

Racism behind ATSIC abolition

Tom Pearson

With the proposed abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) the Howard Government has reached a racist milestone in its policies of assimilation and dispossession of Indigenous Australians. The peak national body with its elected representatives has been a high priority target of the Government. The legislation will be introduced in Parliament next month.

It was one year ago that the Government set up an agency to gut ATSIC. Its staff was cut from 1300 to 20, with those remaining moved to a new board run by Wayne Gibbons, a government-appointed chief executive officer. Gibbons was invested with absolute authority through this new executive agency, called Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services.

As such he replaced ATSIC's 18 elected board members and 400 elected regional councillors.

The coup was executed ahead of a \$1 million government-commissioned review into ATSIC: the review found that ATSIC functioned well and was important to Aboriginal people.

Under this final part of the Government's plan the board members will be now displaced by an advisory group of "eminent Indigenous people" appointed by

notion of Aboriginal self-determination."

The Government put a lot of time in portraying ATSIC as the ultimate expression of Indigenous self-determination. It then undermined the organisation's ability to carry out its tasks and demonised its leaders through character assassination so that it could tear down ATSIC and declare Indigenous rights to be dead and buried.

Thus, in announcing the organisation's abolition Howard described "separate elected representation for Indigenous people" as a "failed experiment".

The word "separate" is pivotal to the Government's racist agenda, as was soon revealed when Minister Vanstone compared ATSIC to apartheid South Africa.

ATSIC delivered

ATSIC leaders Ray Robinson and Geoff Clark pointed out in a statement last year that, despite having been in existence for just 12 years, ATSIC delivered more to Indigenous people than any government, federal, state or territory in 200 years of colonial rule.

As part of the drive to discredit it, ATSIC has been blamed by the Government (with the co-operation of the mass media) for not delivering Indigenous communities out of third world conditions.

But ATSIC is not responsible for



With the destruction of ATSIC recognition of the special needs of Indigenous people is to be wiped. The Howard Government plans to mainstream all essential services to Aboriginal communities.

Noting that most countries have

tarians to realise that Aboriginal community-controlled advisory mechanisms have to be maintained in improving health, education and economic opportunities. "These are life and death decisions."

The Government also intends to dismantle the Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) by contracting out its work to private companies in a bidding war for a \$122 million, two-year contract. The bidder granted the contract will not be required to employ Indigenous staff or to be an Indigenous organisation.

Further, under the plan an Aboriginal person who has one prior conviction for a violent crime can be refused legal aid by the new contractor. This will lead to an even greater number of Indigenous people in prisons and increased Aboriginal deaths in custody. People charged with trivial offences such as drunkenness and traffic violations, would no longer be represented, increasing the Indigenous jail population.

The contractor will be also required to shift its priority from criminal cases, which make up the overwhelming majority of the ALS's cases, to child welfare and family violence matters. A means test will also be introduced.

Vanstone calls this "ensuring that Indigenous people get value for money". The Principal Lawyer for the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, David Bamber, said the proposals will have serious implications.

"The major point is that provision of legal services could not be profitable without a major reduction of service", he warned.

"The introduction of means testing and reduction of the number of types of matters for which aid is granted, services such as our after-hours services, a lot of our field services and services to the bush, would surely be cut."

For more information on privatisation and cuts to Aboriginal legal services see page 2

under the plan an Aboriginal person who has one prior conviction for a violent crime can be refused legal aid by the new contractor

the Indigenous Affairs Minister Amanda Vanstone on July 1 this year. Regional councils are to be scrapped by July, 2005.

As ATSIC commissioner Rick Griffiths put it: "Howard's Cabinet represents a black-armband, mean, narrow-minded, self-serving Government whose members just cannot come to terms with the

the provision of essential services, such as health, housing, education and employment, even though it has programs in some of these areas. These are the responsibility of state and federal governments. ATSIC was forced to provide supplementary funding in these areas because of the failure of governments to meet their responsibilities.

realised that mainstreaming does not work, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) asked why Australia has not learned those lessons. "Why do we want to turn the clock back 40 years?", asked NACCHO Chairman Tony McCartney.

NACCHO is urging Parliamen-

Report from
the coalface
- p4

Child care's
corporate parasites
- p5

The struggle for
Venezuela
- p6

US legacy
in Afghanistan
- p9

Felluja in April
- p12

The Guardian

No 1179

April 21, 2004

Lies and illegal wars

There is much concern and frustration within Australia's intelligence organisations surrounding the policies being followed by the Australian Government, especially the illegal war waged against Iraq. There is a rejection of the barrage of lies that are being used by Prime Minister Howard, his Foreign Affairs Minister Downer and others to justify their actions.

The first to step forward publicly with his concerns was Alan Wilkie from the Office of National Assessments. He is now followed by Lt-Col Lance Collins (Defence Intelligence Organisation) who claims there have been wide-ranging failures in defence intelligence. The charges made by Lt-Col Collins are not limited to the obvious lies that were foisted on the people of the world about Iraq's weapons. Of crucial interest is his charge that there is a pro-Jakarta lobby operating in Australia's intelligence organisations.

In Britain and the US, as well as in Australia, intelligence operatives, frustrated by government manipulation of information, are speaking out. White House counter-terrorism chief Richard Clarke has damned the Bush administration before the US Congressional inquiry in Washington into events leading to the Iraq war. Intelligence expert Dr David Kelly – who was harassed and threatened by the Blair Government and who allegedly committed suicide – spoke out in Britain.

The stand taken by these principled individuals is welcome as they help to expose the rottenness, immorality and neo-fascist agendas of government leaders.

The fact that the top leaders of both Liberal and Labor Party Governments were pro-Jakarta has been obvious ever since the seizure of power by the military-fascist Suharto regime in 1965.

The leaders of the two main Australian parties are fearful of any revolutionary or even progressive governments emerging anywhere in the world. They were fearful of the Indonesian national liberation movement led by President Sukarno and welcomed his overthrow and the mass murder that followed – including hundreds of thousands of communists – by the Indonesian military.

After Suharto took power, both Labor and Liberal Governments were generous in giving military aid to his regime and helping to train the Kopassus elements of the Indonesian armed forces which were Suharto's storm-troopers. The Government turned a blind eye when Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and implemented a reign of terror in which tens of thousands of East Timorese were murdered.

Closer historically is the intelligence assessment made by Lt-Col Collins that a vote for independence by the East Timorese in the referendum held in 1999 would result in military retribution by Indonesian armed forces. Knowing this the Howard Government sat on its blood-stained hands and watched the carnage unfold. It then sent troops as part of a UN force.

The Australian Government fears the emergence of a progressive government in East Timor and will attempt to strangle one led by Fretilin, the liberation organisation that led the struggle against Indonesian occupation.

There is no sign that the Australian troops still in East Timor are going to be withdrawn soon. To its earlier betrayal of the East Timorese people the Australian Government has added grand theft, seizing control of the major portion of the oil resources of the Timor Gap, an action that will help to keep East Timor impoverished for decades into the future.

It is the monstrous and despicable policies of the present government that some in Australia's intelligence services are seeing from the inside and are beginning to question and expose.

It is to be hoped that they will refuse to be intimidated and silenced and will be joined by others in these services who must be sickened by what they know and see. They will get the support and backing of many in the Australian community who are equally opposed to what is being done by government leaders in their name.

PRESS FUND

"If I'd known in advance of the September 11 attack I'd have moved heaven and earth to prevent it", declared US President George Bush recently, treading perilously close to a shattering revelation. Little by little the truth will seep out, despite all the official cover-ups. At *The Guardian* we're intent on revealing the truth, but to do that we really need your help by way of a contribution to the Press Fund – and preferably for the next issue! Our thanks go to the following, for their generous contributions over the last fortnight:

A Attard \$50, B Appleton \$40, R Benkhauser \$32, Tom Bartlett \$100, G Brown \$12, J Casey \$5, Tom Gill *Guardian* tin \$51.50, P Kennedy \$18, J R \$50, "Round Figure" \$11.50, Frank Phocion Vouros \$100.

Last fortnight's total: \$470. Progressive total: \$3225.00

Vanstone targets Aboriginal Legal Services

Aboriginal legal services throughout Australia may be replaced by private law firms if changes proposed by Aboriginal Affairs Minister Amanda Vanstone are adopted.

The Minister has proposed that

the services be put out to tender by private legal firms as a way of "ensuring that Indigenous people get value for money".

The idea has been floated for some time but the release on the

internet of a document, "Notes on the Exposure Draft for the Tendering of Legal Services", by the Government came as a surprise to Aboriginal legal services around the country.

Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS) Principal Lawyer David Bamber said that the proposal had serious implications for CAALAS clients.

"The major point is that provision of legal services could not be profitable without a major reduction in service", he said.

"The introduction of means testing and reduction in the number of types of matter for which aid is granted, services such as our after-hours services, a lot of our field services and services to the bush would surely be cut."

If the changes suggested in the Government's document are followed, then people charged with trivial offences like drunkenness and traffic offences would no longer be represented.

These types of offences account for 62 per cent of Aboriginal people in the Alice Springs jail.

If legal aid is removed for such offences it is likely the number of Aboriginal people in prison will increase.

The government document suggests that initial legal advice can be given face to face or by phone.

Repeat offenders of certain categories of crime such as violence, assault or the breach of a restraining order may be refused representation altogether.

Ms Vanstone also wants to see means testing introduced.

Land Rights News ☺



Punitive privatisation

The 2004 Year Book Australia published the Australian Bureau of Statistics gives the following figures for Indigenous Australians.

- Unemployment is 20 per cent for Indigenous Australians compared with 7 per cent for the whole of Australia;
- Gross household income is \$364 per week compared with \$582 for non-Indigenous Australians.
- The most shocking of all are the statistics for imprisonment, which show that Indigenous females made up 25 per cent of the total female prison population in 2002 despite Indigenous people representing just two per cent of the overall Australian population.
- Male prisoners account for 20 per cent of the male prison population.

In view of these figures, how could the proposed cuts and privatisation of legal services help the Indigenous people?

They are nothing short of criminal and punitive.

M5 East Stack health report rejected as "a sick joke"

Local community group, RAPS (Residents Against Polluting Stacks) has rejected the findings of a report into the health effects experienced by people round the M5 stack in Sydney as a "sick joke".

The report, released late on April Fool's day by NSW Health, claimed there was "no evidence of an association between the prevalence of eye, nose and throat symptoms and

modelled emissions from the M5 East stack", based on a random phone survey, and therefore "no justification for any further investigations". It followed on from an earlier report released in November, where internal NSW Health documents showed that "the experienced allergy, respiratory medicine and occupational medicine physicians examining affected residents, were

convinced of prima facie evidence of adverse health effects related to the vent stack".

After two years of fighting to get the Health Department to investigate residents' complaints, members of RAPS are very disappointed and angry. RAPS has pointed to a number of fundamental problems with the survey. People were only allowed to give yes/no answers about a limited range of symptoms over just the previous four weeks. Some of the residents surveyed had just come back from holidays, others had just been put onto stronger medication, yet they had to say they had no ill effects from the stack during the study period. Children were excluded from the study, and despite RAPS's requests, local doctors' opinions were not sought.

They used average annual exposures to stack pollutants to determine what levels of pollutants residents had been exposed to during the month of the study. "This is like saying that because Sydney gets an average 1200mm of rain a year, we will get 100mm of rain this month", said Mark Curran of RAPS.

RAPS has demanded the withdrawal of the report.

RAPS may be contacted through Mark Curran 02 9558 8863; Charles Briers 0405 808 695; or Giselle Mawer 0411 107153 ☺

Australian solidarity with Venezuela

The first step in establishing an Australia-wide network in solidarity with Venezuela was taken in Sydney recently. Following an address by Venezuela's Ambassador to Australia, Mr Leonel Vivas – in which he outlined the progress being made in Venezuela and the challenges being faced by the revolution – the people gathered at the Lidcombe meeting decided to establish Australia's first Bolivarian Circle.

Participants at the meeting outlined some immediate tasks, such as the preparations for the World Festival of Youth and Students to take place in the Venezuelan capital

of Caracas in August next year and a campaign to have the Australian Embassy in Venezuela reopened. An interim committee was established at the meeting and a regular meeting night set down.

It is anticipated that chapters of the organisation will be established in other centres throughout the country in the near future.

Those interested in promoting solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution unfolding in Venezuela should contact Manuel on 02 9821 2626 or email him at araucosanding@yahoo.com.au (See page 6 for interview with Mr Leonel Vivas.) ☺

NSW State Rail: More funding, but it's misdirected

Peter Mac

One of the areas of prime concern in the NSW Government's recently released (and highly controversial) "mini-budget" is the allocation of funding for the State's rail system.

In the public discussion of the budget most attention centred on matters such as the proposed new stamp duty on sale of real estate. However, the mini-budget also contained chilling implications for the State's public transport system.

There has been much public anxiety in NSW since the recent release of government-commissioned reports which proposed privatisation of parts of the transport system, such as the Sydney ferries, the eastern suburbs buses and much

splitting the present integrated network into five "independent" lines. The State Government is promoting this move enthusiastically, describing the current arrangement as "complex".

In point of fact, the complexity of the rail system as a whole is simply a reflection of the city's intricate harbour-centred topography. Splitting the existing network into five separate line systems (i.e. operating independently of each other) would involve multiple station changing and increased delays, and offers commuters the prospect of chaos, rather than greater efficiency.

The Carr Government has admitted openly that initial works have begun, for example of major "turnarounds" at MacDonalstown

private station owners, who complained that they were still not making sufficient profits. The Carr Government responded by cutting down the cheaper and more popular airport bus service, thus forcing the public to use the private rail stations.)

The only logical explanation for the creation of independent rail line systems would be the eventual privatisation of the entire rail network. In Victoria the Kennett Government divided public transport according to regions and services before its privatisation. This would appear to be what's in store for Sydney commuters, if the Carr Government has its way.

Secondly, the government proposes to replace the 498 ageing non air-conditioned carriages with new rolling stock under the "Steady Fleet Purchasing Plan", under a "private/public partnership" (PPP) arrangement. Such arrangements involve turning the prime aim of public transport into making private profits. Service comes a poor second.

Such deals have been widely introduced into government works in other countries, for example in public education in Britain. However, they have almost invariably been found to involve severe conflicts of interest in terms of people's needs and profit motives. Every individual route and trip has to turn a profit or it is cancelled.

Moreover, they almost invariably involve the provision of funding for the works from private sources offered by the contractors. The terms of loan deals for specific projects are cloaked in "commercial in confidence" secrecy. No transparency of government operations here! In fact, taken as a whole they're known to have crippling long-term debt implications for future governments and the hapless taxpayer.



And thirdly, the government intends to replace the current rail service between Casino and Murwillumbah with a coach service that will carry the official Countrylink badge, but will actually be privately owned.

The Minister for Transport attempted to justify this decision with the statement that "It would have cost \$188 million to maintain this section of line over the next 20 years." However, the government has provided no alternative plans for purposes of comparison, for example the upgrade of regional services and/or the provision of supplementary government-owned branch-line coach or rail services. And it has so far altogether failed to deal with questions of reduced pas-

senger safety and comfort in coach services.

Privatisation and closures of vast sections of the NSW Countrylink rail and Cityrail networks, as well parts of the Sydney ferry services, was signalled in one of the reports recently commissioned by the Carr Government.

The government was cautiously non-committal in responding publicly to the recommendations of these reports. But it's quite clear that the Carr Government, like its federal counterpart, has sought out people who will tell it just what it wants to hear. It is also crystal clear that the Carr Government is fully in favour of the wholesale handover of public enterprises to the private sector. ✪

The only logical explanation for the creation of independent rail line systems would be the eventual privatisation of the entire rail network.

of the state's country rail network.

NSW Premier Bob Carr made much play of the extra \$2.5 billion in funding going to state rail projects over the next six years, and the extra funding is indeed welcome. However, a closer scrutiny of the proposals reveals that it is specifically allocated for a series of projects involving highly disturbing business deals.

The first of these involves the "Rail Clearways" Plan for Sydney's CityRail. Some of the proposed works are well justified, for example the construction of extra lines on rail bottlenecks such as between Erskineville and Sydenham stations.

However, the plan also involves

and other stations. There has been no public discussion on this massive alteration to the Sydney rail system, planning of which has obviously been underway for years.

Privatisation

Moreover, the Carr Government has made no secret of its preference for the involvement of private firms in public transport and other government operations. Several stations on the most recently-constructed rail line, which links the airport to the city, are already privatised, and travelling to them is much more expensive than for comparable distances to other Sydney stations.

(Not that this satisfied the

Dream crusher in mini-budget

Anna Pha

In his plays the communist writer Berthold Brecht used the analogy of capitalist society as a jungle to expose the unforgiving, rapacious "kill or be killed" law of the system. Big capital crushes the dreams and aspirations of working people who are drawn into playing the game on its terms.

Last week's NSW mini-budget provides a classic example. "Carr belts property investors", ran the *Financial Review* headline, with warnings that investors will flock to other states to avoid higher property taxes. Bob Carr's Treasurer Michael Egan appeared to take the big end of town by surprise.

The budget included a new tax on the sale of all properties except for homes and farms, and an increase in land taxes.

It also offered first-home buyers a sweetener with the removal of stamp duty on properties costing less than \$500,000 (phasing out at \$600,000). This amounts to a saving of \$8900 on a \$300,000 home and as much as \$17,990 on a \$500,000 home. In recent years Sydney housing prices have rocketed to such an

extent that such prices are the minimum that a worker could expect to pay for a modest home or flat in the suburbs.

Sounds great, especially the higher taxes on rich investors. But that's only part of the picture. There are many workers and retirees who could be hit hard by these changes.

The financial arrangements of workers have undergone, and are still undergoing, a substantial restructuring.

Once the majority of workers would have relied upon their weekly wage, had some savings in the bank, and a weekly or fortnightly pension (aged or superannuation) on retirement. They may have rented or spent most of their life paying a mortgage off. As for the stock market or property investments; they were seen as a grubby form of gambling conducted by questionable types: market manipulators who never stooped to do an honest day's work.

Now, as a result of the above-mentioned restructure, over 50 percent of Australians own shares and increasingly they have other investments – such as from lump sum redundancy or superannuation payments. They are relying, or will

be in the future, on investments for regular income and security.

Thousands of workers and retirees now have property investments such as units – especially those who are on the cautious side and prefer not to gamble on stock and futures markets.

In addition they have been encouraged to negatively gear their investments: use their lump sum as a deposit on property, and borrow the rest. The rent they receive from this property is used to service the loan (interest and repayment of amount borrowed). Under negative gearing the interest payments are

tax deductible. The message is – sit back, your investments get paid off, capital appreciates and on retirement you have a good income.

That's the theory. Then the quirks of the market kick in: the rental cycle hits with an oversup-

ply of rental properties, and the investment lies vacant or the rental income from it is forced down. Then the trouble starts.

At present Sydney is experiencing a glut of rental properties in some areas, and now Egan's changes to land taxes will place more pressure on investors.

Up to now there was no land tax on rental properties where the land value (as estimated by the government) is less than \$317,000. That exemption is being removed. Thousands of smaller investors will be caught in the land tax net. Egan estimates that close to 250,000

people will be paying land tax for the first time.

Land tax for investments with land value of \$200,000 will rise from zero dollars to \$800 (0.4%). For \$400,000 the land tax would be \$1600. Where does a small invest-

There are many workers and retirees who could be hit hard by these changes.

tor such as a retired or retrenched worker find the extra money? Increase the rent? Make the tenants pay? Are tenants in the present market likely to pay \$15 or \$30 or more a week rent?

The scale has been restructured so that the rate changes at different thresholds. The possessor of a property portfolio with a land value of \$1 million would pay \$2511 less tax than before!

The tax changes cannot be considered in isolation from interest rates, which are set to rise. Add higher interest payments to land tax, lower rents and possible spells without a tenant and thousands of people's life savings begin to disintegrate before their very eyes.

If they try to sell their property (the present market is in decline) they face another surprise – a 2.5 percent duty on their sale and possibly a lower price than the original purchase price.

What on the surface may appear to many to be a progressive move, the taxing of wealth, will likely take a high toll on workers. This is just a taste of things to come as more and more workers become "small capitalists" in property, share and other investments. ✪

Miners strike gold – A report from the coalface

Paddy Gorman

This time last year at the Roche-operated Coppabella open cut coal mine in Central Queensland there was only one union member in a workforce of around 200. Today, with the workforce hovering around 190, more than 80 percent have signed with the CFMEU's Mining Division. At Roche's Commodore open cut coal mine at Millmerran, a couple of hours drive west of Brisbane, the workforce of 35 mineworkers are all employed on individual contracts. However, since last August, more than 30 have joined the union.

This remarkable transformation is the result of a concerted campaign by the CFMEU, in association with the ACTU Organising Unit, to turn the tide of anti-unionism promoted by the Howard Government's anti-worker laws.

The successes at both Coppabella and Millmerran are spearheading a broader campaign throughout NSW and Queensland to unionise new mining operations that are seeking to use Howard's laws to screen out conscious union members in favour of employees with non-union backgrounds.

In January, the CFMEU conducted an organising blitz in the Blackwater (Qld) area targeting non-union contracting operations.

Coppabella and Commodore open cuts on seven-year contracts and directly employs the entire workforces.

From NSW to Queensland the pattern is the same and the management practices almost identical. Workers are primarily recruited from the non-union hard rock mining industry as well as locals off the land with no previous union involvement.

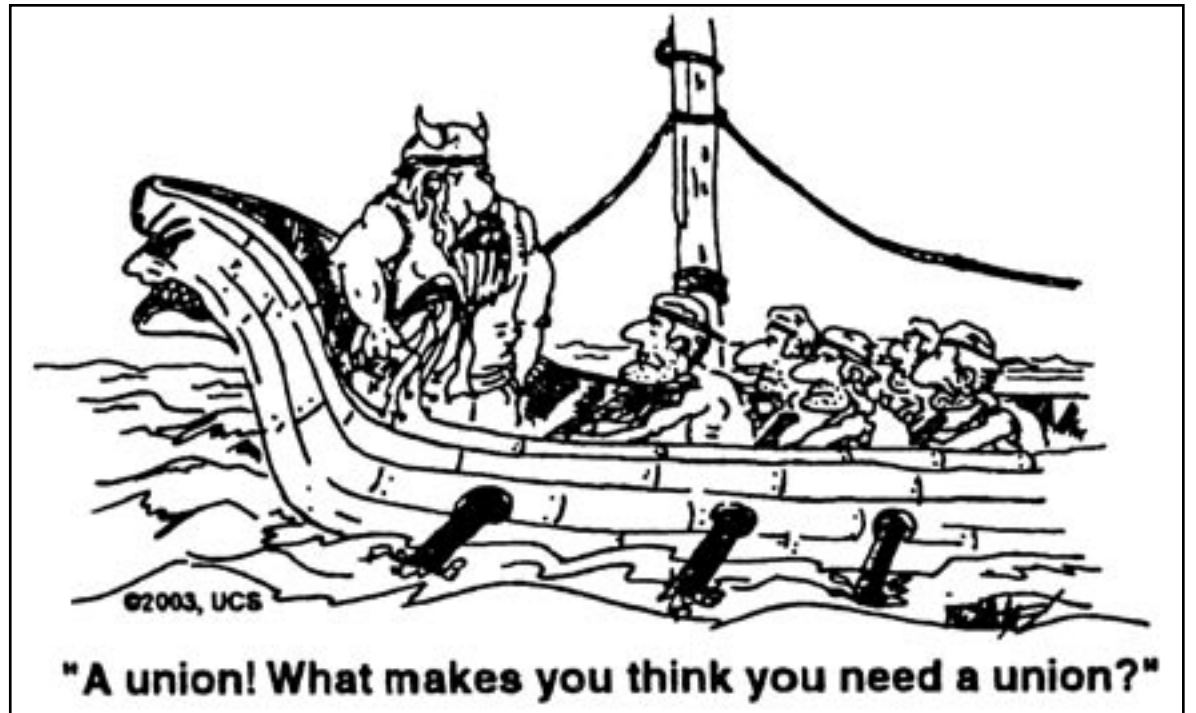
Their pay and conditions are substantially below general coal industry standards but above what most had earned outside.

Management brought their own cultures and experiences into the coal industry. This was basically anti-union and often bordered on the old master and servant mentality.

With a "competitive" cost structure built on lower wages and conditions, companies like Roche have gained an increasing foothold in the coal industry.

Initially, new starters were satisfied with the relative improvements in their positions. For our union this represented not only a great injustice to these exploited new workers, it also threatened the hard-won standards enjoyed by traditional members.

The challenge facing the CFMEU was to get to these workers and explain their rights. The operative word in the whole organising



They won on annual leave, with each worker receiving an ex gratia payment of \$1000 for each six-months of service in compensation for the shortfall in their annual leave entitlements.

The drive was organised jointly by the CFMEU's Queensland and national offices, with rank and file delegates joining forces with CFMEU Board of Management members and organisers from the ACTU's Unit.

The Mining Division's Queensland-based general vice president Reg Coates said "about 90 percent of workers spoken to had joined the union."

The organising campaign is also reaping results in NSW among contractors in the Northern District and at newly-established mines such as BHP's Dendrobium mine in the South/West.

New Solutions

The Federal Government has encouraged new operations to employ workers on AWAs (individual work contracts) and to aggressively challenge union members to abandon collective bargaining for individual contracts.

While the CFMEU has held the line at established operations, it is at new operations and among the growing contracting workforce that employers have trained their guns.

Roche is a perfect example of the new breed of contractors in coal that come from predominantly non-union sectors. Unlike traditional contractors who employed workers to supplement the permanent workforce, this breed operates on long-term contracts and often provides the entire workforce.

For instance, Roche operates the

exercise was help – the union being there to assist the workers on the ground and to help them build their own collective base.

Coppabella

Situated about 150 kilometres west of Mackay, the Coppabella mine produces up to five million tonnes of coking coal a year. The operation commenced in 1999 with Roche among a number of contractors at the mine. Within two years Roche was the major contractor and registered a basic greenfields agreement with the union in February 2001.

However, with a workforce drawn almost exclusively from cleanskins, the union only emerged as a force after February last year when it sent the ACTU Organiser Unit's Bernie Farrelly to establish contact with the workforce.

Meetings were held in workers homes and at other locations outside the workplace. Gradually a picture emerged of people being duded.

At Coppabella they work six-days on and three-days off. Day shift is 10.5-hours; night shift is 11-hours; and maintenance workers do 12-hour shifts.

Employees worked seven-hours straight without a crib break.

Investigations showed they were being short-changed in annual leave entitlements.

The company deducted payment for any "damage" caused from the bonus system, so, in practice, it was worth very little. Management's

attitude to any complaints was – "if you don't like it, the gates aren't locked".

There was widespread fear of victimisation if workers took a stand. However, as they became increasingly aware of their rights and how much they were being duded, they started to join the union.

Treasurer, Steve Houghton; and the Vice-Presidents are Mick Miller and Tony Bright.

Millmerran

The Commodore open cut is situated about 250 kilometres south west of Brisbane on the Darling Downs. With a workforce of around 35, it produces 3.2 million tonnes of coal a year for the nearby Millmerran Power Station.

The mine is operated by Roche on a seven-year contract and it commenced production two years ago.

Roche recruited a workforce of cleanskins, none of whom had previous mining experience. The company employed them all on individual contracts and the management at Commodore, like Coppabella, believed in its divine right to rule, making it clear that anyone with complaints was free to go.

Following the success at Coppabella, former Collinsville coal miner Raz Hingston went to Millmerran in August last year to talk with employees and listen to what they had to say. Hingston is part of the ACTU Organising Unit and is funded by the CFMEU.

He had the same old story. Genuine complaints were summarily dismissed by management and workers shackled by AWAs, were not aware of their rights or the basic conditions to which they were entitled.

The union listened to what they had to say. Their crib room was far too small and they were eating off the floor. They had no toilet

was the company practice requiring them to be on the job 15 minutes before they were due to start work. The new Lodge demanded that they be paid overtime for this early start or they would start at the normal time.

The company relented and the normal time start is now in operation but the new union miners have put in a claim for back pay for all the early starts they were forced to make. This is estimated to be worth something like \$1600 per worker.

With the AWAs due to expire in August this year, the Commodore mineworkers are already planning for a new collective agreement. Led by their Lodge Executive of President Justin Winter and shift delegates Murray Parker and Col McArthur, the miners are looking forward to a better and fairer future.

The Organising Unit

Reg Coates says the union's involvement with the ACTU Organising Unit has been a great success.

"Its function is to get out to where the non-union workers live and engage them. They talk and we listen. We advise them of their rights and leave them to make their own decisions. The underlying philosophy of the organising campaign is to empower the workers at the grass roots level by promoting confidence in them. We make it quite clear that we can't solve their problems for them, but they can and we can help."

While the ACTU recruits organisers and trainee organisers through its Unit, the CFMEU funds coal industry activities. It also supports organising drives in non-union areas like Rio Tinto's Pilbara operations.

Coates says rank and file support for the campaign has been crucial.

"The last time our union was faced with a non-union challenge of this dimension was in the 1930s after the Great Depression. Our union came through it then and we will come through it again. Coppabella, Millmerran and Blackwater show that given a free choice based on the truth, workers will choose to be part of the union where together, in a collective, they can protect and advance their rights and interests."

Common Cause

Management's attitude to any complaints was – "if you don't like it, the gates aren't locked".

in a union and that the company would honour its commitments to them. Rank and file members have since elected representatives from each area of the operation to go into negotiations with the company on a new EBA.

There is a very effective functioning Union Lodge in place at Coppabella. The President is Wade Gilmour; Secretary, Fiona O'Brien;

facilities.

Having failed to get any action as individuals, they took their first collective action by getting a petition together and presenting it to management. And, presto! They got a proper crib room and toilet facilities. All but four of the workforce joined the union.

Another of the important issues they then addressed collectively

Child care's corporate parasites

Tom Pearson

The policies of deregulation and privatisation have exposed all aspects of life to exploitation for profit. As has been revealed in the past couple of months, even child care, a crucial part of the lives of so many working people and their children, is now being used as a cash cow by corporate parasites.

Both major parties are kicking around child care as a political football in the lead-up to this year's federal elections, and both parties are guilty of handing over child care services to the private sector.

A strong grassroots movement for the provision of quality, affordable childcare had gathered considerable momentum by the

Staff-child ratios were set and strictly adhered to, with children under two requiring extra qualified staff.

It was in 1990 that the then Federal Labor Government began providing funding to the emerging for-profit child care industry by extending fee assistance to parents using private centres.

The owners of these private centres opposed the new system. Coordinator for the NSW Community Child Care Cooperative, Jill Ruchel, voiced her concern at the time: "I think it is very short-sighted [of the private centres]. Frankly I'm a bit worried about what they're so afraid of - what are they doing in their child care centres that they are so afraid of having people see?"

workers who had been made redundant or had had their hours reduced.

Today, the concern expressed more than ten years ago by the Community Childcare Cooperative has been confirmed with revelations about the two biggest private operators. Peppercorn and ABC Learning came under the investigative scrutiny of the *7.30 Report* on the national broadcaster last month.

Together these two for-profit operators run more than 600 centres with over 50,000 children around Australia in their care each week. When former staff told the *7.30 Report* that food was rationed, Peppercorn chief executive Michael Gordon was asked if his company generally cuts the food budgets of centres they take over. He replied, "No, we generally don't."

He said it comes down to the efficiency of the centre's cook in using the budget. Gordon views parents and children as profit opportunities: "Over time it will be seen that these corporate structures can actually add and deliver an increased level of value to parents and children."

Revealingly, Gordon listed his priorities as what he called the "four stakeholders", in this order: the investor; the parents; the children; the staff.

The LHMU says the first thing private owners do is look at reducing the budget, in particular through the staff - who are already among the lowest paid workers in Australia - with the imposition of Australian Workplace Agreements (individual contracts) to cut wages and conditions.

ABC Learning is worth \$500 million and is the corporate sponsor of Brisbane Bullets basketball team. Managing director Eddie Groves is on the *Business Review Weekly's* list of richest Australians.

Like his counterpart at Peppercorn, Groves has been funded by taxpayers via the Government's unofficial corporate welfare program, but you'd never know that listening to him crow to the *Australian Financial Review* this month about the secret of his success in exploiting children and their carers.

"... every barrier that a government or a bank, or somebody put in front of me, I jumped through it; I didn't care how hard it was, I'd just do it." ☘



The Howard Government came to office and seized the opportunity that had so thoughtfully been provided by Labor

1980s. As a result community-based and government-funded centres received operational subsidies and parent fee relief on a sliding scale, which allowed access for low-income families.

Publicly run centres were set up with federal funding and funding from local councils. Care was strictly regulated. In 1993 Australia's first national system for child care was introduced. The landmark Quality Improvement and Accreditation System was formulated through discussions with child care organisations in the states and territories.

It was based on 52 principles and recognised that "good quality care must appreciate the individuality of every child and treat all children equally". The special needs of children with disabilities, children from non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were included.

The principles set four fundamental standards of care: Unsatisfactory, Basic, Good Quality and High Quality. These took into consideration the relationship between staff and parents, staff and children, staff and staff, the programs for the children, nutrition, health and safety, centre management and staff development.

Quality of care was paramount.

More and more government funding was diverted into the for-profit sector as government commitments to provide quality, affordable child care were abandoned. Though the high standards still applied in community-based centres, the lack of funding began to bite.

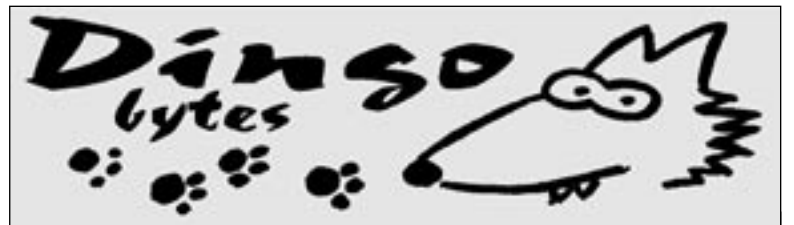
Centres were increasingly forced to make hard budget decisions that avoided affecting the quality of care. This meant such things as reducing the number of places available and increasing fees.

Meanwhile, the private centres increased their fees. Most refused to take children under two years of age because they didn't want to employ the extra staff required.

And the Howard Government came to office and seized the opportunity that had so thoughtfully been provided by Labor and immediately ripped into child care services.

In 1997, after less than a year in government, Howard's hatchet men had left their own trail of destruction, cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from child care funding. The resultant fee increases forced thousands of parents away from the community centres. Centres across Australia began closing.

The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU), reported they were being contacted each day by child care



Free trade means the stripping away of all protection for a nation's economy. Plunder is the name of the game and there'd damn well better not be any hindrances or barriers in the way of transnationals in their carnivorous pursuit of profits. This includes quarantine laws. So, when the Australian Banana Growers' Council hired an expert in banana diseases as part of a campaign to stop the import of Philippines bananas, the quarantine watchdog, Biosecurity Australia, began a counter-campaign to intimidate him. Professor David Jones is a senior scientist with Britain's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs recruited by the Banana Council to examine the dangers of the imports. The Council says it has evidence that Biosecurity Australia colluded with Jones' bosses in Britain to force him to drop his examination. Apparently there are still some imports that are not acceptable.

The NSW Greens say that a financial crisis at Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens is forcing its management to cut down near-century old trees. The Botanic Garden Trust is under pressure to find alternate sources of income because of lack of funding from the Carr Government so the trees are being removed to make more space for crowd activities and also to reduce the cost of liability insurance. The Government is each year cutting the Trust's funding by the same amount as the funds raised by on-site events. The result is that the Domain, a public space, must increasingly make more money from events, a vicious cycle that has now resulted in environmental vandalism on publicly owned land.

The national broadcaster, the ABC, remains under the funding gun but out of the spotlight so that a death by a thousand cuts continues unnoticed but unabated. A report by Liz Jacka, Professor of Communications Studies at Sydney's University of Technology has revealed that arts programming on the ABC has been substantially downgraded and that management is increasingly turning to lightweight, populist programming driven by an eye for ratings. A glaring example of the effect of funding shortfalls and management's exploitation of them to take the ABC toward the ultimate goal - commercialisation - is the national broadcaster's involvement in a planned children's theme park. The park will be at Melbourne Showground and Flemington Race Course. The ABC's community champions, Friends of the ABC, put it this way: "FABC recognises that the ABC is struggling for funds. But joining in ventures, or selling its creations and trusted name to a commercial operation to make money out of children, is unethical and downright dangerous."

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is Foxtel. News Ltd's pay TV Foxtel Footy Show has mustered up all the principles and integrity we have come to expect from a Murdoch entity in dealing with the extreme sexism revealed to be rife in the various football codes. It has introduced a segment with a panel of wives, girlfriends and in one case the daughter, of AFL footballers to give their perspective on the issue. Nuff said.

Proposed laws strip workers' rights

The Howard Government's latest round of anti-union, anti-worker laws are an employer's dream. They take up where former Minister Peter Reith left off, attacking conditions won by workers over many years and undermining such basic rights as the right to strike.

They not only attack trade union rights and working conditions, but erode the ability of workers to participate in their community and impinge on the ability of workers family and social life.

Under the Government's pro-

posals workers covered by federal awards there would be:

- ✗ No paid leave for jury service (leave to donate blood has already been removed)
- ✗ No reimbursement of transport costs for people required to work late at night
- ✗ No paid leave to undertake training courses
- ✗ No entitlement to personal emergency leave
- ✗ Fewer public holiday entitlements for some award workers
- ✗ No allowances for employ-

ees who are required to launder their uniforms at home

- ✗ Long service leave delayed an extra five years until after 15 years service for some award workers
- ✗ Removal of the cap on the maximum hours of classroom teaching
- ✗ No limit on the number of casuals able to be employed - already one in four people are employed as casuals.

"The Government's proposals are unfair -they undermine the rights of the lowest paid and most vulnerable people who are dependent on awards for basic standards of pay and conditions", said ACTU President Sharan Burrow.

The ACTU appeared before the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Legislation Committee last week. The Committee is looking into the Government's latest round of changes to both conditions and rights of the worker. ☘

**Needed urgently!
Solidarity with
the revolution in Venezuela.**

Contact the **Bolivarian Circle**
and help support the progressive achievements
of the government and people of Venezuela.

Contact Manuel on 0412 228 401

The struggle for Venezuela

Leonel Vivas is the Ambassador to Australia of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. He visited Sydney recently to address the inaugural meeting of the Bolivarian Circle, an organisation set up to rally support in Australia for the revolutionary changes taking place in Venezuela today. Before the meeting, Mr Vivas spoke to Bob Briton of *The Guardian* about recent developments in his country.

Bob Briton: What is meant by the term "Bolivarian" used in connection with the revolution taking place in Venezuela?

Leonel Vivas: The term "Bolivarian" means that the ideology and the political point of view of the revolution is inspired by Simon Bolívar, the national hero of Venezuela, because he was the leader of the fight for the country to gain its independence from the kingdom of Spain. That is the reason why Bolívar is our national hero and President Chávez and the other leaders of the Bolivarian revolution developing right now in Venezuela adopted the thought and ideas of Bolívar. That is the meaning of the term "Bolivarian revolution".

BB: What benefits have flowed to the people of Venezuela from the changes taking place in the country?

LV: There have been many, many benefits. There have been benefits in the economic sphere but especially in the social and political arena. The Bolivarian revolution has as its main aim that the people should participate in the decision-making process. The most important goals of the revolution and the most important benefits of the revolution for our people are the direct participation in the process of change, in all the measures that the government is taking to improve the way of life of our people. It is a participative democracy.

Before this revolutionary process the people of Venezuela participated only as electors, going

to the polls to elect the President or the Prime Minister but nothing else. The participation was only in the polls, to give a vote to somebody. Afterwards, the people did not participate in the decisions made by government. Now the most important thing is the direct participation of the people in the big governmental decisions.

In the social arena the revolution has meant a leap forward. There have been many changes in our country – the project for literacy, for instance. Venezuela is a poor country. We have 80 per cent of our people living in poverty and among the poor the rate of illiteracy is very high. About 12 per cent of our population was illiterate two or three years ago. Today, after the completion of the Robinson Project, about 95 per cent of our people are literate. In a six-month period this program involved 1.2 million people. [The literacy program was named in honour of Bolívar's most well known teacher, a Venezuelan whose nickname was taken from Defoe's tale, *Robinson Crusoe*.]

Health has also been a priority of the Bolivarian revolution. We have a very popular program giving health care to poor people. The revolution is being carried out mainly in the interests of poor people in order to overcome their difficulties and health is one of the major problems in my country. In this health program the Cuban Government has helped a lot. In this and other matters, the achievements of the revolution have been obvious and genuinely appreciated.

In the economic arena, as well, we have seen a lot of improvement, again especially for the poor. The main goal of the economic program of the Bolivarian revolution is to find another way to improve the economy of the country because neo-liberalism, the latest attempt by capitalism, has been unsuccessful for the people. So we are trying to find another economic model that matches the reality of our country and not to import a model from developed countries that has nothing to do with the Venezuelan reality.

BB: What are the latest developments in the attempt by opposition forces to destabilise the country?

LV: My government and President Chávez are pushing ahead a revolutionary process of

not want to hand over this power to those who have been excluded for many years.

Of course, those who have been excluded want to participate and to have a share of the wealth of the country. They are the supporters of the Bolivarian revolution. That is why there is a struggle between the Venezuelan people, who have been excluded for many years, and those who have held the power in Venezuela. It is a fight for dignity, a fight for sovereignty, a fight for a better way of life.

The people that traditionally have had the power in Venezuela have been trying to overthrow Chávez as President of the country by any means, including two attempted coups d'état. However, these efforts were kept in check. Other means have already included a national strike, terrorist acts and so on.

These people that have been trying to destabilise the country have the support of external governments and there is no doubt that the main support for the overthrowing the government by a coup d'état or by other means is the Bush Administration. The latest attempt by the opposition to gather support has been the petition for a referendum – a petition not made in a constitutional way but by fraud.

Fortunately this has not been possible and if a referendum is to take place it will be in a democratic and very transparent way and within the constitutional framework. If a national referendum to recall President Chávez happened in a legal way, there is no doubt that he would win any other national election.

BB: How have the people been involved in defending their revolution?

LV: We have many ways to defend ourselves from external



Che, Bolívar and Chávez

aggression. The main arm is, put simply, the opposition of the people. Chávez was overthrown on April 11, 2002 – just two years ago – for 48 hours and it was the people in conjunction with the army that returned the Presidential position to Chávez. So the main means we have to defend our country from aggression is the union of the people and the army. In the Venezuelan army

right now there is 98 per cent support for President Chávez.

We have other ways to defend the country from aggression. Don't forget that Venezuela is an oil-producing country and that we are the fifth largest producer of oil in the world. We supply the United States with almost 2,000,000 barrels a day.

and direct way by 58 per cent of the popular vote. This is an important reason why the Venezuelan Government has strong support from countries in the region and also in many other countries around the world. This has been demonstrated in the Organisation of American States, in the United Nations and other multilateral, multinational organisations.

The support for the government and President Chávez has been really strong but most important of all has been the support of the people of those countries, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. There is no doubt that there is widespread support for the Bolivarian revolution.

BB: What is the attitude of the government of Venezuela to the proposal for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)?

LV: You know that the US, with support from some conservative Latin American countries, has proposed the creation of a free trade agreement between Latin America, the United States and Canada. We call it ALCA in Spanish while you call it the FTAA.

This is an initiative of the US in order to have more power over the economy of the region. My government, especially President Chávez, does not agree with this proposal because it will mean more poverty for our country. We think that, because it is an agreement with the biggest economic power in the world, it will give the US control – even more control than right now – over our economies.

This will be another means by which to invade, to control not only our economy but also our political and social decision-making processes. If this agreement is concluded, there is a strong possibility that our countries will become colonies of the superpower. These are the reasons why we don't agree with this proposal of the United States. ✪

However, the main guarantee against any external and internal aggression and to ensure that our government and President remain in power is the will of the people and the army.

BB: Is Venezuela receiving much support from countries in the region?

LV: Fortunately Venezuela has been receiving very strong support from many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. This is because our government and our President have been elected in a very democratic way. President Chávez was elected twice: once in 1998 with 53 per cent of the popular vote and one and a half years later he was re-elected with 58 per cent of the vote.

The election of the President in Venezuela is by direct and universal vote. Every citizen 18 years old or over has the right to vote. So he was elected in a very democratic

The main means we have to defend our country from aggression is the union of the people and the army. In the Venezuelan army right now there is 98 per cent support for President Chávez.

change and transformation to overcome our centuries-old problems. To be successful in this we must change structures and even habits. As history teaches us, any process of change has supporters and opponents. In the case of the Bolivarian revolution, the opponents are those who for many years have had control over the economy, the army and political life. These people do

aggression. The main arm is, put simply, the opposition of the people. Chávez was overthrown on April 11, 2002 – just two years ago – for 48 hours and it was the people in conjunction with the army that returned the Presidential position to Chávez. So the main means we have to defend our country from aggression is the union of the people and the army. In the Venezuelan army

This is an economic army and also a political army. We can take measures to defend ourselves that take into account this situation in which we are a very important oil-producing country.



Pushing ahead with the revolution – President Chavez speaking at a women's solidarity forum.

The Maestro of Fraud

Art Perlo

Bob Woodward called his biography of Alan Greenspan *Maestro* because the Federal Reserve chief is “a conductor, exquisitely attuned to every instrument in the political and economic orchestra”, according to the *amazon.com* review. But after Greenspan testified before Congress February 25, proposing to cut Social Security benefits, Paul Krugman in the *New York Times* called him the “Maestro of Chutzpah”. (Chutzpah is Yiddish for “a lot of nerve”.)

I would be more blunt. Alan Greenspan is the maestro of fraud. Here’s why.

Social Security was always a pay-as-you go system. People working today pay, through their Social Security taxes, for the benefits of retired and disabled workers. In a larger sense, it was a social contract – active workers will collectively support their retired parents, with the security of knowing that the next generation will support them. This system started in the 1930s and worked well for almost 50 years.

In the 1980s, when President Reagan was leading the attack on workers’ living standards, the now-familiar problem of the baby boomers came up. The story told was, “when all the kids born in the 15 years after World War II retire, it will be impossible for the handful of workers still below retirement age to pay for the boomers’ benefits.”

In 1982, a bipartisan commission was appointed, which changed the way Social Security is financed. Payroll taxes were increased so that, in addition to paying for existing beneficiaries, money would be set aside to pay for the baby boomers’ retirement.

As a result, tax rates for workers went up, and the extra cash was used to fund tax cuts for the very rich and the largest corporations. *New York Times* reporter David Cay Johnston, one of the country’s best tax analysts, said that “people making \$30,000 to \$500,000 a year

February was his open declaration that he and Wall Street are prepared to go back on the deal. The working class has been, in effect, lending money to the wealthy for the last 21 years, and the wealthy don’t want to return it. Greenspan has advocated that the US government repudiate part of its debt – the part owed to retiring workers.

Since the United States was founded over 200 years ago, a basic principle has always been that the US government will pay its debts. Normally, if the government’s most powerful economist declared that

It is only when the debt is owed to the working class that Greenspan thinks it’s okay to be a deadbeat, and Wall Street cheers.

subsidise people who make millions of dollars.”

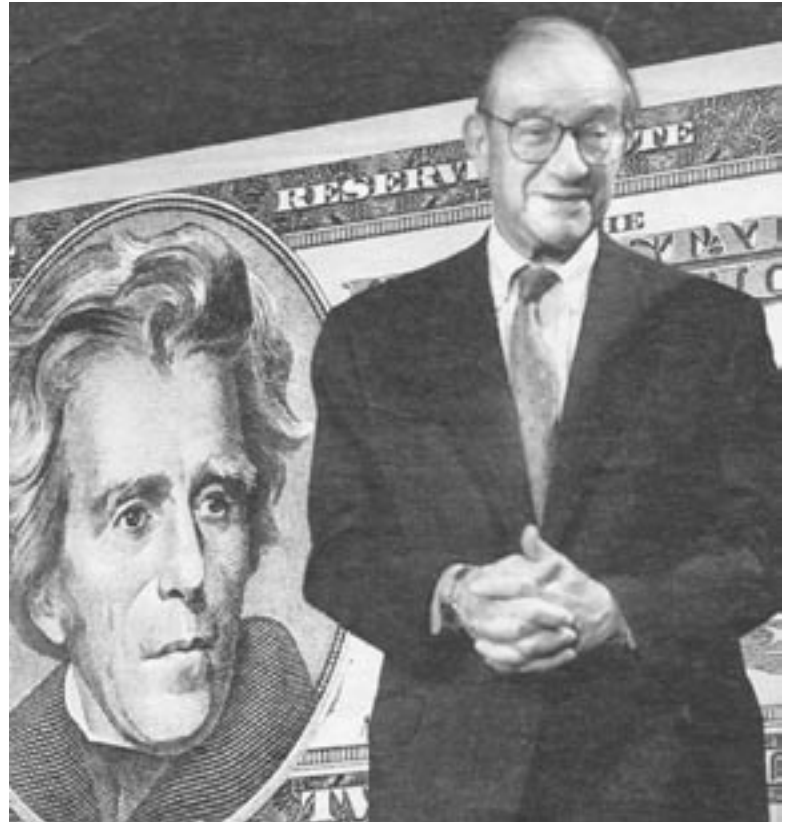
How much extra are we paying? Of every three dollars deducted from your pay cheque for the Social Security tax, two dollars go to pay benefits. With the other dollar, the Social Security Trust Fund buys government bonds, which are supposed to be repaid by the government to finance future retirement benefits.

Greenspan’s testimony this

the US will not pay what it owes, it would shake financial markets from New York to Paris to Tokyo.

It is only when the debt is owed to the working class that Greenspan thinks it’s okay to be a deadbeat, and Wall Street cheers.

Where does the fraud come in? The 1982 commission was headed by a prominent Republican economist from the Nixon and Ford administrations – none other than Alan Greenspan. The maestro him-



Hatchet man – Alan Greenspan

self was the author of the deal he now plans to tear up. When he calls for robbing future retirees of their benefits, Greenspan is admitting that he was the chief conspirator in a fraudulent scheme to bilk the working class out of trillions of dollars.

In his testimony, Greenspan openly said that cuts in Social Security, Medicare and all federal

funding programs should be first on the chopping block to pay for the Bush tax cuts, which go mainly to the wealthy. President Bush not only refused to repudiate Greenspan’s remarks, but has campaigned for privatising Social Security. If Bush is re-elected, our retirement security will be in grave danger.

People Before Profits, *People’s Weekly World* www.pww.org

Book Review

The Betrayal of Dissent

by Scott Lucas

Tom Mellen

To the surprise of many on the left, George Orwell worked for the top-secret Information Research Department, an organisation set up by the Attlee Labour Government in 1948 to generate anti-communist, anti-Soviet propaganda for the consumption of the British people.

In 1949, he handed over a notebook of 135 names of friends and acquaintances whom he suspected of being sympathetic to communism. It contained a disparate bunch of progressives, including Charlie Chaplin, Harold Laski, EH Carr, Stephen Spender and Randall Swingler.

This, in itself, is not exactly a revelation – documents held by the

common man against “Big Brother”, has served to stifle dissent.

Lucas uses this observation to expose the self-proclaimed contrarians, the “belligerati” of our own day – Christopher Hitchens, David Aaronovitch, Nick Cohen, Johann Hari and other intellectuals on the “left” who have not only been cheerleaders for the war against Iraq but have attacked the anti-war movement and provided the warmongers with a sophisticated “humanitarian”, “left-wing” defence not only of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq but also of any future wars waged against “totalitarianism”.

Lucas draws parallels between Christopher Hitchens’ rounding on many of his former allies in the left-wing intelligentsia, and Orwell’s list of communist subversives.

blood of the innocent Iraqis who were slaughtered by Saddam, on their hands.

“I have no hesitation in describing this mentality, carefully and without heat, as soft on crime and soft on fascism”, Hitchens declares. “No political coalition is possible with such people.”

Of course, at a time when all the excuses for the invasion and occupation of Iraq are being exploded (Where are the WMD? Where is the evidence linking Saddam Hussein with al-Qaida?) the pro-war “left” is performing a vital service for British imperialism.

Their assertion that the anti-war movement are “moral relativists” who are appeasers of the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Ba’ath Party of Iraq and the Workers’ Party of Korea serves to provide the illegal, predatory series of wars waged by British and US imperialism with a moral veneer.

Far from being a neo-colonial adventure, these wars by the richest countries in the world against the poorest are portrayed as “liberal interventions”, even manifestations of “internationalism”, as Blair likes to put it.

Scott Lucas has done a commendable job of knocking Orwell off his seemingly unassailable pedestal. At the same time, his expose’ of the role of the belligerati in providing the “moral” and “humanitarian” rationale for imperialist war is detailed, well-researched, and, above all, timely.

The Betrayal of Dissent is in major bookstores *Morning Star*, British socialist newspaper

A few quotes that tell it all

The industrial way of life leads to the industrial way of death. From Shiloh to Dachau, from Antietam to Stalingrad, from Hiroshima to Vietnam and Afghanistan, the great specialty of industry and technology has been the mass production of human corpses.

Edward Abbey

War would end if the dead could return.

Stanley Baldwin

War hath no fury like a noncombatant.

Charles Edward Montague, *Disenchantment*

Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism.

Martin Luther King, Jr

Dress it as we may, feather it, daub it with gold, huzza it, and sing swaggering songs about it, what is war, nine times out of ten, but murder in uniform?

Douglas Jerrold

Just as revealing:

Why should we hear about body bags and deaths and how many, what day it’s gonna happen? It’s not relevant. So why should I waste my beautiful mind on something like that?

George W Bush’s mother Barbara on ABC *Good Morning America*, March 18, 2003

Like Orwell, Hitchens has set himself up as the policeman of the left

Public Record Office proving that Orwell worked as an informer were released in 1996.

The Betrayal of Dissent is more than the beginning of a – long overdue – reassessment of Orwell, “the wintry conscience of a generation which in the ‘30s had heard the call to the rasher assumptions of political faith”, as VS Pritchett put it.

Scott Lucas’s central argument is that what he terms “the canonisation of St George”, far from strengthening the hand of the

Like Orwell, Hitchens has set himself up as the policeman of the left, attacking “appeasers” of Serbo-fascism during the blitzing of Yugoslavia and defenders of “Islamofascism” – or appeasers who dare to oppose a war that is serving to liberate the Iraqi people.

Tariq Ali, Harold Pinter, John Pilger and Noam Chomsky all faced the vitriolic zeal of this convert to humanitarian militarism. Anyone who marched against the war, according to Hitchens, has the

Is USA-backed Colombian intervention in Venezuela imminent?

The following report (abridged) from VHeadline.com correspondent Philip Stinard raises some interesting questions in regard to the US's ambitions in Latin America. Is the US planning to use Colombia (and possibly other states) to destabilise the situation in Venezuela and create an excuse for direct intervention and the overthrow of the popular Chavez Government?

On April 13, the Colombian Senate approved a resolution condemning the "dictatorial regime" of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and called for the Organisation of American States (OAS) to apply the Inter-American Democratic Charter to Venezuela.

Article 21 of the Charter says: "In the event of an unconstitutional alteration of the constitutional regime that seriously impairs the democratic order in a member state, any member state or the Secretary General may request the immediate convocation of the Permanent Council to undertake a collective assessment of the situation and to take such decisions as it deems appropriate."

What is meant by "such decisions" is not made clear but it is generally accepted to include military intervention by OAS states, including the United States.

Immediate responses to the Colombian Senate resolution from both the Colombian and Venezuelan Governments were swift.

The first response came from Colombia's Delegation to the Andean Parliament, which stated that the views expressed by the Colombian Senate are not necessarily those of the Colombian Government and people and that the

decision to invoke the Democratic Charter is in the hands of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe.

Only one OAS member state needs to make a request to invoke the Democratic Charter in order for the OAS Permanent Council to consider the request but it takes a two thirds vote of the OAS General Assembly to suspend a member state from the OAS, which is considered the ultimate sanction.

Jose Rangel, the Executive Vice President of Venezuela, observed that the Colombian Senate's proposal has as its basis the United States Government's campaign against Venezuela and its Plan Colombia. The US military is already deeply involved in Colombia.

Some Colombian social and political leaders point to the recent presence in Colombia of US Congressman Lincoln Balart, a cheerleader for the right-wing Cuban exile community in Florida who may have had an influence in the drafting of this document.

Venezuelan National Assembly deputy Tarek Saab characterised the Colombian resolution as a "vile pamphlet" which, besides being poorly written, appears as though it could have originally been written in English by the US State Department.



When asked by the Venezuelan press about the Colombian resolution, US Ambassador to Venezuela Charles Shapiro is quoted as saying, "I don't have an appreciation at this time of the resolution approved by the Colombian Senate. The idea that this resolution from the Colombian parliament has anything to do with the United States is untrue."

What could be behind the Colombian Senate resolution?

Many point to the US policy in Colombia under the program "Plan Colombia" and say that it is not so much about US anti-drug policy as it is about securing the Colombian oil industry that had been under attack by leftist guerrillas.

Besides outsourcing the task of taking back control of guerrilla-controlled areas to paramilitary death squads responsible for the slaughter of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of innocents, and providing juicy multi-million dollar contracts to US companies such as Monsanto and DynCorp, there have been few visible accomplishments for "Plan Colombia".

It is not inconceivable that part of "Plan Colombia" would be

to destabilise and overthrow the Chavez Government and install puppet leaders to make US access to Venezuelan petroleum resources easier and cheaper.

Perhaps it is to this end that the Colombian Government has purchased 40 AMX-30 tanks from Spain with US assistance. And, knowing how US covert operations have been conducted in the past, it is quite possible that the US has great interest in testing and observing how much support the Chavez Government has by, for instance, sending its surrogates to attack the hospital in Monagas State and watching the community response.

This could also extend to observing the Venezuelan diplomatic response to the provocation produced by the Colombian Senate resolution.

The Venezuelan National Assembly passed a resolution on April 15 condemning the Colombian Senate resolution. Among other things, the resolution calls upon President Uribe to "speak to the issue of this anti-Venezuelan resolution".

The one person who has remained conspicuously silent on the Colombian Senate resolution is Colombian President Alvaro Uribe. His response is awaited. ☺

Immediate responses to the Colombian Senate resolution from both the Colombian and Venezuelan Governments were swift.

Assassination is lethal provocation

The Israeli peace organisation Gush Shalom in a press release has denounced the assassination of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantissi as "another act of lethal provocation". "It might impress the 200,000 registered members of the Likud Party whose votes Sharon needs, but it endangers the Israeli people to whom Sharon leaves a legacy of hatred and bloodshed which might last many years after his own career comes to an end", said Gush Shalom.

"Today's unscrupled assassination is but the latest of the daily killings which accompany the hollow words about withdrawal [from the Gaza Strip]. The Palestinians are not addressed, but issued with ultimatums and dictates. Sharon seems to be doing everything to convince the Palestinians that they have no options left other than suicidal forms of revenge, deepening the hatred and thus making sure that the giving up of territory will not bring about peace."

Leading Israeli academic Uri Avnery, commenting on the latest Sharon plan says that "The maximum plan is to turn all of the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River into a Jewish State, with no non-Jewish population. Since such an ethnic cleansing is not feasible for the time being, he is implementing his minimum

plan: to enlarge the borders of the Jewish State as much as possible, without incorporating a further large Palestinian population. Therefore he wants to get rid of the Gaza Strip with its 1.2 million Palestinian inhabitants... [while] consolidating the West Bank settlements where 250,000 Jewish settlers live.

"Sharon wants to incorporate in Israel 55 percent of the West Bank and crowd the 2.5 million Palestinians into the remaining 45 percent of the area."

Commenting on the role played by President Bush, Uri Avnery said, "Bush is acting solely for his re-election. He needs the votes of the Jews and evangelical Christians who support the Israeli right-wing. He also needs the Jewish donations."

There are scores of UN Security Council resolutions condemning Israel for its acts of aggression against Lebanon, its raids on Syria, for changing the status of Jerusalem and against the establishment of Jewish settlements on Palestinian lands. There are a number of resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw to its 1967 borders. These UN resolutions have been systematically flouted by successive Israeli governments and by its United States backers. Compare the US attitude to the enforcement of resolutions against Iraq while resolutions concerning Israel are ignored. ☺

US hopes for FTAA take a blow

Hopes of reaching agreement on a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) took a nosedive at an emergency meeting in Buenos Aires from March 31 to April 1. Negotiations due to be held later this month have been cancelled and the January 1, 2005 deadline looks less likely by the day.

The FTAA is an attempt to expand the existing North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (US, Canada & Mexico) to encompass all 35 countries (775 million people) within the Americas, with the exception of Cuba.

"Ten years of NAFTA's negative real-life effects have made it politically impossible for most countries to sign up for an FTAA-NAFTA expansion", said Lori Wallach, Director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.

"It's time to bury the failed NAFTA model, pull the plug on the comatose FTAA and start over with rules aimed at pulling up wages and environmental and

consumer standards in the hemisphere."

During last few years there have been some significant changes in government in a number of countries including Brazil and Venezuela.

"Given the deep deadlock between blocs of countries with opposing views of what an FTAA should be, it is amazing that the Bush administration still insists that the FTAA is alive. Clearly the Bush administration view of the FTAA as a full NAFTA expansion has been rejected. And as support drops among the US public for trade policies like the FTAA, which promote a race to the bottom in living standards and the environment, it becomes increasingly clear that US negotiators are not representing the American people", said Lori Wallach.

Trade negotiators from nine countries of the proposed 34-nation FTAA gathered at the Buenos Aires meeting on March 31 and April 1. The goal of this meeting was to

resolve several key deadlocks and build consensus about a common set of FTAA obligations that countries could approve at a planned April Vice Ministerial Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) in Puebla, Mexico.

They failed to agree. This is not the first such failure. In early February 2004 a TNC meeting in Puebla ended with acrimony and without agreement. Then in early March a meeting called to sort out the February TNC deadlock also failed to resolve the issues.

Just as at the World Trade Organisation, third world countries are finding strength in unity, and standing up to the US and its demands. The US remains determined to dictate the agenda and promote the interests of its corporate sector. But increasingly governments of the poorer nations are finding the necessary unity and strength to defend the interests of their people and their development and independence. ☺

Afghanistan

US legacy of chaos lives on

Marilyn Bechtel

The recent power struggle that erupted in northern Afghanistan illustrates the chaos ravaging the country two and a half years after US troops invaded, ostensibly chasing Osama Bin Laden.

On April 8, the north's dominant warlord, General Abdul Rashid Dostum, drove a neighbouring rival warlord and a provincial governor appointed by interim president Hamid Karzai out of Maimana, capital of Faryab province. This forced the US-installed Karzai to send 750 soldiers from his newly formed Afghan National Army (ANA) to the area, together with their US trainers.

The various warlord factions can trace their origins to the private mujahedin militias created and armed by the CIA

Though Dostum's forces left Maimana two days later, at last word they were still in control in Faryab province. In recent days Dostum also clashed with the militia of another rival, Ustad Atta Mohammad, near Dostum's stronghold, Mazar-e-Sharif. Though Dostum is nominally Karzai's representative in the region, he was reluctant to accept the formation of a central government headed by Karzai, and remains a major rival.

In March, Ismail Khan, the west's dominant warlord and the governor of Herat, drove a pro-government commander out of the province, forcing Karzai to send 1000 ANA troops to the area.

Such clashes, combined with the ongoing attacks by the Taliban, al-Qaida and the forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in eastern and southern Afghanistan, have forced the postponement of elections initially slated for June. In fact,

many international observers consider most areas outside the capital city, Kabul, to be highly unstable. They liken the situation to the civil war that raged in the 1990s after the defeat of the national democratic People's Democratic Party (PDPA) government of President Najibullah.

The United Nations has said that for the elections to be credible, at least 70 percent of the country's 10.5 million eligible voters should be registered. But by early April only about 15 percent of this goal had been reached.

With national elections now rescheduled for September, the government said last week that it would pursue its previously announced plan to disarm 40 percent of the

turning point in the destruction of Afghanistan's fledgling people's government.

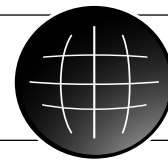
Another profoundly destabilising factor is the dominance of the opium trade in Afghanistan's economy. The opium poppies, which have long funded the warlords, Gulbuddin's gang in eastern Afghanistan, the Taliban and probably al-Qaida, are in full bloom again. Last year the drug trade made up over half of the country's national income, with the opium grown in 28 of the country's 32 provinces making up 75 percent of the world's production. Experts expect land under poppy cultivation to increase by 30 percent this year.

Karzai has warned that opium is "undermining the very existence of the Afghan state", and has declared an all-out campaign against it. But many desperately poor small farmers turn to the crop because it pays far more than anything else they could grow. Again, in view of the pre-election political turmoil, the government is expected to pull its punches.

Last week *The New York Times* quoted Uganda-born political scientist Mahmood Mamdani, who says present-day terrorism originated in US Cold War foreign policy. After the Vietnam War, Mamdani contends, the US shifted from direct intervention against the socialist world to supporting low-level insurgency by private militias.

"In practice", Mamdani has written, "it translated into a United States decision to harness, or even to cultivate, terrorism in the struggle against regimes it considered pro-Soviet." Noting that the best known CIA-trained terrorist is Osama bin Laden, Mamdani added, "The real damage the CIA did was not the providing of arms and money, but the privatisation of information about how to produce and spread violence – the formation of private militias – capable of creating terror."

People's Weekly World, Communist Party, USA ☪



Global briefs

USA: Orphans and babies as young as three months have been used as guinea pigs in potentially dangerous experiments sponsored by pharmaceutical companies. Glaxo-SmithKline, the British drug giant, sponsored experiments on the children from Incarnation Children's Center, a New York home that specialises in treating people with HIV or those born to HIV-positive mothers. The parents were either dead or unfit to look after them. Glaxo has sponsored at least four medical trials since 1995 using Hispanic and black children at Incarnation. Parental consent is usually required for testing on children but as the children are in care, it is the responsibility of New York authorities. The city health department has launched an investigation into claims that more than 100 children were used in 36 experiments with at least four co-sponsored by Glaxo. Some experiments were to test the toxicity of AIDS medication.

THE HAGUE: Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic has listed 1631 people, including British Prime Minister Tony Blair and former US President Bill Clinton, whom he wants to testify for the defence in his trial at The Hague. The list also includes former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Slobodan Milosevic is conducting his own defence.

CHINA: China has decided to take countermeasures against the US decision to fingerprint most Chinese who will go to the United States. The measures include granting ordinary visas and levying a fee for US personnel who hold diplomatic or service passports and are travelling for personal purposes. The decision also banned US citizens from applying for visas upon their arrival. All visas must be granted before they enter China. On March 22, the US embassy in China started to collect the fingerprints of the Chinese who are planning to go to the United States.

EAST TIMOR: Demonstrations are continuing in Dili, East Timor, against Australia's grab for Timorese oil. It is estimated that the Greater Sunrise oil and gas field which lies between Australia and East Timor could bring in \$30 billion of revenue over 30 years. Australia has withdrawn from the International Court of Justice and the tribunal which oversees agreement on international maritime boundaries. Two-thirds of the oil and gas deposits are closer to East Timor than to Australia. Despite this, Australia is planning to rob East Timor of most its entitlements.

ISRAEL: Israeli nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu has applied to give up his Israeli citizenship in order to prevent the government from confining him to the country after his expected release from prison this week. The Israeli Government has placed tight restrictions on his release conditions. It is unlikely that he will be given a passport. He was convicted of treason and espionage for revealing Israel's secret nuclear weapons program and has spent 20 years in jail, 12 of them in solitary confinement.

Big money for mercenaries but death comes just the same

More and more mercenaries are flooding into Iraq. Many of them are working for the US army. They are transporting supplies and fuel to the US armed forces – tasks that used to be performed by military personnel. They are guarding supply lines and providing security for government officials.

These mercenaries are being paid huge wages – up to \$US1000 per day. A number of Australian SAS troops are reported to have resigned from the armed forces to seize the big money.

They may be involved in committing violence against the Iraqi people but, because they are not officially part of the armed forces, they are not covered by the rules of war and the Geneva Conventions.

These mercenaries are just as much enemies of a free and independent Iraq as those in uniform and it is not surprising that the Iraqi people should see them as enemies. This is the reality behind the spate of alleged "hostage taking", actually

no more than the taking of prisoners of war.

Many are employed by corporations such as the Texas based Kellogg Brown and Root, and Halliburton which have huge contracts with the US Government to supply the armed forces.

Robert Fisk writing for the *NZ Star* on April 13 said that up to 18,000 mercenaries are now believed to be in Iraq and that at least 80 foreign mercenaries had

mercenaries is another means by which the invading governments can appear to limit the number of the armed forces actually operating in Iraq.

It is much easier for the US Government to absolve itself from responsibility for the actions of mercenaries than to be accountable for the behaviour of its armed forces.

Reuters quotes figures on the increased use of mercenaries: at the

Because they are not officially part of the armed forces, they are not covered by the rules of war and the Geneva Conventions.

been killed in the past eight days in Iraq.

This setup also allows the military authorities to obscure the real casualty list because the mercenaries are not counted when military spokesmen announce their losses for the day. The employment of

end of the first Gulf War the ratio was about one contractor to 100 soldiers, but this time around it is one to every ten soldiers.

"We do not track US civilian deaths. We leave that up to companies", said a US military spokesperson. ☪

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

email: guardian@cpa.org.au



Questions for Latham

On Thursday April 8, Mark Latham came to Mt Druitt to open the new office of the Member for Chifley, Roger Price. Being surrounded by the Labor Party faithful, it was hard to get close to him.

Also there were so many questions I would liked to have asked him, it was hard to pick one, so I decided on the Free Trade Agreement and the US Military Bases.

In answer to the question about the FTA Mark Latham said, "Oh! It's in the hands of a Senate Subcommittee"; I considered this to be a non-answer.

In answer to the question about the US Bases, Mark Latham said, "Oh! we are quite happy with them".

He did not hear me say "even though they could involve us in another war like Iraq". He also didn't hear me say "I will not give Labor second preference".

I haven't yet seen the Green's policies. But I hope they are less airy fairy than Labor's. If only the Communist Party could stand a Candidate in Chifley.

Ronald Barrett
Mt Druitt, NSW

The people will decide the fate of Cyprus

I write about the optimistic pace and direction of developments in Cyprus. Regardless of the outcome of Kofi Annan's UN plan, enormous cracks have appeared in the Turkish occupied north that I believe are unstoppable.

Calls for a solution are getting louder in the north and Denktash's regime is facing a growing tide of dissent that grows each day and his hold on power is lessening, with the result that his repressive Turkish military-backed dictatorship will eventually begin to fall apart.

And unlike the 1960s and '70s most of the right-wing powerful military and political forces that impeded Cyprus's unity, development and progress are weaker. The Generals in Turkey while still being behind the scenes are not as strong as they were; the Colonels' are no longer in power in Greece; Turkey is preoccupied with other problems in Kurdistan, Iraq, Islamic fundamentalism and its EU aspirations hinge on a resolution of the Cyprus problem.

Turkey also has an economic crisis to deal with and the Denktash regime is reliant on Turkey's cash assistance to survive in power. As well as this, it is expensive keeping some 35,000 Turkish troops stationed in Cyprus. The circumstances of the Republic of Cyprus are also vastly different; politically, diplomatically, socially and economically Cyprus is stronger.

These factors and the support of Greece and other countries restricts

the threats and pressures of the bigger powers in deciding Cyprus's future this time.

The most important dynamic driving the changes in Cyprus however is the will of the Cypriot people for change and a reunification of the island.

Since the easing of travel restrictions over 300,000 Greek and Turkish Cypriots, half of the island's population, have returned to visit their homes and friends, accepting each other with flowers, embraces and tears. And over 20,000 Turkish Cypriots have so far visited offices around Cyprus to apply for passports, identity cards and birth certificates of the Cyprus Republic.

Past history has shown that Greek, Turkish, Maronite, Latin, Armenian, and other Cypriots can live together in peace. The reason we have progressed as far towards the foundation of a reunification process is the great success of the grassroots bi-communal contacts in breaking down the walls of division and distrust between the Cypriot people.

We need to build on these positive steps towards unity based on open and sincere principles and truly respecting each others rights.

I don't think the latest version of the Annan Plan is a principled, fair and balanced proposal and thus it will not be acceptable to the vast majority of the Cypriot people.

The Republic of Cyprus not only has moral and legal rights on its side, but has time on its side. While Cypriots desperately want a solution, they should not rush into an agreement despite the pressures.

At this crucial time Cyprus doesn't need some imposed quick fix settlement that is not workable, just and comprehensive. After waiting for 30 years unfortunately Cyprus might have to wait a little longer to get a well thought out, suitable, viable and just resolution.

The political breakthrough will come one way or another, because the people on both sides want change and their determination will make it happen.

If Denktash continues to cling to his oppositionist policies and to stand in the way of a just and permanent solution to the problem he will be swept aside by the momentum like many old relics before him have.

Turkish Cypriots especially are desperate for real change and eventually the remnants of Denktash's regime will crumble, paving the way for a renewed, united and free Cyprus.

A solution to the Cyprus problem does not solely depend on the Annan Plan, but on the wishes, and actions of Cypriots. As a Greek Cypriot refugee from the Turkish-held town of Morphou, Marios Demetriou said, "We, the people will solve the problems. We are all Cypriots."

Steven Katsineris
Hurstbridge, Vic

Opus Dei – its real sins

I was interested to see the letter by Tom Gill (*The Guardian* March 17, 2004) in which he raises the issue of a connection between Mel Gibson and Opus Dei.

Andrew (Andy) Alcock
Forestville, SA

Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

Of supermarkets

Rob Gowland

Guardian readers hardly need to be reminded that we do not live in the best of all possible worlds, despite what our present leaders and the bourgeois media would have us believe.

Take the case of a woman we know who lives up here on the NSW Central Coast. She has two small boys and a husband who has been unemployed for months. Howard and Co may crow about how the jobless figures fell recently, but the unemployed got little joy out of this statistical sleight-of-hand.

It doesn't take a degree in economics to figure out that for there to be a significant drop in the real number of people unemployed there would have to be surge in the creation of real jobs. And blind Freddie can see that that hasn't happened.

Nor will it, of course. Capitalism's drive for profit cannot be reconciled with providing full-time, productive jobs for all the workers available to it.

Instead of real jobs it provides McJobs, named after the outfit that pioneered the large-scale creation of low paid jobs that lead nowhere – McDonalds.

Being staunchly anti-union, the giant fast-food chain made a point of hiring school kids for its own McJobs. But such is the crisis of capitalism today, and the lack of job opportunities within it, that grown-ups are now trying to scrape a living stacking supermarket shelves at night or returning supermarket trolleys from the car-park.

And they count themselves lucky when they can get even this kind of work. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise: capitalism is a system in ever-deepening, inexorable crisis.

While corporations keep their bottom lines looking healthy by mergers and downsizing, shedding jobs by the thousand as they go, the system as a whole is digging itself – and us poor bloody workers – into a very deep hole indeed.

A society that cannot provide work for its citizens cannot last, that is true. Unfortunately, its demise may be long drawn out with concomitant distress for the people caught up in its descent into ruin and chaos.

We in Australia are not anywhere near the ruin and chaos stage yet. But already the signs are there.

My friend with the two sons and the unemployed husband, remember? She was telling us the other day about her grocery shopping.

She has to do it at 11.30pm at night. Not because she's an insomniac, but because at that time of night supermarkets have substantial "specials".

Taking advantage of these late-night specials is the only way she can afford to shop for her family. That's a rotten way to have to live, isn't it?

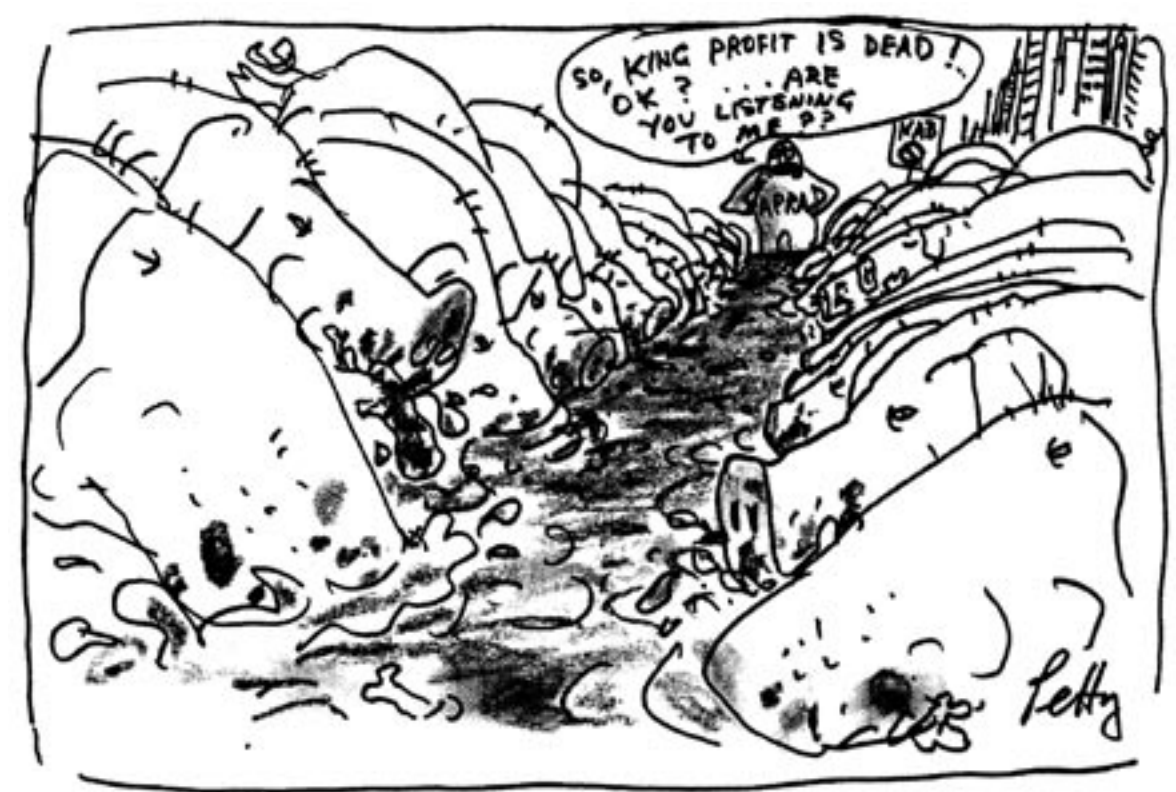
Let's see John Howard or the big banks put a positive spin on that!

Endless war

Of course, John Howard can put a positive spin on almost anything, if it suits his political purpose that is.

Even Britain's Foreign Secretary Jack Straw says that a majority of Iraqis are now opposed to the US presence in their country. Howard however will have none of that.

According to the *Sunday Telegraph*, "Mr Howard dismissed this, saying he believed opinion polls that have shown widespread



support for US efforts to rebuild Iraq".

Those must have been curious opinion polls, eh? Can't you imagine the questions: "Do you approve of the nationally owned assets of your country being handed over to foreign companies?"

Or perhaps: "Do you feel you are better off with the mass unemployment and poverty that has come with the US occupation?"

Hard to see how they could possibly get negative answers, really.

Mind you, Howard prattling on about "US efforts to rebuild Iraq" were echoed by Foreign Minister Downer, telling radio listeners that Australia had a "task" (or was it a "mission") to carry out in Iraq and we had not yet completed it, so you see, we couldn't leave yet, could we?

All this talk of missions and rebuilding is designed to distract

attention from the fact that the US, Britain and Australia invaded Iraq ostensibly to rid it of a dangerous dictator whose weapons of mass destruction threatened not only the countries of the Middle East but nations much further afield as well.

No such weapons were found, as we all know (although poor old Downer still seems to cling to the fond belief that they may yet be found buried somewhere). The dictator has gone, too.

So why are our troops still there? I mean, even the RSL is getting twitchy about the apparent open endedness of the venture.

War without end, as Howard will probably learn at the next elections, is not a popular concept. Even militarists like to win in the end.

In fact, looked rationally, war without end is about as ugly and inhuman a concept as it is possible to come up with.

If Gibson is affiliated to Opus Dei, there certainly are concerns.

Its founder, Fr Jose Maria Escriva, was much more than an odd ball who indulged in self flagellation. He was a strong supporter of Franco and Mussolini (as was B A Santamaria, the founder of the National Civic Council in Australia).

Opus Dei has connections with gangsters and extreme right-wing regimes. It was involved in corruption scandals in the Vatican Bank and gangland assassinations. A number of the leaders in the fascist dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet in Chile had links with Opus Dei, while the mainstream Catholic Church championed human rights. This dictatorship was responsible for the slaughter of over 60,000 Chileans.

It does raise questions as to why Pope John Paul II has already canonised Escriva, well short of the 100 years usually required, while the move to have Sister Mary MacKillop canonised seems to be confronting many obstacles. Progressive Catholics also are questioning the motives of John Paul II when he gave permission for Opus Dei to have its own archbishop – the only lay organisation to have been so honoured.

Tom Gill is right to highlight the fact that Catholics who become martyrs because of their courage to oppose tyranny and support human rights are not likely to be canonised while John Paul II is Pope.



Sun April 25 ~
~ Sat May 1

For Britain and the Allies in WW1, T E Lawrence was an invaluable propaganda figure. Both British and French imperialism were quick to see the potentialities for colonial expansion in supporting Prince Faisal's Arab National Uprising against Germany's ally Turkey.

Turkey's Middle Eastern empire could be up for grabs and the Western imperialist powers were determined to get it. The ANZACs went to their deaths partly – and unsuccessfully – for this end.

In Arabia itself, a low-ranking army intelligence officer, T E Lawrence, was enthusiastic about what could be done by arming the Arabs themselves. Lawrence was never loath to blow his own trumpet and Allied propagandists and media were not slow in romanticising "Lawrence of Arabia".

Lawrence fitted the racist colonial concept that "native" armies needed to be led by white Europeans to be successful. Just what role Lawrence saw for himself in a united Arab empire under Faisal is hard to determine now, so wrapped around is he by spin doctoring.

Certainly Faisal recognised the young British officer's Napoleonic tendencies. Both David Lean's movie and the two-part series *Lawrence Of Arabia: The Battle For The Arab World* (ABC 7.30pm Sundays) credit Lawrence with many of the achievements of the Arab forces, such as the taking of the port of Aqaba after a gruelling march across the desert.

The imperialist powers double crossed Faisal, which Lawrence

seemed to take as a personal affront. The series repeats as fact the cover story that he resigned and re-enlisted in the air force as ground crew under a pseudonym ("aircraftsman Smith") to live in anonymity.

This carefully fostered myth is just that, a myth. As Lawrence he was too well known to do useful intelligence work. As Smith, however, he served British imperialism in Afghanistan and elsewhere before his accidental death in 1935.

This week sees the welcome and long overdue arrival of a new series of the WW2 detective series, *Foyle's War* (ABC 8.30pm Sundays), written by Anthony Horowitz and starring Michael Kitchen as Detective Chief Inspector Foyle, fighting crime on the south coast of England in the early years of the War.

Writing, direction (by Giles Foster) and casting contribute to a splendid period atmosphere. Horowitz has a knack for capturing exactly how people thought in 1940, especially about Nazism and the conduct of the war.

Honeysuckle Weeks returns as Foyle's Auxiliary Territorial Service driver, a perfectly realised period characterisation.

This week's episode, *Fifty Ships* is set in September 1940, and involves organised looting of blitzed buildings, murder and espionage.

Dr Peter Singer, Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, whose views smack of eugenics is the subject of *Singer: A Dangerous Mind*, screening on the ABC's right-wing religious program, *Compass* (ABC 10.15pm Sunday).

Like many bourgeois commentators, Singer can see some of the glaring contradictions of capitalism today, but, lacking a working class perspective, he draws incorrect conclusions.

Seeing only the symptoms and being ignorant of the cause, he seeks solutions purely within the parameters of capitalism. His solution, for instance, to the dilemma that the amount of money expended to keep alive an injured or handicapped child in a developed capitalist country would save hundreds or even thousands of lives if expended in a poor Third World country is to let the capitalist country child die.



A mass of contradictions (*The Shadow of Mary Poppins*)

His response to the existence of poverty and the unequal distribution of wealth is to give away 20 percent of his own salary. A Princeton Professor can probably afford to do so, but once again he is treating the symptom and not the disease.

His specialty is "moral dilemmas", but he shies away from tackling the moral dilemma of a social system based on unearned income and exploiting the labour of others.

A social revolution to do away with poverty and ensure that children in all countries receive adequate health care is certainly not something he advocates. I don't suppose he would last long at Princeton if he did!

On the outbreak of WW1, the Royal Estates at Sandringham raised from their extensive staff a regiment, the King's Regiment, under command of Captain Frank Beck. On August 12, 1915, Captain Beck led his men across the Suvla Plain in

Gallipoli and disappeared into the dust and smoke of battle. They were never seen again.

Investigation after the war revealed that those who had survived the actual fighting had been taken prisoner by the Turks and ignominiously massacred. For the honour of the Royal family it was never made public and remained a mystery.

The story is dramatised, quite well if a little pompously, *All The King's Men* (ABC 11.55pm Monday). David Jason is patriotic loyalty personified as Beck and Maggie Smith is the Queen, who is more than somewhat away with the fairies.

Written and directed by Lisa Matthews, *The Shadow Of Mary Poppins*, screening on *Untold Stories* (ABC 9.30pm Wednesday), is a very interesting account of the troubled life of *Mary Poppins'* Australian creator, the writer Pamela Travers.

Behind the whimsical tales of

the smiling efficient Nanny lies Travers' much darker story of a woman escaping her own upbringing – her father, an impoverished bank clerk obsessed with his Irish roots who drank too much and read Yeats to his little daughter, died when she was only seven.

Her mother was clearly depressed and frequently disturbed. As an adult, Pamela's professional life was a success but her private life was still rather fraught.

At one point, living in England, she tried to adopt her maid, promising the girl that she would "see the world". Wisely, perhaps, the girl's mother would not agree.

More than a little fey, she was a mass of contradictions. This fascinating documentary has been very cleverly put together, each aspect of her life dealt with in its own discrete "chapter".

It is always fascinating to watch, even the necessary "talking heads" are generally interesting in their own right. ★

Perth

Celebrate 10 years of democracy & freedom

Guest Speaker – Raymond Suttner

Raymond is a well-known activist, long-term political prisoner and author of *Inside Apartheid's Prison*. A member of the first post-apartheid parliament in 1994, Raymond spent four years as South African ambassador to Sweden.

Saturday 24th April 7:00 pm for 7:30 pm start
State School Teachers Union 150 Adelaide Terrace, Perth (parking at rear)

\$12 waged / \$10 concession / kids free FOOD – DRINKS – AFRICAN MUSIC
RSVP: 9276-9144 or 0419 942 045 or 0419 812 872 or 0411 693 241
 South African Freedom Day Committee

Sydney

Politics in the Pub

Every Friday night 6pm – 7.45pm
Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills
(across from the Chalmers St exit and Devonshire St tunnel at Central Station)
 Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

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 & Catchment Alliance
Noel Child, environmental scientist & 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
Winton Higgins: Co-director of Australian Institute of Holocaust & Genocide Studies, author of *Journey Into Darkness*
Michael Dudley: Senior Lecturer Psychiatry UNSW, Alliance of Professionals for Health of Asylum Seekers, Chair Suicide Prevention Aust.

May 7

**What's Happening With
 Progressive Politics In The Usa**

Roger Bell, School of History at UNSW;
 Stephen Loosely, (former ALP Senator) Consultant,
 Price Waterhouse Coopers

Inq: Pat Toms 02 9358 4834 pbtoms@bigpond.com; Janet Fischer 02 9398 8891;
 PO Box 325 Rozelle NSW 2039; Win Childs Fax 02 9660 6554
www.politicsinthepub.org

Subscribe to **The Guardian**

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

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

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

or by credit card: Bankcard Mastercard Visa

Card #

Amount: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____/____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

The Guardian

65 Campbell Street
 Surry Hills NSW 2010
 Phone: (02) 9212 6855
 Fax: (02) 9281 5795
 Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Anna Pha

Published by T Pearson
 65 Campbell St
 Surry Hills NSW 2010
 Printed by Spotpress
 105-107 Victoria Rd
 Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment
 is taken by T Pearson,
 65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, 2010

Falluja in April

Jo Wilding

Trucks, oil tankers and tanks are burning on the highway east to Falluja. A stream of boys and men goes to and from a lorry that's not burnt, stripping it bare. We turn onto the back roads singing in Arabic, past the vehicles full of people and a few possessions, heading the other way, past the improvised refreshment posts along the way where boys throw food through the windows into the bus for us and for the people still inside Falluja.

The reason I'm on the bus going to Falluja is that a journalist I knew turned up at my door at about 11 at night telling me things were desperate there. He'd been bringing out children with their limbs blown off. The US soldiers were going around telling people to leave by dusk or be killed, but then when people fled with whatever they could carry, they were being stopped at the US military checkpoint on the edge of town and not let out, trapped, watching the sun go down.

We pile the stuff in the corridor and the boxes are torn open straightaway, the blankets most welcome. It's not a hospital at all but a clinic, a private doctor's surgery treating people free since air strikes destroyed the town's main hospital. Another has been improvised in a car garage. There's no anaesthetic. The blood bags are in a drinks fridge and the doctors warm them up under the hot tap in an unhygienic toilet.

Screaming women come in, praying, slapping their chests and faces. Ummi, my mother, brings me to a bed where a child of about ten is lying with a bullet wound to the head. A smaller child is being treated for a similar injury in the next bed. A US sniper hit them and their grandmother as they left their home to flee Falluja.

The lights go out, the fan stops and in the sudden quiet someone holds up the flame of a cigarette lighter for the doctor to carry on operating by. The electricity to the town has been cut off for days and when the generator runs out of petrol they just have to manage till it comes back on. The children are not going to live.

An old woman has just had an

abdominal bullet wound stitched up. Another in her leg is being dressed, the bed under her foot soaked with blood, a white flag still clutched in her hand and the same story: "I was leaving my home to go to Baghdad when I was hit by a US sniper." Some of the town is held by US marines, other parts by the local fighters. Their homes are in the US controlled area and they are adamant that the snipers were US marines.

Snipers are causing not just carnage but also the paralysis of the ambulance and evacuation services. The biggest hospital left since the main one was bombed is in US territory and cut off from the clinic by snipers. The ambulance has been repaired four times after bullet damage. Bodies are lying in the streets because no one can go to collect them without being shot.

Some said we were mad to come to Iraq; quite a few said we were completely insane to come to Falluja and now there are people telling me that getting in the back of the pick-up to go past the snipers and get sick and injured people is the craziest thing they've ever seen. I know, though, that if we don't, no one will.

He's holding a white flag with a red crescent on; I don't know his name. The men we pass wave us on when the driver explains where

The feet are visible, crossed, in the gutter. I think he's dead already. The snipers are visible too, two of them on the corner of the building. As yet I think they can't see us so we need to let them know we're there.

"Hello", I bellow at the top of my voice. "Can you hear me?" They must. They're about 30 metres from us, maybe less, and it's so still you could hear the flies buzzing at 50 paces. I repeat myself a few times, still without reply, so decide to explain myself a bit more.

"We are a medical team. We want to remove this wounded man. Is it OK for us to come out and get him? Can you give us a signal that it's OK?"

I'm sure they can hear me but they're still not responding. Maybe they didn't understand it all, so I say the same again. Another man, Dave yells too in his US accent. I yell again. Finally I think I hear a shout back. Not sure, I call again.

"Hello."
"Yeah."
"Can we come out and get him?"

"Yeah."
Slowly, our hands up, we go out. The black cloud that rises to greet us carries with it a hot, sour smell. Solidified, his legs are heavy. His Kalashnikov is attached by sticky blood to his hair and hand and we



lies from the clinic pull the young fighter off the pick-up, yellow fluid pours from his mouth and they flip him over, face up.

We wash the blood off our hands and get in the ambulance. There are people trapped in the other hospital who need to go to Baghdad. Siren

me: "Can you go to fetch a lady, she is pregnant and she is delivering the baby too soon?"

Azzam is driving. Something scatters across my hand, simultaneous with the crashing of a bullet through the ambulance, some plastic part dislodged, flying through the window.

We stop, turn off the siren, keep the blue light flashing, wait, eyes on the silhouettes of men in US marine uniforms on the corners of the buildings. Several shots come. We duck, get as low as possible and I can see tiny red lights whipping past the window, past my head. Some, it's hard to tell, are hitting the ambulance I start singing. What else do you do when someone's shooting at you? A tyre bursts with an enormous noise and a jerk of the vehicle.

I'm outraged. We're trying to get to a woman who's giving birth without any medical attention, without electricity, in a city under siege, in a clearly marked ambulance, and you're shooting at us. How dare you?

Abridged: for full text and other material visit Jo Wilding's website www.wildfirejo.org.uk/

The US soldiers were going around telling people to leave by dusk or be killed, but then when people fled with whatever they could carry, they were being stopped at the US military checkpoint on the edge of town and not let out, trapped, watching the sun go down.

we're going. The silence is ferocious in the no man's land between the pick-up at the edge of the Mujahedin territory, which has just gone from our sight around the last corner and the marines' line beyond the next wall – no birds, no music, no indication that anyone is still living until a gate opens opposite and a woman comes out, points.

don't want it with us so I put my foot on it as I pick-up his shoulders and his blood falls out through the hole in his back. We heave him into the pick-up as best we can and try to outrun the flies.

No more than 20 years old, in imitation Nike pants and a blue and black striped football shirt with a big 28 on the back. As the order-

screaming, lights flashing, we huddle on the floor of the ambulance, passports and ID cards held out the windows. We pack it with people, one with his chest taped together and a drip, one on a stretcher, legs jerking violently so I have to hold them down as we wheel him out, lifting him over steps.

The doctor rushes out to meet



Adelaide
UTLC Music Festival
30 April to 2 May
Governor Hindmarsh,
Port Rd, Hindmarsh
Opens 30 April 6.30pm
1 May 12 noon onwards
Speeches, BBQ
For full program contact
UTLC 08 8212 3155 or
visit www.utlc.org.au

May Day March
Saturday 1 May
Assemble 10am
Victoria Square
March to Parliament
House

Brisbane
May Day March
Monday 3 May
Assemble 9.30am

Celebration Lawn
March 10am from Mary
St to parklands
Stalls, BBQ, rides for
kids, speakers

Melbourne
May Day March
Sunday 2 May
Assemble 2pm corner
Victoria & Russell Sts
opposite VTHC
Tea & Concert After
March at Trades Hall
Multi Cultural
Celebration
Friday 23 April 7pm
Trades Hall
Crn Lygon & Victoria Sts
Donation \$5
Film & Food
Sat 17 April 5.30pm

CEPU 71 Cromwell St,
Collingwood
Wreath Laying
Thurs 29 April 5.30pm
8 Hour Monument
May Day Lecture 6pm
Old Council Chamber
THC & Tea

Perth/Fremantle
May Day Toast
Friday 30 April 5.30pm
May Day Parade
Sunday 2 May
Assemble Fremantle
Esplanade 11.30am
March 12 noon
Rally & Concert with
speeches, a jazzy
African band, kids'

activities, free grub &
drinks, community stalls
etc

Sydney
May Day Toast
Thurs 29 April 6.45pm
Sth Sydney Leagues
Club
256 Chalmers St,
Redfern
\$20 Food, Drink and DJ
May Day March
Saturday 1 May
Assemble 11am
Hyde Park North
March 12 noon to
Town Hall Square
Speakers: Andrew
Ferguson, State Secretary
CFMEU; Julia Gillard,
Federal Labor; Lee

Rhiannon, Aust Greens;
Anna Pha, Editor Guardian
Inquiries 02 9265 8438

Wollongong
May Day Toast
Friday 30 April
6.30pm (for 7pm)
Hellenic Club
Princes Hwy, Figtree
\$25/\$15 concession
Special guest Paddy
Crumlin MUA Secretary
May Day March
Saturday 1 May
Assemble 10am
Fred Moore House
Lowden Sq Wollongong
March 10.30am
For more info ph:
Leanne 0425 201 828 or
Elizabeth 02 4229 2888



Communist Party of Australia

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Guardian