

Revelations of horrendous crimes against humanity

Some of the realities of the so-called civilising mission of the US, Britain and Australia in Iraq have been exposed with the publication of pictures of American soldiers in horrendous acts of bestiality and torture performed on Iraqi prisoners.

It is hard to find words to describe one's feelings on seeing the pictures, a few of which have made it into the Australian media.

There are a number of websites where they can be viewed including: www.albasrah.net/images/iraqi-pow/iraqi-pow Readers are warned that they are extremely disturbing images, certainly not for weak stomachs.

Other, less disturbing, pictures can be viewed at: www.informationclearinghouse.info/article6106.htm (click onto "World enraged by US torture of Iraqi prisoners").

The depravity, degeneracy, barbarism and immorality beggar description. The pictures shown on Australian TV and in the media are only a few of the less disgusting images that have now circled the world and which show the depths to which the US armed forces have sunk. There are also allegations of torture committed by British troops.

Shots were taken of prisoners stacked in a pyramid, one with a slur written on his skin in English. There are rape scenes. And in most of the pictures, the Americans are laughing, posing, pointing or giving the camera a thumbs-up.

One of the prison officers implicated is reported as telling the US *60 Minutes* program that: "Military intelligence has encouraged and told us, 'Great job'. We help getting them [the prisoners] to talk with the way we handle them ... We've had a very high rate with our style of getting them to break. They usually end up breaking within hours."

Bush, Blair, Howard and US military commanders have expressed their shock and horror but it is their policies, their armed forces and their war that are directly responsible. Their expressions of shock and the court-marring of a few officers will never wash away the crimes that are being committed by their occupying armies in Iraq.

The leaders of the "Coalition of the Willing" are responsible for this illegal war and occupation. It is their militarism and repeated lying that have produced the immorality and disgusting degeneracy that now have been shown to the world. The troops involved are merely following their leadership.

These leaders must answer for these crimes. For justice to be done they ought to be arrested and arraigned before the International Court of Justice as war criminals. As a first step in a campaign for justice, the people of Australia, Britain and the US should vote them out of office. ✪



Photo: Jackie

Political lessons of Jones, Laws showdown

Bob Briton

Tensions between rival Sydney radio outfits reached a new peak last week when a spat between AM jocks Alan Jones and John Laws spilled out on the airwaves. A trivial matter, you would think. However, caught up in the war of words were none other than Prime Minister John Howard and the chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA), Professor David Flint. The injured list has swollen to include Veterans Affairs Minister Danna Vale and others are sure to be added.

While the wriggling, squirming and hissing of these conservative public figures have provided an entertaining spectacle, their greatest value has been to expose the close, normally secret connections between government and the media. These are links between the political apparatus and one of the major ideological apparatuses of the state.

This latest instalment in the "cash for comment" scandal is highly instructive – it reveals just

how important the control of media comment is to the functioning of modern day capitalism. It gives away some of the detail as to how this manipulation of the media can continue under the nose of an industry watchdog that is supposedly safeguarding the public interest.

"Cash for comment" entered the Australian vocabulary nearly five years ago when the cosy arrangement between the Australian Bankers' Association and John Laws became public knowledge. The Bankers' Association paid Australia Street Consulting \$1.35 million to have a more positive spin put on the behaviour of the banks in the media. Up until that time, Laws had been reflecting the community view that the banks were ripping the public off with excessive fees and the like. After a \$500,000 payment to the announcer, Laws was singing the praises of the banks, their generous tax contributions and so on.

In 2002 another chapter was added when a deal between Telstra, Jones and Laws was exposed. In Jones' case, \$1.2 million (\$5,000

a day!) was handed over in return for 12 months' worth of a more enthusiastic depiction of the giant telco on air. Jones had previously been signed up to a deal with rival Optus and had a reputation for putting the boot into Telstra. Jones soon changed his tune, however.

Money talks

Laws was the beneficiary of a similar deal. Telstra would keep the good news stories coming and the AM jocks would weave them into their shows a specified number of times per week, not as ads but as part of their banter or during talk back. By now Jones who had been at 2UE, was working at rival station 2GB in which he had (and still has) a 20 per cent stake. Laws stayed at 2UE. This became an important difference when the ABA finally became involved.

The Authority was dragged into all these issues thanks chiefly to the pressure generated by the investigations carried out by the ABC program *Media Watch*.

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Destroying ATSIC – a giant step backwards

So the Howard Government is to abolish the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission (ATSIC) as the end result of a long campaign of denigration and lying about the work of the Commission and its leaders.

What is happening now has nothing to do with any supposed misappropriation of money, any incompetence on the part of ATSIC or the alleged personal conduct of this or that leader of ATSIC. It is the end result of a long line of policy decisions that have the aim of turning the clock back for Indigenous people to the days of assimilation and integration.

In the 19th century it was genocide, in the 20th century it was integration and assimilation. Historically Australia's Indigenous people have resisted and fought back. By the time of the 1988 anniversary of the second century of the white invasion of Australia, Aboriginal people were able to proudly proclaim – "WE HAVE SURVIVED!"

Few know about the activities of ATSIC because a compliant press does not publicise its achievements. Here are only a small number.

ATSIC has been responsible for schemes that provide employment and training in a range of activities. For example, one scheme has supported about 35,000 participants employed by around 270 Community Development Employment Projects.

ATSIC has used its funds to build around 500 houses. Around 6800 people were accommodated in new or upgraded dwellings.

It has built up 25 Aboriginal legal services with 95 service sites across Australia.

ATSIC supports 22 licensed radio stations and 105 remote units presenting art and craft activities and language centres.

Lack of work and a climate of humiliation has led to family violence: ATSIC has held roundtable meetings for women and men and established the National Indigenous Working Group on Violence. It now supports 13 Family Violence Prevention Units in areas of high need.

It is working to re-link the families of the "stolen generations".

ATSIC has sent its representatives to the various bodies of the United Nations and sought their assistance to force Australian governments to change their racist policies.

The UN Human Rights Committee criticised the Australian Government for the amendments to the Native Title Act and branded them as "discriminatory".

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern that Indigenous Australians remained at a "comparative disadvantage in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights."

In 2000 the UN Committee against Torture reminded Australian governments that they are answerable for their treatment of Indigenous people caught in the nation's justice systems.

But for the Howard Government these ATSIC activities are among its greatest crimes as they exposed the policies of Australian governments in the eyes of the world.

In 1993 the UN General Assembly, with Australia as a sponsor, launched the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People which had the aim of encouraging governments to "seek means, in consultation with Indigenous people, of giving Indigenous people greater responsibility for their own affairs and an effective voice in decisions on matters which affect them."

The formation of ATSIC was a long step towards the fulfillment of this aim.

In a speech in May 2000 Aboriginal leader Mick Dodson generously said: "I bare no grudge against those who made the policies and laws that took my grandmother, my mother and sisters and placed them in missions, orphanages and government settlements. I don't hate those who made my father's love for my mother a jailable offence."

He asked: "Who did these things to my grandmother, my father, my mother and two sisters? Who took the kids?"

The Indigenous people of Australia have waged a courageous struggle against economic, political and social discrimination and continuous racism for more than 200 years.

Fundamental to progress by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people is RECOGNITION of them not only as the original owners of the continent but as two national minorities within the Australian State.

Their inalienable right to land and its resources, jobs, education, health and other social services, and above all equality should be their natural right. These steps would provide the economic, political and social basis for their real liberation. By destroying ATSIC the racist Howard Government is going full speed in the other direction.

PRESS FUND

Where is everybody? This week the Press Fund received only two contributions. Come on everyone, we're falling behind and we really need your help if we're to meet our annual target of \$14,000, especially in view of additional expenses imposed by the fire in the Party building earlier this year. The Press Fund assists with the running expenses of producing *The Guardian*, it is one means by which we keep the price down so as many people as possible can afford it. So please, send us a contribution for the next issue if you possibly can! We acknowledge with gratitude the generosity of this week's contributors, namely:

Anonymous \$50, R G \$200.

This week's total: \$250. Progressive total: \$3765

ADI site protests

John Gardener

The campaign against the development of the ADI (Australian Defence Industries) site at St Marys in the west of Sydney is gathering strength. Protests are now planned against the proposed development of the huge (over 1500 hectares!) site that used to be occupied by the St Marys Munitions Factory

The Federal Government originally obtained the site by resuming farming land in the early 1940s during World War II. The St Marys Munitions Factory was then built to produce bombs, artillery shells, hand grenades and other materiel. It continued production until the early 1990s when the plant was finally closed.

After the corporatisation of government small arms, munitions and defence factories by the Labor Government in the 1980s, the land was included among the assets of the Australian Defence Industries (ADI), as the renamed government defence factories and works were called.

Like many former munitions factories around the world, the land surrounding it was used as a dumping ground, and for almost 40 years

many toxic chemicals were buried on the site. There were few formal records ever kept of the dumping, and there are many fears that houses will be built on contaminated land.

Local people have been protesting against the planned development for more than 12 years. It has been quite a difficult campaign, because both the Labor and Liberal parties strongly support it.

There was outrage earlier in the year when the Howard Government revealed that the land had been sold to Lend Lease, along with two other ADI sites, for \$165 million. The land was given to Lend Lease at approximately one twentieth of its real value, according to conservative estimates.

The St Marys site has been earmarked for the building of between 6000-8000 homes: with land prices in that area approaching \$300,000 to \$350,000 per housing block, Lend Lease stands to generate profits of more than \$2 billion through housing land sales on the St Marys site alone.

This virtual give-away of the land sparked immediate calls for a formal investigation into the pricing and sale. Local activists compared

the fairly recent sale of Australia's Wonderland, where 58 hectares were sold for \$53 million, to the sweetheart deal at St Marys, where Lend Lease paid only \$165 million for 1535 hectares.

Recently, because of the rapidly deteriorating state of the Sydney real estate market and fears of what might occur if an additional 6000-8000 new homes were dumped on it, there has been increased media coverage critical of the development. To drive home the seriousness of the situation, local residents have called two public meetings.

The first has been called for this Wednesday, May 5. Speakers include Senator Kerry Nettle (Greens), Jackie Kelly (Liberal Party MP for Lindsay) and David Bradbury (Mayor of Penrith and Labor candidate for Lindsay).

The other is a major protest rally at the NSW Parliament House on May 13 to call on Bob Carr to save the ADI Site.

Local activists are hoping for a big response from Western Sydney residents to the Parliament House rally. They are asking that people to catch the "Save the ADI Site Express" into the City. See details of actions below. ☘

Celebrating the defeat of apartheid

Vic Williams

In Western Australia, 240 people met in the State School Teachers' Union Hall to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the South African election that defeated apartheid.

The Freedom Day Committee organised the rally and the finances to bring Raymond Suttner from South Africa as the key speaker. The Workers' Voices' choir opened with a number of songs including the *International* and a song of welcome written by a woman in the Noongar language, signifying the link between the South African and Aboriginal peoples.

Steve Rametse spoke with deep

feeling for his people and their struggle to end 300 years of domination. He called on the audience to remember ANC leader Chris Hani and the other martyrs of the long struggle. He also called on the audience for solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Raymond Suttner, imprisoned for his anti-apartheid activism, called for a celebration of ten years of great achievement. The people are now free to say what they feel and think, he said. He recalled how the election ten years ago which ushered in the ANC government faced much violence.

Since then many have found life in the countryside has changed,

including the provision of electricity, water services and health facilities. There has also been a big increase in pensions and new social organisations have developed.

Raymond welcomed the new constitution of South Africa as better than in most countries, to be used to ensure that the government carries out its promised programs.

Paul Kaplan, a tireless worker against apartheid, recalled how Raymond's visit in 1989 inspired marches and activities. He was greatly encouraged by the developments in the past ten years: how people's power and international support had crushed apartheid. ☘

Sydney

Save the Australian Defence Industry site

» Rally «

Thursday 13 May 12.30pm

NSW Parliament House, Macquarie St

Catch the "Save the ADI site Express" to the City. Train departs from Penrith Station at 10.35 am, St Marys at 10.44am, Mt Druitt at 10.48 am and from Blacktown at 10.58 am

» ADI site Forum «

Wednesday 5 May 7pm

St Marys Memorial Hall Cnr Mamre Rd & Great Western Hwy, St Marys

Deadline to stop the site being developed is June 2004.

For more info: www.savethedisite.bmt.com.au

Adelaide

STOP THE NUCLEAR WASTE DUMP!

BETTER ACTIVE TODAY THAN RADIOACTIVE TOMORROW!

FABULOUS FILM NIGHT!

Featuring music from Liam Gerner

Tuesday May 11
Grace Emily Hotel
232 Waymouth St

Organised by the Campaign Against Nuclear Dumping
For more info: 08 8227 1399 nonucleardump@hotmail.com

The 2004 federal election provides a great opportunity to stop the Howard Government's plans for a nuclear waste dump in South Australia.

Row over defence intelligence grows

Peter Mac

Spindoctoring over issues concerning Australia's intelligence gathering has once again landed the Howard Government in hot water.

The Government had previously commissioned a report by lawyer and former naval officer Captain Martin Toohey into the effectiveness of the activities of government agencies that gather and process military intelligence.

To the government's horror, Toohey's report found serious weaknesses, in particular the tendency for intelligence personnel to frame their reports in a manner bound to find favour with the government of the day.

After receiving his report, the government undertook a "fishing expedition" for a report that would better suit their purposes: A second report confirmed the conclusions drawn by Collins and Toohey, but this was also rejected in favour of a third report by Colonel Richard Tracey, which claimed that Toohey's report was without foundation.

Toohey claims that Tracey hadn't bothered to contact him and had not read transcripts of interviews conducted by Toohey. Tracey himself does not appear to have conducted any such interviews. Toohey commented: "I believe there is no basis for the Tracey report. It is merely personal advice."

Nevertheless, in a transparent ruse, the government accepted the Tracey version, describing the discrepancies between the two reports as simply a result of "differing opinions".

The affair has revealed the Government as totally cynical and morally bankrupt. However, it has also highlighted major changes emerging within the Australian intelligence services which involve issues of profound importance for the Australian people.

High-level intelligence is a most important political weapon, which is intended to serve the interest of the

government that gathers it, and the class whose interests that government serves.

One of the most embarrassing revelations arising from the recent open letter sent by a defence intelligence officer, Lance Collins, is that there is a clique of members of Australia's Defence Intelligence Organisation who are sympathetic to Indonesia. Their views correspond to those that have prevailed among the major political parties since General Suharto's bloody neo-fascist coup in Indonesia in the early 1960s.

Specific reference was made in Collins' letter to the 1999 situation in East Timor, in which post UN plebiscite violence was clearly and accurately forecast. The Howard government failed to act until the massacres were well underway, and then only with greatest reluctance as the principal member of a UN taskforce.

Howard's "yes men"

The modification of intelligence reports to make them acceptable to a government's political views is attributed to being a result of appointing intelligence officers with a background in policy formation and the diplomatic service.

The performance of these officers is undoubtedly supported by the Government. They are fully conscious of the government's requirements, share their views and are only too pleased to shape their reports accordingly. A prime example of this is the material used to back up allegations that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction prior to the invasion by US-led forces.

The Government is cultivating organisations of "yes men". It is abundantly clear that it wants a public service, including the intelligence agencies, that will produce material lending credibility to its policies.

It is also clear that the Howard Government is prepared to use this material to transfer the blame onto



members of those agencies when things go terribly wrong, as is happening in Iraq. Let's not forget the hapless Mick Keelty, head of the Australian Federal Police, who was publicly humiliated and forced to recant when he stated that Australia now has a heightened danger of becoming a terrorist target as a result of the Howard Government's support of the war in Iraq.

The treatment of Captain Toohey, including commissioning reviews of his report, bears this out.

Alienating the intelligence service, defence forces

There is now an increasing tendency for government officials to publicly state their differences with the government. Notable recent examples include Captain Toohey and former Office of National Assessments officers Andrew Wilkie, as well as Lieutenant-Colonel Lance Collins and defence intelligence operative Jane Errey, both from the Defence Intelligence Organisation.

Errey, a Ministerial briefer, claims she was sacked for refusing to write a report that exaggerated

the threat posed to the West by the former Saddam Hussein regime. These people's decision to speak out is a direct result of the Government's practice of blaming catastrophes such as the Iraq war on faulty intelligence and, by implication, poor performance by intelligence organisations and personnel.

This practice is not only duplicitous; it is also very unwise. The government ultimately depends heavily on the support of the intelligence services and the public service generally. They want "yes men" to provide them with material to back up their more unpopular activities, but they also need competent professionals and operatives to provide them with accurate and objective information.

It is these people who are likely to feel the greatest resentment, both individually and collectively, at being asked to lie or cover for the Government. And this resentment is almost guaranteed to result in them speaking out.

Further scandals are emerging to dog the government. Some 200 former and serving defence

personnel are considering taking a legal class action against the Government. They claim that their behaviour, which in many cases comprised speaking out against unjust treatment, resulted in their being dismissed from the service on the totally spurious grounds of ill health.

More and more people close to the design and delivery end government's disastrous military policies are speaking out. Their courage and their contribution to the campaign to rein in this aggression are to be welcomed.

And as if that was not enough, there is now a major scandal brewing involving radio announcer and right-wig rabble rouser Allan Jones (see page 1).

The Prime Minister did not deny he had spoken to Jones, but stated that he had "no recollection" of a discussion with Jones about Flint's appointment. In the circumstances many people will see this as just another attempt by "honest John" to weasel out of another unpleasant and politically embarrassing scandal.

Nothing happened? Plenty happened

Tom Pearson

News Ltd, the co-owner of rugby league, sent Malcolm Noad galloping in to the Canterbury Bulldogs camp to spin some a PR following rape allegations against some of the club's players which caused corporate sponsors to dump the club to the tune of tens of millions of dollars. After a decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) not to lay charges, Noad demonstrated the value of his training as a News Ltd executive, telling the media, "Lets' believe nothing happened in Coffs Harbour."

Noad's approach is the "let's move on" line favoured by those wanting to bury damaging revelations.

The DPP decision on the case – which followed allegations by a 20-year-old woman that the players raped her in Coffs Harbour last February – stated there was "insufficient evidence", i.e. there was not enough evidence to lay charges.

The head of the investigation, Detective Chief Inspector Jason Breton, was adamant, stating that he "absolutely" believed something happened: "That's why we worked almost 18 hours a day for ten weeks."

Now Noad – who was appointed on April 1 as Bulldogs chief executive following the resignation of chief exec Steve Mortimer – is talking up the club's "player code of conduct", as though failure to follow some school-yard rules is the fundamental cause of the problem.

Let's look back a couple of years and consider the example the club hierarchy's "code of conduct" provided and we'll see that plenty has happened. Mortimer, and another former player, George Peponis, who became chairman, were elevated to their positions following the resignation of club president Gary McIntyre in 2002.

It was the year that the Bulldogs had 37 competition points taken away from them because the club cheated the player payment system, making secret payments to some players above the stipulated salary cap.

It turned out that the extra \$900,000 was transferred out of a \$900 million development project, Oasis, in which the Bulldogs were partners with Liverpool City Council. Oasis is huge: a 35,000-seat stadium, a 6000-seat basketball arena (the Bulldogs sponsor the Sydney Razorbacks basketball team), a swimming complex, retail

and residential developments and a casino owned by the Bulldogs.

But rorting the salary cap was only the tip of the iceberg. Beneath the surface were kickbacks, conflicts of interest and under-the-table deals involving the Labor Party and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) as well as the Oasis project, Liverpool Council and the Bulldogs.

The then Minister for Fisheries and Mineral Resources – and a Bulldogs board member – Eddie Obeid, was accused by a former Oasis media consultant of promising to fast-track the project to beat the introduction of legislation limiting the number of poker machines in NSW. In return there would be a \$1 million donation to the Labor Party.

Happily for all involved ICAC found that "evidence does not establish to a requisite degree" that any donation to the Labor Party "was ever seriously contemplated by Mr McIntyre"; that "there is no evidence that any donation was made to the ALP in relation to the project"; and that there are "no findings that Mr Obeid ever solicited such a donation".

Trouble is ICAC Commissioner, Irene Moss, was herself entangled



in the whole mess: her husband, Allan Moss, is managing director of Macquarie Bank, an original investor in Oasis which, at the time in 2002, was suing the Bulldogs and Liverpool Council to recoup bank fees. That's what happens when thieves fall out.

Obeid is still an MP (he is not a minister but is, perhaps more ominously, a member of the Government's Legislation Review Committee), and father-in-law to George Peponis.

As for the rape case, it will

have another effect in this time of a vicious political backlash against women. It sends a message to women not to report rape, said Sarah Maddison of the Women's Electoral Lobby.

"The inevitable outcome of this, regardless of the merits of this situation, is that other women who have been sexually assaulted will be put off coming forward. We need to start removing the suggestion that women are responsible for rape and I don't think we've been able to do that yet."

Enthusiastic May Day celebrations

Around 15,000 people took part in one of the most successful May Day celebrations for many years in **Brisbane**. The march was held on the Monday, Labour Day holiday. There was a strong trade union presence with unions easily identifiable by their flags and T-shirts, made even more colourful by participants carrying balloons. The main theme was "Union Rights are Human Rights".

The banners and placards took up many issues, including peace, solidarity with Cuba, defence of Medicare and trade union rights. A petition against the Free Trade Agreement was circulated and found no shortage of willing signatories.

The **Melbourne** march and

rally was held on the usual Sunday. Like the Brisbane march, there was no shortage of enthusiasm, but the attendance was down, around 1500. Trade unions, left political parties, including the Communist Party of Australia, solidarity and other groups and individuals participated.

The question of socialism was raised as well as the attacks on the working class movement, and the building industry in particular. Speakers came from the building industry, the Philippines and the Cuba Friendship Society.

It appears that numbers were affected with the holding of another May Day march on the Saturday, May 1, which attracted between

600 and 800 workers. Five unions – MUA, AMWU, United Fire Fighters, CFMEU, LHMU – were represented.

In **Perth**, 1000 people rallied for May Day at the Fremantle Esplanade. Main demands included workers' compensation, fair trade and use of local labour and local materials in the oil, gas and other developments in the north of WA. "Make it here or jobs disappear" was a popular slogan.

CPA comrades worked well in party stall selling *Guardians* as well as other merchandise. The red flag flew high throughout march and some contacts were made.

In **Sydney** around 2000 people marched from Hyde Park to Town Hall via John Howard's office in the city where a noisy stopover was held. Speakers were Greens MP Lee Rhiannon; Andrew Ferguson, State Secretary CFMEU; Julia Gillard from the ALP; and Anna Pha, editor of *The Guardian*.

In **Wollongong** approximately 300 people marched from Fred Moore House to the Wollongong Mall Amphitheatre via the historic Regent Theatre. Greens Federal MP Michael Organ spoke at the Regent Theatre stopover about the historical importance of the former cinema. CFMEU State Assistant Secretary Peter Zaboyak announced his union's green ban on the site that has been earmarked for development.

Speakers at the Mall Amphitheatre included Rob Long from the Wollongong TAFE Teachers' Association on impact that fee increases had on students and his unions campaign to save public education. South Coast Labour Council Secretary Arthur Rorris spoke on the union movement's campaign to have a medical retrieval unit for the region.

The last speaker of the march was retired MUA Southern Branch Secretary Tony Adcock who spoke on the importance of international worker solidarity and the need for international peace.

Two of the themes common to all marches were the need to get rid of the Howard Government and the demand for Australian troops out of Iraq.

The Communist Party of Australia had good contingents at all the marches. It ran stalls, distributed *Guardians* and handed out thousands of leaflets. The leaflet calling for a Stop to the Militarisation of Australia was particularly well received.

(See adjacent article for Adelaide.) ☺



Arthur Christoforou – communist and trade union veteran of more than 60 May Day Marches

Photo: Tom Pearson



Sydney



Perth



Adelaide

Photo: Tom Pearson

Photo: Avante Media Australia

May Day Adelaide 2004

Bob Briton

There were relatively small numbers again at this year's May Day march and rally in Adelaide. About 400 defied threatening skies to carry their banners and flags from Victoria Square to the steps of Parliament House.

Jorge Navas of the Health Services Union introduced the speakers after the crowd had been warmed up with workers' songs from the Trade Union Choir. Jim Green spoke about the decision by the Federal Government to build a national waste dump in SA. He described the project being foisted on SA and the indigenous Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta and Kokotha people as unnecessary, unwanted, unsafe and illegal. An overwhelming majority of South Australians agree with the anti-dump campaigner!

CFMEU Construction and General Division Secretary Martin O'Malley made an appeal for socialism to be put back on the agenda of the labour movement. He pointed out that in 2004 officials of building unions were still being threatened with charges of "conspiracy" of the same pro-boss type that caused the Tolpuddle Martyrs to be transported to Australia in the 19th Century.

He added that the latest "terrorist laws" are similar to the sort that eventually made all dissent illegal in Nazi Germany. Only by moving forward to socialism can we be sure that such gloomy comparisons will not be made in May Day speeches in one hundred years time.

Workers' Memorial Ceremony

The family, friends and comrades of the late Jim Mitchell gathered at the Workers Memorial at Black Diamond Corner in Port Adelaide last Sunday to acknowledge the addition of Jim's name to the monument. His name now appears under that of comrade Steve Pappas. A wag quipped that Stevie would probably try to sell him a *Guardian*!

The Mayor of Port Adelaide Enfield, Fiona Barr, spoke to the gathering about the importance of leaders like Jim and the need to defend the gains that the movement had achieved under their leadership.

Fellow retired waterfront worker Rex Munn paid tribute to Jim, and Jim's daughter May added that the people gathered for the ceremony should use the occasion to renew their commitment to the cause of the working class. ☺

WA bosses try to worm out of immigration rorts

Employers, including WA's powerful Chamber of Commerce and Industry (WACCI), are protecting their backsides in the wake of immigration rort revelations (see last week's *Guardian*). The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU), last week lifted the lid on the abuse of dozens of tradesmen, imported from South Africa and paid as little as one-third of going rates.

The AMWU fingered three companies – labour hire outfit Freespirit, the WACCI and Pretoria-based Australian Business Associates – as ringleaders of a scheme that pays qualified boilermakers, pipe fitter and welders as little \$11.45 an hour, after expenses.

In the wake of the revelations, Freespirit hired a PR company,

Australian Business Associates and rushed its South African representative to Perth, and the WACCI made noises about extricating itself from the scheme. But, according to AMWU representatives on the ground, none of them would talk to affected workers.

"They are all pointing the finger at one another", said State Secretary Jock Ferguson. "But nobody will take responsibility for what has happened."

"Freespirit has hired a legal firm and a PR agency. We have made numerous requests for meetings to try and sort this out but, so far, nothing."

"We want these workers paid the appropriate rates that apply in the industry and we want an end to unfair conditions that are being applied. At

the end of the day, we want a fair go for these people because they are working in our country.

"Someone, eventually, is going to have to face up to that."

The union is also concerned by allegations from the South Africans that they were instructed not to join trade unions on pain of deportation.

When a boilermaker from Johannesburg went public about his situation, two weeks ago, he was sacked from Perth engineering shop, RCR, the following day.

The scheme was revealed when 25 South African tradesmen walked off jobs in Perth, Port Hedland and Kalgoorlie, in protest at their treatment. They all signed up with the AMWU.

One boilermaker revealed he was earning \$13.40 an hour, after

expenses, alongside Australians at Port Hedland on \$44 an hour union-negotiated agreements.

Members of the 25-strong group said they had answered advertisements in Johannesburg newspapers placed by Australian Business Associates.

They went to a meeting with a woman, claiming to represent both Freespirit and the WACCI. She told them four-year visas would be arranged and they would earn around \$25 an hour.

When they arrived in Australia they were farmed out to a range of sites where all-in rates were eaten away by a \$1 an hour health care levy; nine percent super deductions; and 12.5 percent kickbacks to the labour hire company.

On top of that, they faced \$5000

slugs to cover airfares and administration costs on visas arranged through Australia's Immigration Department. Most said they were being charged 144 percent interest on that figure.

Unions say the scheme is being facilitated by a Federal Government prepared to use immigration to undermine the earnings of Australian families.

AMWU organiser Steve McCartney said the South Africans deserved praise for blowing the whistle on the practice.

"They've stood up to be counted on this. They don't know anyone in this country but they do know they are being shafted by Freespirit, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Federal Government", he said. ☺

A curious war with no dead

Tom Pearson

There is something curious about the war in Iraq – it's a conflict with no dead. There are burning vehicles; soldiers on patrol; GI snipers plying their bloody trade; buildings, city blocks, whole towns and villages, blown to pieces by American shellfire; protesting Iraqis; arrested Iraqis; homeless Iraqis; some wounded. But search the newspapers, scrutinise the television news, and there's not a body in sight.

This is perhaps the most censored war in history. There are reports. In Falluga, 700 reported dead last month, half of them women and children. Families, trapped by the fighting in their homes, bury their dead in their gardens. Refugees are quoted describing "streets littered with bodies".

Right from the beginning, the invaders took their "embedded" journalists with them. Then kept them and their cameras away from the carnage. Many journalists have been killed – by who? The occupying forces who are suppressing information on atrocities, torture, racism, rape, mass killings?

Of course, those running the war have learnt some lessons from past adventures, in particular Vietnam. It is even forbidden by the Bush Government to publish photos of the coffins of US personnel, let alone Marines dead in the streets.

Sources independent of the occupiers have come in for brutal attention. One of the early targets of US forces in Baghdad was Al-Jazeera, the Arab-language television station, which was bombed, resulting in the deaths of a number of the station's staff.

At the other extreme, there is no detailed coverage of the daily lives of the Iraqi people. On the state of their schools, health services, water, sanitation, heating, where they get food, etc – nothing.

As Robert Fisk, of *The Independent* newspaper, puts it, "Just shut up" is now the foreign policy line of the Bush administration. People who raise criticisms of the manipulations and machinations of Bush and his cronies are told to pull their heads in.

Fisk notes that the occupation's US administrator, Paul Bremer, closed cleric Muqtada Sadr's little weekly paper – a closure that in part

sparked a bloody uprising – because it condemned Bremer for taking Iraq down "Saddam's path".

Here in Australia "Just shut up" is also the favoured approach of the Howard Government, which, like its US and British counterparts, keeps announcing that their whole and sole purpose in Iraq is to bring democracy to the Iraqi people.

Curious also, then, that at the same time they have put in place draconian anti-democratic laws designed to silence all opposition to their policies and actions.

But if the images that would speak a thousand words – of the dead, the dying and the maimed – are being buried by the occupiers and their masters, the power of words has not been quelled.

Here is Felicity Arbuthnot in the British socialist weekly, *Morning Star*, on the ruthlessness of the occupiers: "Winning 'hearts and minds', 'freedom, democracy', common civility and decency have no place, just arbitrary slaughter on suspicion, random bombings, the demolition of homes of 'suspects', and the rounding up of families, women and children, in night raids.

"Collective punishment is the order of the day, and night." ☘



Worth a thousand words – occupiers with an Iraqi prisoner

Political lessons

continued from page 1

ZUE was eventually found guilty of breaches of ABA codes and standards for failing to disclose on air the deals it had made with corporate heavyweights like Telstra and NRMA. ZGB was cleared in circumstances that have been the subject of further *Media Watch* investigation.

Jones was absolved of the charges because he had not received a payment directly from Telstra. The cash was given to ZGB. No importance is given to the fact that Jones is a major shareholder in the radio station in the final ABA report on the matter. According to the ABA assessment, Jones had no obligation to make on air announcements of any personal benefit from the Telstra deal.

During the investigation of these issues by the ABA, Professor David Flint was forced to step down from his presiding position. While the controversy was still raging, the professor had gone on air with the two embattled presenters in a gesture that was widely viewed as a one of solidarity.

However, upon Flint's return to his post the ABA report on the Jones matter underwent a transformation. The original concluded that Jones had indeed breached the codes set down for media behaviour by the ABA. The final report dropped all these adverse references and Jones was "cleared". While it appears that Flint was able to retrieve what he could for one of the right-wing mouths-for-hire on a technicality, the fact that the charges were made to stick to Laws aggravated a rift between the two presenters.

Last week the tiff assumed national significance. Laws claimed that his rival announcer had interrupted him at a dinner party in 2000 while he was criticising the "pretentious, posturing professor". Laws then recalls Jones turning on him: "...careful what you say about him. If it wasn't for him, God knows where we'd be."

It was then that Jones is meant to have boasted that he had been to Kirribilli House to demand from the Prime Minister that David Flint

be reappointed as head of the ABA. Failure to do so would have caused Jones to withdraw his support for the coalition at the 2001 Federal elections.

Jones and Howard have now both denied having had any such meeting or conversation. Their statements have been strengthened from the generic and ambiguous (of the "I do not recall any such conversation taking place" sort) to emphatic denial when it became clear just how serious the issue had become.

It is worth noting that neither Jones nor the PM is talking about defamation proceedings against their accuser. Laws claims to have several witnesses to the alleged outburst from Jones.

So who is David Flint and why should his stewardship of the nation's media watchdog be the subject of such terse, high-powered conversations? All seven members of the board of the ABA are appointed, including Professor Flint. They were to represent the range of political and social opinion within the Australian community. However, the successive governments have narrowed this "spectrum" of opinion and moved it to the right to the point where someone with Professor Flint's credentials can be appointed as chair for two successive terms.

David Flint was Dean of Law at the University of Technology in Sydney. He was also the Chairman of the Australian Press Council from 1987 to 1997 and is an Associate Member of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. He was appointed Chairman of the ABA in 1997 and again in 2001.

He is a leading light in the Australians for Constitutional Monarchy and has catalogued his cranky beliefs in a manifesto published in 2003 called *Twilight of the Elites*. In the time-honoured right-wing tradition, the staunch defender of the establishment would have us believe that left leaning "elites" dominate academia and the media. Political correctness and the black armband view of Australian history

are choking our cultural life, according to Flint.

He is a supporter of the Judaeo-Christian ethic, welfare "reform", "free trade" and a host of pet projects of the international ruling class. He wrote at least one letter to Alan Jones (on ABA letterhead!) praising him for his staunch support of these worthy causes:

*Dear Alan,
...you have an extraordinary ability of capturing and enunciating the opinions of the majority on so many issues.*

This of course annoys those who have a different agenda. I suspect it is extremely irritating to them that you do it so well...

Keep up your considerable contribution to the widening of our national debates.

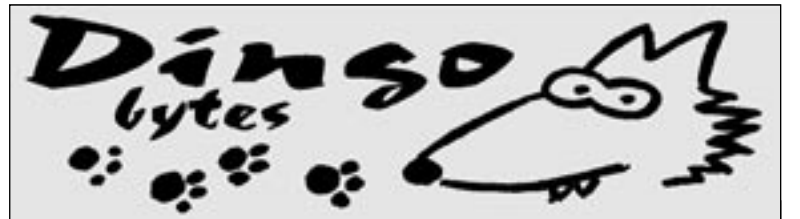
Sincerely, David

Not surprisingly, Flint stands squarely behind the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq. In fact, with the media focus now squarely on the rarely examined workings of the ABA, and in view of his fixed position, the Professor has agreed not to chair the Authority while it considers former Communications Minister Richard Alston's accusations of bias against the ABC during their coverage of the war in Iraq last year.

Another "extremely annoying" feature of this whole saga for the establishment is that it exposes just how politically charged senior appointments in the media are.

The choice of a Chair for our public broadcaster, the ABC is another ideological battlefield where the right deploys a lot of its forces. The labour movement must defend the remaining independent voices within the ABC to prevent the whole of the mainstream media being turned over to the political agenda pedalled by Flint and Howard. Support for the alternative media, including the working class, press must be strengthened.

Another demand must surely be the immediate dismissal of the ABA Chairman and a review of the makeup of the board of the Authority to ensure that it genuinely reflects the range of views in the community. ☘



The Nauru Government has refused entry to Australian lawyers seeking to represent the hundreds of asylum seekers who are locked up on the island. This may be a little shady, the obvious conclusion being that the Howard Government's payment of hundreds of millions of dollars to the Nauru Government motivated the blocking of the lawyers. On the other hand Nauru has no problem letting in the Australian Government's lawyer.

Who polices the police? It's a perennial question. The force currently going through revelations of graft and corruption is the Victorian Police. The latest is that the Vic cops have been sending seized drugs to NSW for analysis because a scientist in the state's forensic laboratory is suspected of being in the pay of criminals. Just why they think NSW is squeaky clean they don't say.

PM Howard's Iraq trip was just a matter of time, but how typically cynical and opportunistic it was to choose Anzac Day, a day born of blood due to the treachery of the British command which set up Australian troops to be slaughtered. For the returned service personnel and their families Anzac Day is about remembrance and a desire for peace. But for the warmongering Howard conflicts are clearly something to celebrate. Instead of arriving in Iraq with a turkey, like George W Bush months earlier, Howard cooked a barbeque and quaffed a beer, arrogantly posing for the media in a nation to which he helped bring death and destruction and occupation. Some WW2 veterans have derisively labelled him "Flakjacket Johnnie". It deserves to stick.

The nation's major science organisation, the CSIRO, is in the throes of being privatised. All the signs that it has been infected with this lethal process have been evident for some time, to one degree or another. There are the big business appointments such as tobacco lobbyist Donna Staunton; there's the re-direction of funds from scientific research for the public good to research aimed at increasing the corporate bottom line. Now there's a pre-budget review of the CSIRO's operations by none other than Donald McGauchie, one of the architects of the 1998 attack on the Maritime Union, a former head of the National Farmers' Federation and now a member of the board of the Reserve Bank ("scum" is too good a word). The report says that the CSIRO should compete with other agencies for funds "to encourage commercialisation and collaboration".

CAPITALIST HOG(S) OF THE WEEK: are the nation's negligent employers, who are responsible for the deaths of more than 2000 workers a year, with many thousands more injured. Yet only one government, the ACT, has had the guts to introduce industrial manslaughter laws to bring such employers to justice.

Targeted by the state: The 1984 British Miners' Strike

Fern Lane

Twenty years ago, on March 5, 1984, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), together with the communities from which it drew its membership, embarked on an epic confrontation with the Thatcher Government.

Although superficially a struggle over proposed pit closures, in reality the Miners' Strike was actually about something transcendently greater than that; it was a titanic clash over what direction British politics was to take from that moment on.

The strike was a desperate last stand by working class communities against a Tory machine which had, since coming to power in 1979, made clear its desire to destroy organised labour, most especially the NUM.

It had made equally clear its determination to restructure the British economic landscape to conform to its greedy, market-led, profit-driven vision in which, as Thatcher famously said, the thing called "society" had no place.

Almost exactly three years prior to that pivotal week in 1984, another strike with equally momentous and long-lasting effects had also been set in motion, backed by an equally politicised, defiant and largely working class community.

Like the Miners' Strike, the 1981 Hunger Strike had been, outwardly at least, about the issue of the political rights of (Irish) republican prisoners.

But, like the Miners' Strike that was to follow, as it progressed it became much greater than its core issue.

It became the struggle around which nationalist resistance to British occupation, with all its violations of person, property and human rights, became crystallised.

MI5 also infiltrated the pickets during the strike, sending in undercover police officers to identify particular targets for arrest or to provoke violent incidents

In both cases, as the miners' groups who visited the Six Counties in 1984/85 quickly learned, the Tory Government had similar motives – the destruction of the Republican Movement in Ireland on the one hand and of the Trade Union Movement in Britain on the other.

And in both cases it used near-identical techniques in its attempts to crush wider political opposition to its policies.

It waged an unfettered propaganda war; it belittled and ignored the legitimate grievances of those involved; it used the full force of its security and intelligence services in the, often illegal, attempt to undermine the strikes; it sought by similar means to discredit their leaders and; backed up by force, it set out to impose its will on communities fighting for their very survival.

Like the Hunger Strike, the Miners' Strike was presented to the public in its most crudely simplistic form; the latter as Séamus Milne has

recently said, being portrayed as "an anti-democratic insurrection led by a ranting megalomaniac in defiance of economic logic".

Similarly, anyone living in Britain in 1981, who did not make strenuous efforts to inform themselves about the Hunger Strike, would have been under the impression that a small gang of criminals, backed by slightly bigger, but infinitely dangerous criminal conspiracy were attempting to blackmail a plucky British Government over apparently trivial issues such as the prisoners' (criminals') demand to wear their own clothes.

And in both cases, the government could rely on a cravenly obedient British press to convey, unquestioned, its propaganda to the public.

Smear campaign

And, as republican leaders were the subject of a determined campaign of demonisation in the British press at the behest of the government, so the miners' leader, Arthur Scargill, was relentlessly smeared with false allegations and portrayed as a villain of almost pantomime absurdity.

Although a "ferociously principled" man, his reputation has never really recovered from the grievous defamation it endured.

As recently as the firefighters' industrial action last year, Tony Blair sneeringly referred to their union representative as "Scargillites", hoping no doubt to send a collective shiver down the spines of middle England, and reminding them in a single word that organised labour must be resisted, whatever the cost or however reasonable its demands.

There are other similarities. Like the Hunger Strikers, the miners were forsaken by those who should have supported them, but who were

too afraid or too unprincipled to do so, and who chose to turn their faces away from the enormity of what was at stake.

As the Catholic Church, the Dublin Government and middle-class nationalism abandoned the H-Block men, preferring instead to attack republicans and try to undermine the unity of the strikers and their families, so the Labour Party and the TUC (Trade Union Congress) blamed Scargill for the strike.

They insisted that he should hold a national ballot and blamed him and the miners, rather than the police and the government, for the violence that occurred on the picket lines.

Dirty tricks

Another means of attacking both strikes was to lure in weaker members of each respective community and set them the task of destroying the strikes from within.

Denis Faul was, of course, the chosen instrument in 1981, and in 1984 the British Government refined the ploy and used it again.

It sponsored and ardently promoted the so-called Democratic Union of Mineworkers, courting a cabal of right-wing, strikebreaking miners who engineered the first cracks in the previously solid position of the strikers.

But the true extent of the dirty tricks the government had employed only really began to emerge in 1993, when five Labour MPs signed a Parliamentary motion accusing the head of MI5, Stella Rimington, of sending an agent into the heart of NUM "to destabilise and sabotage the union at its most critical juncture".

At the time of the strike Rimington had been a specialist in F2, the MI5 unit dedicated to the monitoring and surveillance of trade union officials and members.

She also had considerable prior form in the Six Counties.

The agent that she had deployed was named as Roger Windsor, the Chief Executive of the NUM at the time of the strike and Scargill's right-hand man.

As chronicled by Séamus Milne since, this was all part of the MI5 "Get Scargill" plan, a campaign, authorised by Margaret Thatcher, to destroy the NUM leader "politically and personally".

The agency set about its task with vigour. It mounted the biggest telephone tapping operation it had ever undertaken.

The homes of union officials were bugged. Scargill and many other officials were put under 24-hour surveillance, with restaurants and hotels they regularly used also bugged.

The telephones of sympathetic groups and members of other trade unions were tapped.

MI5 also infiltrated the pickets during the strike, sending in undercover police officers to identify particular targets for arrest or to provoke violent incidents that would then be served up to an unwitting British public as part of the propaganda war.

But, when two such police officers who had infiltrated the Creswell Strike Centre in Derbyshire were exposed, the national media conspired to ignore it.

Windsor had joined the NUM staff office as its finance officer in 1983, quickly becoming its Chief Executive.

According to some accounts of the strike, he advised the NUM to transfer funds into a network of overseas trusts and accounts, supposedly to avoid the threat of confiscation, but all the time allegedly informing the security services about where the money was going.

Ultimately, his financial "advice" led the NUM into being placed into receivership; its funds were sequestered, with the effect that its work was severely hampered.

It cost the union millions of pounds.

He was also responsible for one of the biggest public relations disasters to befall the NUM.

Without the knowledge of the union, Windsor travelled to Lybia to visit Colonel Gaddafi, at the time a figure of profound fear and loathing in a Britain, which was incessantly



Trade unionists in 1984 Manchester march in solidarity with the miners

reminded of the killing of a woman PC outside the Libyan embassy six months earlier.

Windsor arranged to be filmed and photographed embracing Gaddafi with predictable results; the NUM and its leader were vilified in the British press.

What the public did not learn was that Scargill had been invited to Libya to "explain the NUM's position" but that he had declined the invitation, telling Gaddafi that if he wanted to help the miners he should stop the strike-breaking sale of oil to Britain.

Not content with this, MI5 also attempted to deposit 500,000 pounds in a Dublin bank account, using the British intelligence Services "house" bank, the now discredited Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), to carry out the transfer.

Presumably, the idea was to subsequently "expose" Scargill as a fraudster who was stealing NUM funds.

The plan failed, however, when the Dublin bank involved uncovered the scam.

Thatcher's frontline troops

Crucial to the Thatcher Government's plan to nail Scargill was the role of the British media, whose members were referred to by the miners themselves as "Thatcher's frontline troops".

Indeed, in 1991 journalist

Richard Norton-Taylor revealed the existence of a list of something like 500 prominent Britons, including around 90 in the media, who were in the employ of the CIA, and paid through the old friend of the intelligence services, the BCCI.

The *Daily Mirror*, in particular, much of it under the editorship of the now-repentant Roy Greenslade, launched a sustained and often demented hate-campaign against Arthur Scargill, a campaign which lasted long after the strike had come to an end in March 1985.

As late as 1990, the paper was still printing MI5-planted front-page "exclusives" in order to smear Scargill and some of his associates.

The most notorious was the allegation – or rather the lie – that during the strike the NUM had received money from Libya.

This money, claimed Roger Windsor in the *Daily Mirror*, had been intended to bring relief to the impoverished miners, but Scargill, along with another official, Peter Heathfield, had diverted some 70,000 pounds of it in order to pay off their mortgages.

This story, on which, says Séamus Milne "the fingerprints of the intelligence services could be found like an unmistakable calling card", was also repeated in March 1990 on Central TV's *The Cook Report*.

An inquiry by Gavin Lightman QC subsequently found that the story was "entirely untrue", but

Like the Hunger Strike, the Miners' Strike was presented to the public in its most crudely simplistic form

The rising corporate military monster

Russell Mokhiber
& Robert Weissman

A corporate military monster is being created in Iraq. The US Government is relying on private military contractors like never before.

Approximately 15,000 military contractors, maybe more, are now working in Iraq. The four Americans brutally killed and mutilated in Fallujah on March 31 were part of this informal army of occupation.

Contractors are complicating traditional norms of military command and control, and challenging the basic norms of accountability that are supposed to govern the government's use of violence. Human rights abuses go unpunished. Reliance on poorly monitored contractors is bleeding the public treasury.

The contractors are simultaneously creating opportunities for the government to evade public accountability, and, in Iraq at least, are on the verge of evolving into an independent force at least somewhat beyond the control of the US military. And, as the contractors grow in numbers and political influence, their power to entrench themselves and block reform is growing.

Whatever the limitations of the military code of justice and its in-practice application, the code does not apply to the modern-day mercenaries. Indeed, the mechanisms by which the contractors are held responsible for their behaviour, and disciplined for mistreating civilians or committing human rights abuses – all too easy for men with guns in a hostile environment – are fuzzy.

It is unclear exactly what law applies to the contractors, explains Peter W Singer, author of *Corporate Warriors* (Cornell University Press, 2003) and a leading authority on private military contracting. They do not fall under international law on mercenaries, which is defined narrowly. Nor does the national law of the United States clearly apply to the contractors in Iraq – especially because many of the contractors are not Americans.

Relatedly, many firms do not properly screen those they hire to patrol the streets in foreign nations. "Lives, soldiers' and civilians' welfare, human rights, are all at stake", says Singer. "But we have left it up to very raw market forces to figure out who can work for these firms, and who they can work for."

There are already more than a few examples of what can happen, notable among them accusations that Dyncorp employees were involved in sex trafficking of young girls in Bosnia.

In general, the performance of the private military firms is horribly under-monitored.

Sometimes the lack of monitoring is a boon to the government agencies that hire the contractors. Although there are firm limits on the kinds of operations that US troops can conduct in Colombia, Singer notes, "it has been pretty loosey-goosey on the private contractor side."

The contractors are working with the Colombian military to defeat the guerilla insurgency in Colombia – unconstrained by Congressionally imposed limits on what US soldiers in Colombia may do.

Meanwhile, in Iraq, a problem

The security firms are networking formally, "organizing what may effectively be the largest private army in the world, with its own rescue teams and pooled, sensitive intelligence."

of a whole different sort is starting to emerge.

The security contractors are already involved in full-fledged battlefield operations, increasingly so as the insurgency in Iraq escalates.

A few days after the Americans were killed in Fallujah, Blackwater Security Consulting engaged in full-scale battle in Najaf, with the company flying its own helicopters amidst an intense fire-fight to resupply its own commandos.

Now, reports the *Washington Post*, the security firms are networking formally, "organizing what may effectively be the largest private army in the world, with its own rescue teams and pooled, sensitive intelligence."

Because many of the security contractors work for the Coalition Provisional Authority, as opposed to the US military, they are not integrated into the military's operations.

"Under assault by insurgents and unable to rely on US and coalition troops for intelligence or help under duress", according to the *Post*, the contractors are banding together.

Private occupying commandos? Corporate military helicopters in a battlefield situation?

An integrated occupation private intelligence network?

Isn't this just obviously a horrible idea?

Given the problems that have already occurred in places like Colombia and Bosnia, the scale and now independent integrated nature of the private military operations in Iraq is asking for disaster, beyond that already inflicted on the Iraqis.

Making the problem still worse is that the monster feeds on itself.

The larger become the military contractors, the more influence they have in Congress and the Pentagon, the more they are able to shape

policy, immunize themselves from proper oversight, and expand their reach.

The private military firms are led by ex-generals, the most effective possible lobbyists of their former colleagues – and frequently former subordinates – at the Pentagon.

As they grow in size, and become integrated into the military-industrial complex (Northrop Grumman has swallowed a number of the military contractors, for example), their political leverage in Congress and among civilians in the executive branch grows.

Over the last decade or so, the phenomenon of private military contracting has grown unchecked. We're now at a precipice, with action to constrain the contractors about to become far, far more difficult than if the madness of employing mercenaries had been averted in the first place.

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unsurprisingly, the British press proved itself highly reluctant to set the record straight.

Indeed, it took until 2002 for Greenslade to publish a mea culpa piece in the (British) *Guardian* and apologise, far too late many would say, to Scargill.

Bitter aftermath

In the meantime, of course, the NUM and the trade union movement in Britain along with it, was virtually destroyed.

And, exactly as Arthur Scargill had predicted, in the wake of the defeat of the NUM, the Tory Government set about the dismantling of the coal industry with relish, reducing great tracts of the country to wasteland in the process.

Former mining communities in Britain still feel the consequences of the events of 1984 and many are only now beginning to recover.

The understandable bitterness felt by those who fought for their communities towards those who broke the strike is also still apparent.

A scab in 1984 is still a scab 20 years later.

The Six Counties also live with the consequences of the Hunger Strikes.

The difference is, of course, that despite how it appeared in October 1981, the Hunger Strike could not be defeated.

Thatcher's tactics, which were honed and applied with renewed determination three years later, actually achieved the very objective they were designed to prevent.

She failed utterly in her plan to destroy republicanism.

From the tragedies of 1981, a new generation of republicans was politicised.

And it led directly to the realisation of the British state's worst nightmare; the spectacular electorate rise of Sinn Féin.

Morning Star, Britain's socialist daily. ☪



"Sure kids, I know you're hungry, but us military fellers gotta keep up our strength to protect ya!"

Women's march shakes Washington

Carolyn Rummel

"I know first hand the anti-choice extremists now in control of the Capitol and of the White House are opposed to basic contraception", House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi told the more than one million participants at the April 25 March for Women's Lives in Washington.

Seven groups – the American Civil Liberties Union, Black Women's Health Imperative, Feminist Majority, Pro-Choice

of whom pushed strollers or carried placards with pictures of their children.

"If we succeed, they will grow up in charge of their bodies and their lives and their destinies. They'll decide whether and when to have children, they'll decide whether to marry and they'll marry who they want to marry", Gandy said.

"We hope and dream that they'll grow up with clean air and clean water, a good education, full health care, and freedom from bigotry, hatred and violence. And equal

"All these numbers have names and faces, they represent women's lives", said Cole. "Just like Sojourner Truth more than 150 years ago, we have sojourner here to speak the truth. The time is now to answer Sojourner Truth's question 'Ain't I a woman?' with a resounding 'yes!'"

One of the issues of the march was the global "gag rule" imposed by the Bush administration on family planning clinics around the world that receive US funds. Funding has been cut to clinics that mention abortion as an option.

Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State during the Clinton administration, said *Roe v. Wade* is based on the US Constitution but the right to choose is a global imperative. "I say that not as a matter of ideology but rather as a description of reality."

The rally speakers were a mix of women's and mass movement leaders, Democrats, Republicans for choice and Hollywood stars, and included trade union leaders Gerald McEntee and Dolores Huerta. Representatives from over 60 countries participated.

Actress Ashley Judd, wearing a T-shirt that declared, "This is what a feminist looks like", led the crowd in a chant directed at the Bush administration, "Keep your laws off my body!" and called for "health insurance [to] cover all birth control."

Judd introduced United Farm Workers co-founder Huerta by saying, "This grandmother rocks!"

"The most important day of your life is not your birthday. The



More than one third of the marchers were under 25

"If we succeed, they will grow up in charge of their bodies and their lives and their destinies."

America, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, National Organisation for Women, and Planned Parenthood – initiated what turned into the largest and most diverse march for women's rights ever.

Over 70 speakers addressed the crowd full of families, young mothers, pregnant women and youth. The overriding theme was "We won't go back" and "We need regime change at home", and that reproductive rights means more than just legal and safe abortions.

"I have my daughter here and I'm here for her and for all of your daughters", President Kim Gandy from National Organisation for Women told the marchers, many

access to the bounty of this country without taking it from the pockets of the rest of the world. And all of this in a world at peace."

More than one-third of the marchers were under the age of 25. One of them, youth organiser Caricia Catalina, said, "We are here to remind everyone that choice is about more than legal freedoms. It means access to doctors. It means access to education. It means access to care in your language."

Babies born to Black women die at rates as high as in Third World countries and one out of every three Black women in the US has no health insurance, Black Women Health Imperative head Dr. Lorraine Cole told the crowd.

most important day of your life is Election Day", said Huerta. "In the Farm Workers' Union we have a phrase that says 'every worker is an organiser.' Today I want to say that every feminist is an organiser."

Huerta told the cheering crowd, "We have got to take this energy not only to our homes but to our neighborhoods and to our communities and make sure that every single person is registered to vote and that every single person gets out to vote."

Senator Hillary Clinton told participants before the march that there were 50 million women in the

country eligible to vote who did not vote in the 2000 election.

"As you march today", she said, "turn to the person next to you, the person in front of you and the person behind you and ... ask them, 'Are you registered to vote? Do you vote?'"

The march and marchers put reproductive rights on the presidential campaign roadmap. They were unified on the necessity of defeating George W Bush in November. As one sign put it, "Landscape the White House ... get the Bushes out of there."

People's Weekly World ✪

May Day rallies across the world

While the Australian media, including the ABC, gave very little attention to May Day celebrations in other countries or even in Australia, hundreds of thousands took to the streets in major cities around the world.

They called for labour rights, an end to the war in Iraq, the reunification of Korea, rights and education for young people, for women's rights, for the independence of countries and voiced many other demands being made by workers, farmers and others.

A huge march took place in **Washington** in support of women's

rights and opposed the attempt of the Bush administration to turn back the clock and deny women the right to choose. (See article opposite.)

In **Moscow** a demonstration organised by the Communist Party and trade unions called for fair wages, pensions and benefits. Russian Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov lashed the US military campaign in Iraq.

In **El Salvador**, thousands of workers, some with signs reading "Yankees out of Iraq", marched through the capital, San Salvador. "This is not our war", said the Reverend Ricardo Cornejo. "There

is no reason why our soldiers should die in Iraq. ... We ask God to guide President Flores so that he orders the return of the troops."

In the **Ukrainian** capital of Kiev, about 20,000 people attended Communist- and Socialist-organised rallies, though hundreds broke away to take part in a sing-along. "We want to sing. We are tired of political rallies", said Vadym Shkavro, standing in line with his two-year-old daughter, Lena, in his arms.

In neighboring **Moldova**, the Communist Party President Vladimir Voronin reduced the price of a loaf of bread by five percent to 23 cents for the day.

Traditional labour-organised May Day rallies drew about half a million supporters across **Germany**. The leader of the DGB union federation Michael Sommer said the gap between Germany's rich and poor had widened and demanded that Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder end his unpopular drive to trim the welfare state. "We don't want a Europe where one needs three jobs just to get by," Sommer told a cheering crowd in Berlin.

In **Spain's** capital, thousands chanted "Terrorism, no" during a May Day march dedicated to the victims of the Madrid train bombings last month. "We are missing 192 workers and students of different nationalities who (could have) walked with us here for peace, the right to work and for a free and just society", Candido Mendez, secretary general of the General Workers Union said.

Thousands of striking transport workers marched through the **Greek** capital, Athens, demanding greater protection of workers' rights.



Demonstrators marched to the US Embassy to protest the war in Iraq.

In **Pyongyang**, the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 600 workers from the south and the north held a joint May Day celebration, expressing hopes for reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

About 20,000 **Thai** workers and labour activists wearing red shirts and waving flags denounced a government plan to partially privatise the state electricity company.

In **Havana**, President Fidel Castro said **Cuba** would defend itself "to the last drop of blood" and was unafraid of what he called new US measures to change the island's four-decade-old socialist system.

Across **Brazil**, hundreds of thousands of workers filled the streets of major cities. About 80 women from a rural workers' group marched toward the Amazon port of Santarem to protest the expansion of soy farming. They say it is destroying the rain forest.

In the **Costa Rican** capital of San Jose, union leaders and students broke through security barriers in front of the federal congress to protest a pending US trade agreement.

In **Honduras**, thousands of workers marched peacefully in the capital, Tegucigalpa, and five other cities to protest the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, which would extend from Alaska to Argentina. ✪

China's space achievements get US cold shoulder

The Chinese, who launched their first astronaut into space last year, are "shocked" that the United States has not welcomed them into the community of space-faring nations.

Joan Johnson-Freese, who chairs the National Security Decision Making Department at the US Naval War College, said, "They are shocked that the US is not reaching out to them. They want very much to work with the United States."

The Chinese went so far as to build a docking ring onto their Shenzhou spacecraft that would allow it to park at the International Space Station which is being jointly run by the US and Russia.

China's expectations ran into a wall of US suspicion that the Chinese program could someday

pose a threat to the US domination in satellites used for military communications, reconnaissance and tracking.

However the Europeans have taken a different attitude and are eager to work with China. China is already participating in the European Union's Galileo constellation, a rival to the US Global Positioning System.

Joan Johnson-Freese warns that if the US falters it could undergo something similar to the "Sputnik shock" experienced after the Soviet Union became the first nation to launch a satellite into Earth orbit in 1957.

"What if, in 10 years, the Chinese are on their way to the moon and the US effort is diminishing", she asked. ✪

Fremantle

Weapons of Mass Distraction

Meet the Greens' alternative to John Howard: Andrew Wilkie
Former Senior Australian Intelligence Officer Andrew Wilkie who resigned in protest over the Howard Government's position on the Iraq War. Hosted by Peace Campaign Veteran & former Senator Jo Vallentine & featuring other speakers including Greens (WA) Senate Candidate Rachel Siewert.

Thursday 6 May 7pm

Fly By Night Club 1 Holdsworth Street Fremantle

Full bar available \$15 waged / \$10 unwaged

Tickets: Katrina 9228 1985 or katrina@oved.com.au

Former Ambassadors condemn Blair

In what can only be regarded as a significant broadening of opposition to the war against Iraq, and the policy adopted by Bush and Blair to recognise illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory, more than 50 former British ambassadors have written the following critical letter to Prime Minister Blair.

We the undersigned former British ambassadors, high commissioners, governors and senior international officials, including some who have long experience of the Middle East and others whose experience is elsewhere, have

at last make a determined and collective effort to resolve a problem which, more than any other, has for decades poisoned relations between the West and the Islamic and Arab worlds.

But the hopes were ill-founded. Nothing effective has been done either to move the negotiations forward or to curb the violence. Britain and the other sponsors of the Road Map merely waited on American leadership, but waited in vain.

Worse was to come. After all those wasted months, the international community has now been

and Muslim world as partners in an illegal and brutal occupation in Iraq.

The conduct of the war in Iraq has made it clear that there was no effective plan for the post-Saddam settlement.

All those with experience of the area predicted that the occupation of Iraq by the Coalition forces would meet serious and stubborn resistance, as has proved to be the case.

To describe the resistance as led by terrorists, fanatics and foreigners is neither convincing nor helpful.

Policy must take account of the nature and history of Iraq, the most complex country in the region.

The military actions of the Coalition forces must be guided by political objectives and by the requirements of the Iraq theatre itself, not by criteria remote from them.

It is not good enough to say that the use of force is a matter for local commanders.

Heavy weapons unsuited to the task in hand, inflammatory language, the current confrontations in Najaf and Falluja, all these have built up rather than isolated the opposition.

We share your view that the British government has an interest in working as closely as possible with the United States on both these related issues, and in exerting real influence as a loyal ally.

We believe that the need for such influence is now a matter of the highest urgency.

If that is unacceptable or unwelcome there is no case for supporting policies which are doomed to failure.

For list of signatories, visit BBC website:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/politics/3660837.stm

Heavy weapons unsuited to the task in hand, inflammatory language, the current confrontations in Najaf and Falluja, all these have built up rather than isolated the opposition.

watched with deepening concern the policies which you have followed on the Arab-Israel problem and Iraq, in close co-operation with the United States. Following the press conference in Washington at which you and President Bush restated these policies, we feel the time has come to make our anxieties public, in the hope that they will be addressed in Parliament and will lead to a fundamental reassessment.

The decision by the USA, the EU, Russia and the UN to launch a "Road Map" for the settlement of the Israel/Palestine conflict raised hopes that the major powers would

confronted with the announcement by Ariel Sharon and President Bush of new policies which are one-sided and illegal and which will cost yet more Israeli and Palestinian blood.

Our dismay at this backward step is heightened by the fact that you yourself seem to have endorsed it, abandoning the principles which for nearly four decades have guided international efforts to restore peace in the Holy Land and which have been the basis for such successes as those efforts have produced. This abandonment of principle comes at a time when rightly or wrongly we are portrayed throughout the Arab

Opposition to Japan's Defence Forces in Iraq

Opposition to Japan's participation in the occupation of Iraq is growing stronger and broader. The Japanese Bar Association has called for the withdrawal of Japan's so-called Self-Defence Forces (SDF) from Iraq. The President of the Association says that the government may be dispatching the SDF in violation of Japan's Constitution that prohibits the use of force as a means to solve international disputes in foreign countries.

More than 100 doctors from the northernmost Japanese prefecture of Hokkaido have petitioned the Koizumi Government to withdraw the SDF from Iraq. The doctors say that members of the SDF might "suffer from leukemia or cancer as the Iraqi people have as a result of the use of depleted uranium shells by the US military forces."

They are also supporting a former conservative politician who has filed a lawsuit calling for a court injunction against the dispatch of the SDF to Iraq.

The government claimed that the Japanese contingent would be involved only in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance but it has been revealed that SDF transport units are involved in transporting troops of occupation forces and weapons.

The three Japanese citizens taken hostage for a short time in

The bills (seven in all) would grant US and Japanese military the use of public facilities such as sea and airports, roads, sea lanes, air zones, TV and radio facilities.

Iraq returned to Japan but instead of receiving a warm welcome for their safe return Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi said, "I have nothing to say to them".

The subservient stand of the Japanese Government in going all the way with the USA received a

warm endorsement from US Vice-President, Dick Cheney. On a recent visit he told the Japanese Prime Minister that "Japan's policy on Iraq is on the right course and we appreciate it." Koizumi replied: "I believe in the United States' great cause and continued goodwill."

The Japanese Government is introducing legislation into the Diet

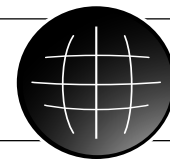
(parliament) enabling it to mobilise the Japanese public for US wars outside of Japan. The bills allow Japan to take unlimited actions in support of US forces even when Japan is not attacked or when such an attack may be just predicted.

The bills (seven in all) would grant US and Japanese military the use of public facilities such as sea and airports, roads, sea lanes, air zones, TV and radio facilities.

Akamine Seiken, a Communist Party of Japan member of Japan's House of Representatives in opposing the legislation said that, "Contrary to its title, the 'public protection bill' is aimed at excluding residents from areas needed for operations by the US forces and the SDF incorporating the public in a mobilisation system even in peacetime."



Protesters on the march in London



Global briefs

LATIN AMERICA: The largest source of foreign income in Latin America is emigrant workers sending money home, according to the Inter-American Development Bank. Last year alone Hispanic workers living in industrialised countries sent home US\$38 billion. This is more than the total foreign investment in the region and greater than the total amount of foreign aid. In the case of Mexico, emigrant workers resident in the US sent home US\$13 billion, the second largest earner for the economy after its oil exports.

INDIA: India has asked for membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), according to Mr Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister. "India made such a request not to Russia or China, but it directly asked the organisation", Mr Lavrov pointed out. The Russian foreign ministry stressed the fact that the organisation is an open one, rather than some military-political bloc. As of today, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation consists of six countries: Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

JAPAN: At Nestlé Japan, a subsidiary of the Swiss-based multinational instant coffee maker, workers have had 15-minute breaks in the morning and in the afternoon to refresh themselves with a cup of coffee in the canteen. They were paid breaks. Without warning the company decided to only pay workers for 10 of the 30 minutes. The union immediately demanded that the company revoke its decision.

FRANCE: After one year on strike, 30 employees at the Strasbourg-St Denis McDonalds in the centre of Paris have won a great victory. Salaries have been increased by 6-6.5 per cent, the manager removed, a sacked trade union shop steward reinstated and the company has agreed to pay the strikers for 35 per cent of the time they were on strike – about four months' pay. A McDonalds spokesperson tried to soften the company's defeat by saying that "no-one wins when a strike lasts one year", but the CGT (peak left-wing union body) official Karl Ghazi hailed its as a "magnificent victory" against a company which wanted a "resigned, insecure and flexible workforce", McDonalds had hoped to make this as an example for workers at other branches.

COLOMBO: Sinaltrainal, the union representing workers in Colombian factories that bottle Coca Cola, has announced that it is suspending a hunger strike after 276 hours. The union said that a number of agreements had been reached with the company. They included a commitment to a further meeting with the union. Delegates from all plants involved in the conflict will be allowed to attend. The company agreed not make reprisals against hunger strikers and to revoke sanctions already imposed. It will also grant two weeks' paid leave to the hunger strikers to recover physically and would pay for medical treatment needed for their full recuperation. The company also agreed to pay to publish a notice in a national daily newspaper demanding that the protestors' claims and the workers' lives be respected. Sinaltrainal thanked the many trade union and solidarity groups around the world that had supported the hunger strikers.

Sydney

Stop the Apartheid Wall in Palestine

The Apartheid Wall is still under construction & continues to tear up Palestinian land & further destroy Palestinian life. Dr John McDonald, recently returned from Palestine exposes the horrific reality of the Apartheid Wall

Thursday 6 May 6-8pm
Labor Council Building 377 Sussex St Sydney

Entry by donation

Further info **02 8572 6052** or info@sawiyon.org.au
Organised by Sawiyon Solidarity with Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Palestinians' long battle

Since the dispossession of their homeland over 50 years ago it has been an uphill battle for the Palestinians seeking to obtain justice and support against considerable distortions and bias in the Western world.

Most people only took serious notice of problems after the first Intifada (uprising). This led many people to change their ideas and attitudes substantially on this issue over the past decade or so and to recognise the legitimate rights and justness of the Palestinian cause.

Many people who were once confused or knew little about the situation have come to clearly distinguish between who is the oppressed and oppressor in the case of Palestine. This has brought the Palestinians the empathy and solidarity they deserve.

And Israel, which had a monopoly on virtue since 1948 found it had to defend its past violent history and actions. This has resulted in a shift of emphasis and a concerted campaign by Israel and its supporters abroad to focus on the subject of Palestinian "terrorism".

While all warfare and its consequences are horrifying, any assessment of the conflict will show that Israel's record on terror and

carnage is more methodical and on a greater scale than anything Palestinians have resorted to. And Palestinians have the legal and moral right, the same as any other occupied people, to use any means at their disposal to resist the invaders of their country.

Israel and its supporters are now trying desperately to convince people that various tactics used by some Palestinian factions make their struggle illegitimate and beyond backing.

This notion that the Palestinian resistance is an exception is ridiculous. The Palestinian forces use exactly the same methods utilised by various indigenous and subjugated peoples for centuries, including the American Indians, Aboriginals, Algerian, South African, Kurdish, Latin American, Vietnamese among others that have fought anti-colonial wars and national liberation struggles as well as the anti-fascist forces in Europe and Asia during the 1940s.

The Palestinians share the same common aims and methods as other peoples struggling for independence and freedom around the world and are worthy of the same unconditional support.

Steven Katsineris
Hurstbridge, Vic

Not all is well within US military

A secret intelligence report inside the Pentagon has been leaked to the Internet, no doubt by officers hostile to Bush's war.

It stated that an army group was on only one meal a day, with only enough water for drinking and low on fuel.

It does not name the place, but it is most probably the 3000 marines at Fallujah because they have been out longer and the Baghdad-Fallujah convoys have been continually cut. They are facing a hostile city of 300,000.

Another army group of 2500 troops have only six latrines. This is probably the army group surrounding the holy city of Najaf and numerous militia of Moqtada al Sadr.

It could be the group reported on two meals a day.

The have tried to get tents but Halliburton says it is impossible for the communication lines are cut and drivers are refusing to face the increasing dangers.

The temperatures in the desert are in the mid-'30s in April, the mid-'40s in May and higher still in June.

If they continue to lay siege to Najaf, tents are essential.

The Pentagon report estimated up to 50,000 Republican Guards are cutting the supply lines.

Has Bush set two army groups Missions Impossible?

Vic Williams
Willagee, WA

DPRK honours their leader

April 15 and July 8 are significant dates in the hearts and minds of the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. April 15 marked the 92nd anniversary of the birth of the great revolutionary leader and founding father of the DPRK, Kim Il Sung. July 8 marks the 10th anniversary of his death.

Known as the "Day of the Sun",

April 15 is celebrated in recognition of Kim Il Sung's leadership in founding socialist Korea. The people of the DPRK pledge on this day to uphold the victorious banner of socialist Korea.

Kim Il Sung was born into a revolutionary family that had a long history of patriotic struggle. He was known as the great leader and at an early age soon demonstrated his leadership qualities. At the early age of 14 years he formed the "Down with Imperialism Union" in 1926. One year later he formed the Young Communist Movement of Korea. Two years later he was arrested, imprisoned and tortured.

Unable to break his revolutionary spirit the great leader continued to inspire the Korean people in their struggle for national liberation. In 1932 he formed the first guerilla unit [to fight the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula - Ed].

Today, 92 years after the birth of Kim Il Sung, the Korean people, under the leadership of the Workers' Party of Korea, continue to make great strides in the development of their socialist society.

They are making also a very important contribution to world peace and to the unification of all the Korean people as one nation.

Despite fierce opposition from US imperialism and other agents of world imperialism, the revolutionary spirit of the people of socialist Korea has not been broken and will continue to be inspired by the memories of their great leader, Kim Il Sung.

Ray Ferguson
Brisbane Secretary
Australia-DPRK Friendship and Cultural Society

Proposed ban defends nothing

How sad to see Howard's homophobic proposal to ban gay marriage described as a push "to defend traditional marriage" and "to protect heterosexual marriage" (Australian, 26/04/04). Give us a break! "Traditional" heterosexual marriage is not under attack. It doesn't need defence.

Legislation to ban gay marriage does not "defend" anything. It will hardly cause gay couples to turn to heterosexual marriages. Nor will it reduce the incidence of marriage break-up and divorce among heterosexual couples.

Please call a spade a spade. This proposal is not about defending anything. It is about attacking. Attacking homosexual and transsexual people. Attacking tolerance and diversity.

Dressing this up as somehow "defending" heterosexual marriage is an appalling piece of emotional manipulation. How is any heterosexual married couple threatened by the marriage choice of another person?

Is Howard going to ban de-facto relationships next, because they "threaten" traditional marriage? What about racial or religious "mixed" marriages? Just how traditional can we get in search of the One Nation vote? And how many human rights will be trampled in the stampede?

Linda Gale
Vice-President,
Progressive Labour Party



Culture & Life

by
Rob Gowland

Welcome home, John!

So you're back from Baghdad, John? Had a good trip?

It didn't look too rough, what I saw of it on TV. As far as I could tell, you only went to Baghdad airport.

Not much to see from there, John, except - for your visit - wall to wall soldiers. Given your physically challenged stature, I imagine that most of the time you must have had a good view of their belt buckles.

I noticed you wore desert camouflage fatigues. You were expecting sand hills at Baghdad airport?

Later, on the radio, I heard you say that, yes, you supposed there was an element of danger, as though danger was something people like you (you know, *world leaders*) just have to accept.

Brave words, John, my compliments to your speech-writer. But let's be honest, your greatest danger is not from people overseas.

It's here in Australia, isn't it, that you are really loathed and despised. Although, to be fair, even here I don't think they actually want you dead.

Hanging you by your testicles probably appeals to quite a few, but I am sure they don't mean you any real harm. After all, they know that you would only be replaced by another just like you.

No, I think most of your opponents here are well aware that

political change is what is needed to remove you and your Party (and the corporate elements behind you) from positions of leadership in this country.

Which is one reason you're so busy putting all those anti-democratic laws in place, isn't it? Smart move, if you want my opinion.

Nothing like planning to protect your (corporate) interests when democracy turns awkward - and it will, as you are well aware. You can't go on bashing working people senseless for ever without them getting the hump, can you?

It must be a great comfort to you to know you've got all those laws, and camps and police powers in place already (with the Labor Party's help, let us not forget).

Anyway, back to Baghdad. It's a shame you had to forego the chance for a meet and greet walk around downtown Baghdad. An interesting city, by all accounts.

But, of course, those Iraqis do tend to be a bit, well, *volatile*, don't they? Tend to get a bit worked up over little things, like the almost total lack of jobs or the absence of electricity.

Might have asked you some tricky questions, do you think? Very wise of you to avoid that, I think.

As if you could do anything about that sort of thing, anyway, eh? You've got your hands full just trying to get some contracts for Australian firms to share in the looting [oops, sorry, Freudian slip there, should have said *rebuilding*] of Iraq.

Can't have been easy, in the face of all those greedy Yank corporations, to successfully beg some crumbs from Uncle Sam's table. But you did it, John, showing just what sort of patriot you are.

As I said, I saw you in Baghdad on TV, so clearly your secret visit was not a secret from the TV news services. But then, there would not

have been any point in going if it had been, eh?

Greeting a handful of Australian military personnel was never the main purpose of the Baghdad junket, was it? Not even a minor purpose, I suspect.

No, garnering that all-important TV coverage, that was the real reason for the trip, wasn't it John? After all, there is a Federal election looming.

I take it you have now subcontracted your re-election campaign to the same guys who are handling George Bush's? You certainly seem to be getting the same advice as he's getting.

He went dashing off on a secret visit to the troops in the Gulf, and now you've done the same.

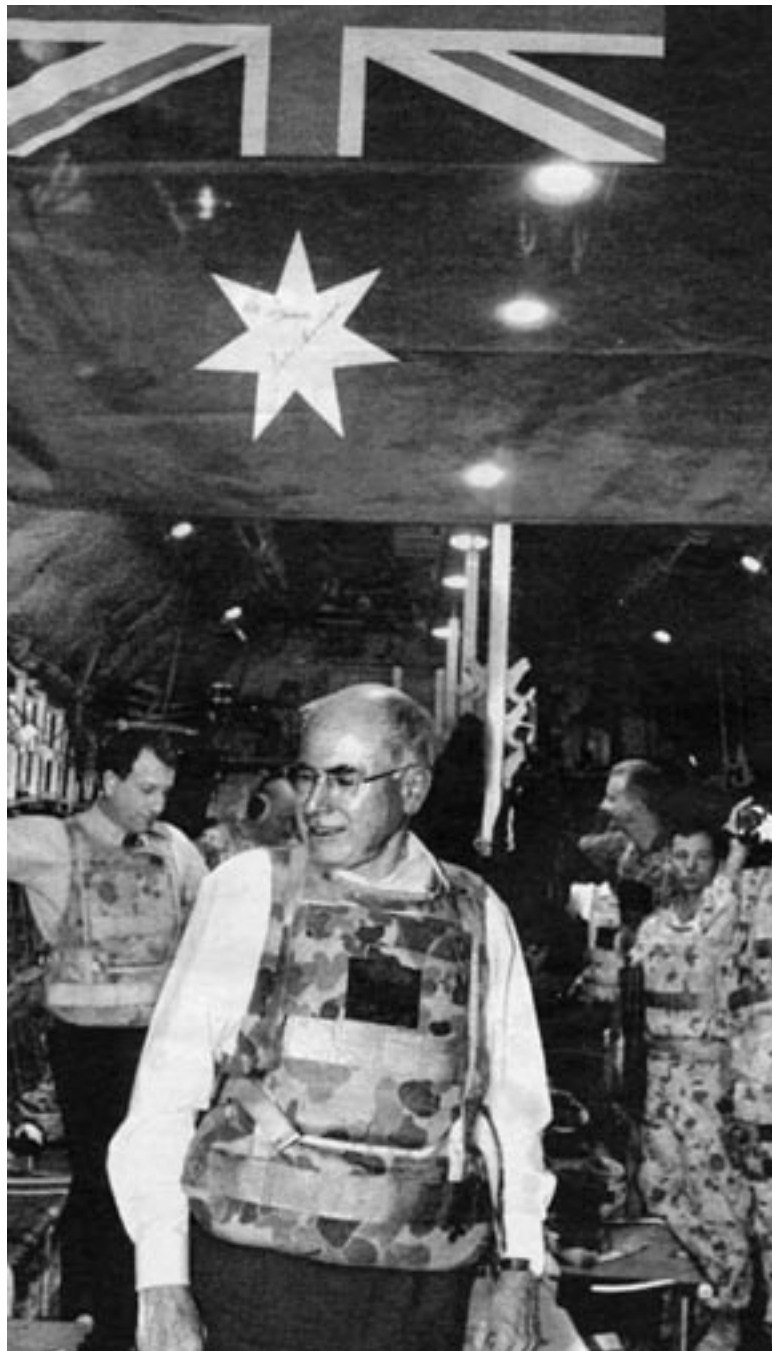
He dressed up as a fighter-pilot and was flown to a carrier where he strutted around like a Top Gun US Navy flier. You dressed up in camouflage gear and flew to Baghdad airport where you could make believe you were a soldier at the front.

You want to be careful of stunts like that, though, John. Your mate George has had a lot of negative feedback from former and serving military personnel who were not impressed by his ever-so-safe impersonation of people he sends into mortal danger for his own purposes.

Of course, I don't have to tell you. I believe you're bringing the Federal election on early, *before* the US poll in November, is that right?

That suggests you have no illusions about George's chances of success and don't want his debacle to spill over on to you. Can't say I blame you.

But if your defeat had followed his, it would at least have maintained your unbroken record of following the US lead in everything you did, wouldn't it? ☺



Flakjacket Johnnie on his way to Iraq



Sun May 9 ~
~ Sat May 15

The British "Royal Family" is an offensively expensive waste of space, a medieval hangover kept in place by capitalism to give the ruling class a spurious legitimacy and to provide diversion for the despised masses.

No one has the "right" to be set above the rest of humanity by virtue of their birth. No one has a right to a life of luxury and privilege simply because hundreds of years ago a robber baron ancestor of theirs slew his rivals and had himself made king of the remaining robber barons.

For ordinary people such medieval thugs would be a blot on the family tree, but royals are proud of their ancestors' exploits. Seizing your neighbours' lands, poisoning children who might inherit, putting the peasants to the sword and making war on other kingdoms near and far are all evidence of your "legitimacy" to be deemed royal.

You also need to be able to trace your ancestry back to someone who was recognised as King in the dim and distant past (regardless of what sort of murderous scoundrel he was).

In *Britain's Real Monarch* (ABC 7.30pm Sunday), Tony Robinson, better known as Baldrick in *Black Adder*, asserts that the present Queen, Liz Windsor, is not the "true" monarch of Britain. That dubious honour apparently belongs to some guy living in the NSW town of Jerilderie.

Baldrick's (sorry, Robinson's) basis for this curious assertion is evidence "suggesting" that Edward

IV was illegitimate. Shock. Horror. Yawn.

Edward IV, the son of the Duke of York, was proclaimed King in March 1461. The War of the Roses was in full swing and Edward's coronation was a tactical move by the Yorkists to thwart the rival House of Lancaster.

In 1464 Edward secretly married a widow with two children, five brothers and seven unmarried sisters, something of a dynastic nightmare. When Edward IV died in 1483, he was succeeded by his 13-year-old son as Edward V.

On his way to be crowned, the young king was seized by his uncle Richard of Gloucester (the later notorious Richard III), and, together with his brother, put to death in the Tower of London.

Richard's supporters then put it about that all the children of Edward IV were illegitimate and hence ineligible to be king anyway. They did not try to suggest that Edward IV himself was illegitimate, however.

For people in the 15th century, the question of whether the king was illegitimate was of realm shattering significance. In a world of innumerable servants and lackeys, palace spies and conniving nobles "waiting in attendance" on the royal personage, it would have been almost impossible to keep such a thing hidden.

Robinson's evidence may be suggestive but it seems highly unlikely. More importantly, what does it matter?

I suspect that *Guardian* readers, for example, couldn't give a toss about whether the present British monarch is "the true Queen" or not. No matter how inbred her blue blood might be, she and all the rest of the so-called "Royals" should be tipped out into the street and told to go find jobs.

That might even make a good reality TV show.

This week's *Foyle's War* episode, *War Games* (ABC 8.30pm Sunday), is set in October 1940, during a large-scale Home Guard exercise. Foyle is investigating a spate of rural burglaries when a member of the Home Guard dies during the exercise.



Can it sustain the pace? (Noah and Saskia)

The military close ranks, lest the dread word "incompetence" comes up, but Foyle is more concerned with what he learns of the world of high finance. Many large corporations, he finds to his disgust, are continuing to trade with the Nazis.

Money, he realises, "talks a universal language" for some - even during war.

The very clever and very well made children's series *Noah & Saskia* takes up its regular slot (ABC 5.25pm Tuesdays) after last week's double length opener.

The big question we're all waiting to see answered is whether the series can sustain the inventiveness and charm of the opener. It all depends on the writing.

Time will tell. Russell Page was the principle dancer for Bangarra Dance Theatre, the Sydney-based Indigenous dance company. He mostly danced to choreography by his brother, Stephen, Bangarra's Artistic Director, and to music by another brother, David.

In July 2002, at the age of only 34, Russell Page committed suicide. In November 2003, Australia's leading dance companies came

together to pay tribute to Russell, at the newly built Sydney Theatre at Walsh Bay.

This was a unique event as it was the first time all the major dance companies - Bangarra Dance Theatre, The Australian Ballet, The Australian Dance Theatre, Chunky Move, One Extra Dance Company and the Sydney Dance Company - had performed on one stage.

The dancers gave their time and all proceeds raised through the event went towards establishing the Russell Page Fellowship in his memory, to be offered, annually, to an emerging contemporary dancer.

Russell Page: A Dance Tribute, screening in the *Masterpiece* timeslot (SBS 10.00pm Tuesday), is a record of that event. The program features some of the most accomplished dancers from around the country in a show of respect for their colleague.

Message Stick (ABC 6.00pm Friday) this week deals with the efforts of some Aborigines in 1988 to deal with what many Aborigines perceived as *Desperate Times* for the national Aboriginal movement.

The program provides an insightful look at that time, and the

actions of a group of Aboriginal people from Tasmania in particular, who sought help from the Libyan Government. Their activities shocked and panicked both the Australian Government and much of the white community.

Fourteen years on, Darlene Mansell and Jim Everett, two members from that group, tell their side of the story.

Finally, the *2004 Eurovision Song Contest* (SBS 7.00pm every night this week) plus the preliminary final (SBS 7.30pm Friday) and the Grand Final (SBS 7.30pm Sunday May 16).

What is it about the *Eurovision Song Contest* that gives it so many appalling pop songs and produces so many icons of kitsch: Abba, Bucks Fizz, Sandie Shaw, Brotherhood of Man, Celine Dion, Katrina and the Waves, Lulu and Australia's Gina G?

It is the world's largest and most watched song festival. Last year on SBS the contest attracted 1.6 million viewers nationally.

And yet SBS' presentation, headed by comic Des Mangan, relentlessly sends up the show and the performers. Probably the only thing you can do with it. ☘

Sydney
Lisa Milner academic & author
presents the work of

The Wharfies Film Unit

Sunday 16 May 2-4 pm
Carlaw Lecture Theatre
Room 173 University of Sydney

With support from the Waterside Workers' Federation, Sydney wharfies brought together artists and workmates to make films by workers, for workers and about workers. This talk will introduce the fascinating history of the Film Unit. The afternoon will include the screening of some films made by the Unit. Organised by the Sydney Branch, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History with the Labour History Group, University of Sydney.

Inquiries: Julie Kimber: (02) 9557 9231 juliekimber@unsw.edu.au
Rowan Cahill: (02) 4861 2323 rowcah@hotmail.com

Brown Nose Day 2004 Inaugural Awards Gala

Comedy/Music/Information/Nose Awards

Sunday 4th July 4-6pm (Venue to be announced)

Brown Nose of the Year For outstanding achievement in going all the way with the USA in 2003/4. Email your nominations to the Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition at aabcc@zipworld.com.au

For more info: www.anti-bases.org

Sydney

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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

May 14

Corruption of Public Culture -
Lessons of Interwar Germany For Present Day Australia
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,
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Voters swing to left-progressive

Peter Symon

Over the past few months national elections in a number of countries have seen great gains for progressive and left candidates and governments. These countries include France, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Spain and South Korea. Before that the victory of the left-progressive Lula da Silva as President of Brazil consolidated the sweep of the anti-imperialist movement in Latin America. Although not a national election, the victory of secular candidates in a local government area in Iraq is also a strong indication that progressive, secular forces have solid support in that war-ravaged country.

Some of these elections have been given very little coverage in the Australian media.

One of the most significant was the re-election with about 70 percent of the vote, of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa. This is the highest vote so far recorded by the ANC. The ANC is a broadly based anti-apartheid, democratic movement which includes members of its alliance partners the Communist Party of South Africa and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

The alliance has stood the test of time despite strong efforts by both right-wing and extreme "left" forces to disrupt it.

Door-to-door

A statement on the elections by the South African Communist Party says of the election campaign: "Beginning with our president, right through to every grass-roots cadre of our alliance, we have criss-crossed our country, door-to-door. We have explained the achievements of the last 10 years, we have discussed our ANC manifesto plans, and, perhaps most importantly, we have listened to the hopes and frustrations of working people and the poor."

The increase in support for the ANC in the province of KwaZulu Natal is of considerable significance. It had been ruled by the Inkatha Freedom Party of Buthelezi which had been a spoiler and carried on a killing spree against supporters of the ANC even after the defeat of apartheid by the ANC. The vote of the Inkatha Freedom Party dropped

to only 36 percent in the recent election.

Sri Lanka

Another significant election outcome was that held in Sri Lanka on April 2. The left-progressive parties won a resounding victory over the governing United National Party. The United People's Freedom Alliance, that includes the Communist Party of Sri Lanka and the Trotskyite LSSP, was on this occasion allied to the JVP (People's Liberation Front). Together with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) they won 105 seats out of a total of 225.

Although this does not provide a majority it is expected that other smaller parties will vote with President Kumaratunga to give a government sympathetic to her policies a majority. She has already appointed a new Prime Minister from her own party, the SLFP.

The socialist JVP was formed in 1965 and is expected to hold several Ministerial positions in the new government.

For the first time political representatives of the Tamil National Alliance (the Tamil Tigers) were elected to the Sri Lankan parliament and became the third largest group. The Tamil leader said, "We want talks..." with the government. It is to be hoped that such talks will result in a conclusion to the long-running ethnic-based military conflict in Sri Lanka.

The outcome of the elections in South Korea tipped a bucket of cold water over conservative candidates who had attempted to remove President Roh Moo Hyun by impeaching him over some remarks which were taken to indicate his support for a particular party.

Roh's impeachment gave rise to the People's Emergency Action to Nullify the Impeachment. A coalition of over 500 organisations, including the powerful Korean Confederation of Trade Unions came into existence. The day after the impeachment decision a demonstration by at least 70,000 took place in Seoul. Despite bans on such demonstrations thousands of people continued to demonstrate on a daily basis.

On March 20 up to one million people took part in demonstrations

against both the Iraq war and the President's impeachment. South Korea is now considering withdrawing its military contingent from Iraq.

President Roh had made himself unpopular with South Korea's conservative ruling circles by stepping up prosecutions of business leaders for corruption. The country was rocked by case after case of corruption among businessmen, politicians and political advisers.

Roh's mother who is a poor farmer said, "He understands us. He knows what we need. Rich people don't know".

Another largely unspoken factor in the Korean elections was the growing friendly relations between the north and south of Korea.

President Roh supported the growing sentiment among the South Korean people for better relations with the people and government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) which has resulted in family exchanges between north and south, the opening up of rail and road communications between the two halves of Korea and a generally more relaxed relationship.

These developments do not suite the interests of the US Bush administration which declared the DPRK to be a member of an "axis of evil" and has attempted to find an excuse to launch a war against the DPRK over the nuclear weapons issue.

In the south's elections the Uri Party, which supports the impeached President, won 151 seats in the 299 seat assembly. Before the elections the Uri Party held only 49 seats. The conservatives, which had dominated the parliament for many years, ended with 122 seats while the leftist Democratic Labor Party won 10 seats.

As was the case in Spain, the electors rejected the shoddy manoeuvres of the conservatives.

Spain

French municipal elections resulted in sweeping gains for the French Socialist Party while the national elections in Spain resulted in the surprise election of a Socialist Party government which immediately decided to recall Spanish troops from Iraq. This decision sent the US coalition occupying Iraq into a spin with both Howard and Downer



The Spanish Socialist Government will take Spain's forces out of Iraq

echoing the chorus of American politicians who condemned the Spanish decision claiming that it would encourage terrorists.

The Spanish election was a victory for democracy, openness and truth and, as in many other countries, it saw the mass participation of the Spanish people in hundreds of meetings and street demonstrations.

Far from the train bombing in Madrid, just three days before the election, stampeding the people into giving their support to the conservative government, it had the opposite effect. The terrorist atrocity revealed the lies of the conservative government at a time when the Spanish people were overwhelmingly against the war in Iraq.

Taiwan

Another important election outcome was the near defeat of the Democratic Progressive Party and President Chen Shui-bian by the Kuomintang Chinese Nationalist Party in the Taiwanese election held on March 20.

President Chen has pushed strongly for the total independence of Taiwan from China. Taiwan is a province of the Chinese mainland and any declaration of independence is strongly opposed by the People's Republic of China.

There have been huge demonstrations in Taipei against the outcome of the elections in which the Democratic Progressive Party claimed to have won by a margin of only 23,000 votes or 0.24 percent. Demonstrators are demanding an investigation into the elections and the circumstances of an alleged assassination attempt on the life of President Chen just one day before polling day.

The Kuomintang Party opposes the independence of Taiwan from the PRC. Demonstrations against the election result are continuing in Taiwan.

At the same time as the ballot for Taiwan's parliament took place

a referendum was held. It was interpreted as intended to give the green light for President Chen to proceed with a declaration of Taiwan as an independent state.

As only 45 percent of the electorate voted in the referendum, which required a vote of at least 50 percent, it was defeated.

Significant change

These election results, when taken together, indicate that there is a significant change taking place throughout the world. In many countries the persistent struggles by the people are swinging election results in favour of more progressive candidates and away from the economic rationalist policies of the conservatives and in particular, against the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Of course there have been and will be continue to be setbacks in some countries but this should not blind us from seeing the overall swing that is taking place.

A resolution adopted by the Communist Party of Australia in 2001 said that "the world-wide struggle between the people and the transnational corporations is intensifying".

These struggles are against the evils of globalisation, war and militarisation. They are in essence struggles against capitalism.

There are innumerable actions by community organisations, trade unions and political parties opposing the consequences of the economic rationalist policies which have created poverty, homelessness, unemployment and many other social evils for millions of people.

It is these struggles that are now reflected in various election results which are defeats for conservatives and victories for left and progressive candidates.

The Australian people could join this sweep by throwing out the Howard government in the national elections due later this year. ✪

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