often hard to hear. But when we hear them, we're called, all of us, to be like voices in the wilderness, raising their laments and finding ourselves motivated to build a better world."

Meanwhile, two countries lie in ruins, Iraqis are being shot, "disappeared" and having their homes demolished by the unaccountable US military.

While the US doesn't "do Iraqi body counts", others are trying. Some estimate that as many as 1000 children a month are being injured.

Six hundred and sixty people have "disappeared" in Guantanamo.

The peacemaker is jailed, but President Bush and Prime Minister Blair have been nominated for this year's Nobel peace prize. The ghost of Machiavelli is walking tall by the Potomac.

Morning Star, British Socialist newspaper ✪

"I am American and I am sorry", was all that she could muster. "No, no", said the woman: "It is not you, you are not your government".

to the Jordanian border and safety, risking their own lives twice.

Kelly promptly made medical and transport contacts in Jordan and spent the 42-day war driving up and down the Amman-Baghdad highway, delivering medical aid while the bombs dropped.

Just after Baghdad's Amariyah shelter was bombed, incinerating all but eight inside, the indomitable

One of the group stayed in what had become known as "missile street" where, just a year earlier, US or British bombs had destroyed or damaged 34 homes, killing six people – including three little girls under seven, from one family – and injuring 64.

Claiming that there were tanks and military hardware hidden in this poorest of poor quarters, the US

That's how I learned of their fear. They were grinding their teeth, morning, noon and night. But they were far more fortunate than the children who were survivors of direct hits, children whose brothers and sisters and parents were maimed and killed".

When Baghdad fell, a new kind of desperation set in. The collapse of electricity, medical services,



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 Illawarra Branch: Janice Hamilton
16/26-30 Hutton Ave
Bulli NSW 2516
Ph: 02 4283 6130

Website: www.cpa.org.au
Email: cpa@cpa.org.au

The Guardian

Website: www.cpa.org.au/guardian/guardian.html
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

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