

More funds for spy agencies Fewer rights for the people

Bob Briton

This week could end up being a very good week from the point of view of Australia's spy agencies and a very bad one for the democratic rights of Australians. The Prime Minister has already spoiled the Budget night surprise by announcing a major funding boost for the existing spy organisations and even the establishment of a new intelligence body.

The Senate will also receive a report from one of its committees on a raft of new, so-called anti-terror legislation. By the end of the week, new legislation could be added to the recently reinforced ASIO legislation that converted that body into a secret police force with police state powers.

It appears that the Federal Government – while remaining keen to blame intelligence agencies for flaws in its foreign policy arguments like the non-existent weapons of mass destruction in Iraq – sees a bright future for the network. In fact, with the “war on terror” replacing the Cold War as the pretext for increased military spending and the curtailing of civil and political rights, these could turn out to be the “glory days” of these secretive bodies.

A visibly cheerful John Howard put it this way for the media last week:

“This is a struggle that will go on for a long time, and regrettable though it is to say it, we have to settle down for a very long struggle. I hope it doesn't last as long as the Cold War. I certainly hope it doesn't, but it's not something that's going to be easily dealt with.”

After months of bruising treatment from the government over the value of intelligence reports, the

agencies finally got reassurances in the nicest possible form: money and the promise of more powers.

ASIO will get an additional \$131.4 million over the next four years bringing increases since September 11, 2001 to \$332 million. Staffing will have increased by 80 per cent since that time by 2006.

The overseas intelligence agency ASIS will get an extra \$45.6 million and the Defence Intelligence Organisation will get an additional \$47.5 million. The peak intelligence assessment body, the Office of National Assessments, will have another \$7.6 million to spend on new technology.

A new 24-hour a day, seven days a week agency has been established. The National Threat Assessment Centre will be the 7-Eleven of our spook outfits and will be another body entrusted with the linking of the various other intelligence agencies.

It will assist in making travel advisory notices and determine “terrorism alert levels” of the sort that are issued in the US. No expense is being spared in the effort to keep the “terror threat” uppermost in the mind of the public.

To this end, another organisation was added last week to the list of 16 “terror” organisations drawn up by the Attorney General's Department. Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) was put on the AG's distinctive catalogue which includes groups not shown on the United Nations' list of terror organisations. The PIJ has no record of activity outside the Middle East. Neither has it targeted “Western interests” other than making threats against the US Embassy in Tel Aviv in Israel if its personnel were to be moved to Jerusalem.

This week in Parliament, the



Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee will report on the *Anti-Terrorism Bill 2004* referred to it by the Senate at the end of March. Included in the Bill are measures to transform the *Crimes Act 1914*, the *Crimes (Foreign Incursions and Recruitment) Act 1978*, the *Criminal Code Act 1995* and the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* into new layers of “anti-terror” legislation. If passed they could be, in fact, new nails in the coffin of civil and political rights in Australia.

The amendment to the *Crimes Act* would allow for an extension of the period a person can be detained for questioning by the police from

four hours to 20 hours. A judicial officer can grant the extension on application from the police in cases where the person is suspected of serious offences such as terrorism.

At the moment, the *Crimes Act* recognises that any deprivation of personal liberty should be kept to the minimum. Groups like the Civil Rights Network see the changes as a grab for power and as unjustified and unnecessary in view of the capacity the state already has with its revamped *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act*.

This Act allows for the interrogation of people suspected of involvement in (or even just having information about) terrorist activities for rolling periods of seven days. Persons can be interrogated for 24 hours at a time (or 48 hours with an interpreter). Such persons have no right to silence and have only a highly circumscribed right to legal representation. They will be held incommunicado and the details of this must not be reported in the media.

Changes to the *Crimes (Foreign Incursions and Recruitment) Act 1978* mean that the legality of Australians fighting for foreign governments will be at the whim of the executive of the government of the day. If an Australian in such a situation was also a member of a terrorist organisation – again, according to the Attorney General's list, not the UN's – that person would risk serious criminal liability.

The organisation need not necessarily target civilians to qualify. The broadness of the terms and the resultant openness to abuse of this legislation is clear. Notice the present Federal Government's concern about Australians alleged to have fought alongside forces of the then Taliban government in Afghanistan and compare it with the absence of concern at our citizens fighting with the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army – a terror organisation committed to the break-up of the former Yugoslavia.

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After months of bruising treatment from the government over the value of intelligence reports, the agencies finally got reassurances in the nicest possible form: money and the promise of more powers.

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The Guardian

No 1182

May 12, 2004

Inspiring victory over fascism

The greatest military victory in all history passed unnoticed in Australia on May 8. There were no celebrations, no articles in major newspaper, no TV coverage to recall the event, no acknowledgement by Australia's political leaders. It is as though the political establishment wants to bury what happened just 59 years ago.

The event was the defeat of German fascism and its drive for world domination in WWII.

The Western world wants to forget and cover up what actually happened because it was the armed forces of the socialist Soviet Union that made by far the greatest contribution to this victory. Britain, France the United States and other Western countries played a much smaller role.

The largest armies ever assembled fought along the thousands of kilometres of the western front from the Caucasus mountains in the south to the Arctic Circle in the north. Millions of Soviet and German soldiers and millions of Soviet citizens lost their lives in the conflict.

The Soviet victory was achieved by a country that was building a socialist society. At the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Robert Menzies, who was then Prime Minister of Australia, declared that the German armies would "go through Russia like a knife through butter". How wrong he was.

The victory showed that socialism made a country politically, economically and militarily strong.

There are many other consequences of the war that the Western capitalist leaders want to forget and cover up so that present generations know nothing of how the Nazi armies were defeated or that they were defeated at all.

The example of the socialist Soviet Union inspired the working people around the world. Their victory and example led to a great upsurge in the national liberation struggles in all of the colonial countries. The whole colonial system began to crumble and a number of countries began to take the socialist path of development.

This in turn opened the way to the victory of the Chinese revolution and the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic in 1949. The Korean people also liberated their country only to have half of it overrun by United States troops in the early 1950s. The Vietnamese people threw out the French armies and then defeated the US (and Australian) invaders who also attempted to trample on the sovereignty and independence of their newly liberated country. The Indonesians threw out the Dutch colonialists and the African people forced the Portuguese, French, Belgian and British colonialists to get out and go home.

The long struggle of the former colonial countries to preserve their sovereignty and independence continues to this day. The struggle of the East Timorese people and their government is one example. Having liberated their country from Indonesian occupation – they are battling to prevent Australia from stealing their oil and gas resources in the Timor Sea.

The leaders of the Western world never wanted the complete defeat of the Nazi armies. They hoped that both the Soviet Union and Germany would exhaust each other in the war and that the Western powers would then dictate the peace terms.

The Soviet victory, which took place under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, upset their plans and is a main reason why Stalin has been continually reviled ever since his death in 1953. He proved to be more than a match for Winston Churchill and US Presidents Roosevelt and Truman.

For many years after the war ended, the Soviet Union was an impassable barrier to all the aggressive plans of the imperialist countries. But the Soviet Union is no more, at least for the time being. It was brought down by international conspiracies and internal treachery.

The breakup of the Soviet Union gave the imperialist powers new hopes that they could re-impose their worldwide domination as it was in the days of colonialism and before the victory of the Russian revolution in 1917.

But a new barrier to imperialism has arisen. It is the super-power of people's power. Imperialism cannot turn the clock back. Even as they try to ignore and bury the truth of the victory over fascism in WWII they cannot escape its world-shaking consequences.

PRESS FUND

Last week Alexander Downer declared that: "Before the Madrid bombing there was no debate about Australian troops in Iraq, but now there is..." Come on, Downer, what about the hundreds of thousands of people who protested before Australian troops left last year? *Guardian* readers are undoubtedly better informed than the Foreign Minister with all those intelligence services at his disposal. And better motivated! So what about a contribution to Press Fund! Speaking of which, we're running a long way behind, so if you can possibly make a contribution, please do so. We need another \$1500 by the end of May. We offer our sincere thanks for this week's contributions to the following:

M and E Ainsworth \$50, Bert Appleton \$40, Gerd Busselmann \$60, S Langford \$10.

This week's total \$160. Progressive total \$3925.

Govt deleted truth

Richard Titelius

As the US occupation of Iraq enters its second year, it is clear that, to paraphrase those infamous words of the US president from a year ago, the mission has been far from accomplished – discredited would be closer to the truth.

As the reasons for the US, UK and Australian intervention in Iraq continue to unravel, it was an opportune moment for the former intelligence analyst at the Office of national Assessments (ONA), Andrew Wilkie to give an overview of the situation from the time of his shock resignation from ONA to the changes which have occurred on the national and international security landscape since that time.

He did this at a public meeting at the University of Western Australia on May 5 to an appreciative audience around 500 people who came to hear him speak.

Much of the case of the US-led push for war and Australia's following of the US lead, lay not so much in faulty or poor intelli-

gence, according to Wilkie, but in the drive to remove any ambiguity from the intelligence reports. The reports presented to the government were couched in qualified terms such as, "would", "possibly" and "on the basis of an uncorroborated interview".

The government removed any ambiguity by deleting references to these terms and turned a qualified assessment into an unqualified statement.

The government went further in its drive for war by making selective use of the truth and fabricating it when necessary such as the reports of Iraq importing uranium yellowcake from Niger and the aluminium tubing from China. PM John Howard claimed the tubing was going to be used to process nuclear material for the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction.

While the Howard Government may be misusing the security assessments it receives from its intelligence agencies, Wilkie assured the audience that Australia

has not reached the levels of politicisation which the intelligence agencies of the US have had to suffer, with officials from the White House looking over their shoulders as they prepared the security assessments on the case for going to war on Iraq in 2003.

However, in its zeal to protect its global military and economic ascendancy through its War on Terror, the US and its allies have made the world a dangerous place – helped in no small part by the mischievous and incompetent use of the resources of their intelligence agencies.

Andrew Wilkie started and finished his presentation with the qualification that he was now the endorsed candidate for the Australian Greens for the Federal Lower House seat of Bennelong in New South Wales, which is John Howard's seat.

He accused the Howard Government of being incompetent on national security through its erroneous determinations of what it perceives are the risks to Australia's security.

He said the government should concentrate its intelligence resources on looking at the causes of international terrorism rather than following the leads offered by the United States, which has its own agenda – and arguably not a benign or peaceful one.

Finally, Andrew Wilkie said that he hoped John Howard would make national security an election issue as he welcomed the opportunity anytime to publicly debate the issue with him.

It can't happen soon enough, judging by the warm applause he received for his forthright challenge to his upcoming Federal election opponent.

After his formal presentation Wilkie also took several questions on a range of topics from the floor of the auditorium. ☺



Andrew Wilkie

Police pre-empt land claim

At least 20 police entered the proposed Barrick Gold mine site at Cowal in central western NSW to break up the protest camp set up by the traditional Aboriginal owners and environmentalists.

"To hear that police have moved in on this camp while the traditional owners are still pursuing a native claim is an outrage", said Dr Kaye, Greens NSW Senate candidate.

Dr Kaye pointed out that in addition to being of great importance to the Wiradjuri people it was also an ecological hot spot,

with up to 277 protected species of birds recorded or considered as possible occurrences in the Lake Cowal region.

"Many of these migratory birds are protected under agreements between Australia and Japan and China.

"The proposed use of cyanide places at risk not only the downstream farmers but the wetlands themselves which are listed on the Directory of Important Wetlands of Australia, the Register of the National Estate, and as a 'Landscape

Conservation Area' by the National Trust".

Dr Kaye called on the Federal Government to use its powers to acquire the land, subject to the outcome of the native title claim. Should the claim not be successful, the government should purchase the land from the gold mine developers and hand it over to the traditional owners.

"We owe at least this much to the Wiradjuri people, to the downstream farmers and to future generations", he said. ☺

151 is the figure that matters in Budget Week

When the Human Rights Commission announced an inquiry into whether children should be kept in immigration detention centres in November 2001, no-one thought that it would take two and a half years to make its report. Nor did they realise that 70 of the children who were in detention on Nauru at the time would still be there today.

According to Howard Glenn, National Director of human rights organisation A Just Australia, there are presently 151 children in immigration detention centres.

One day this week, or at least in the next 15 Parliamentary Sitting Days, Attorney General Philip

Ruddock is expected to release and bury the report midst budget debate.

The report looks into the treatment of children and the legality and rationale for putting hundreds of children through what child psychiatrists have described as institutional abuse.

"Unfortunately Philip Ruddock has a lot of form in dismissing reports, as he has done with the numerous condemnations of the child detention system from churches, doctors, judges, the UN and a host of international bodies, said Mr Glenn.

"We are all used to hearing excuses like: 'it was long ago, it's out of date, there's errors in

the report, who really wrote the report, it's an exaggeration – who are these people anyway, it's not our fault'."

"Well there are more than 151 children in immigration detention this week. Apart from those on Nauru, 27 are detained in Port Augusta, 36 in Villawood, 16 on Christmas Island and 2 in Melbourne.

"The media still can't visit them, and for many of them, neither can their lawyers.

"In the swirl of figures coming out this week, I hope that people reflect on the moral deficit that this number 151 represents to Australia", Mr Glenn said. ☺

Government kicks kids back into custody

Peter Mac

In an astonishingly cynical ploy, the Howard Government last week declared the current Adelaide home and school of five asylum seeker children to be detention centres, and their carers detention officers.

Rather than liberating the children, the move has actually changed their home and school into places of imprisonment, and is a cynical attempt to consolidate the government's rigidly inhumane policies towards asylum seekers.

Last August the Family Court of Australia ordered the release of the children, who cannot be named, from the Baxter Detention Centre. The Howard Government then launched a High Court challenge as to whether the Family Court had the right to make such a determination.

Note that the government was dealing with the issue of legal jurisdiction, not with the justice of the decision itself. Throughout the case the government's actions have demonstrated that its real concern is not the children's welfare, but rather the retention of its asylum seeker policies.

Two weeks ago the High Court found that the Family Court did not in fact have the right to deal with the case under the current law. While agreeing with the legality of this decision, Justice Michael Kirby said it was "strongly arguable" that the government's actions breached Australia's obligations under the UN Convention on the rights of the child.

Commenting on the deci-

sion, the Attorney-General Phillip Ruddock said that the Family Law Act does not override migration law, which clearly states that anyone without a visa has to be detained. "The system has worked as intended", he exclaimed smugly.

Of course the government could enact legislation, with bipartisan parliamentary support, to release children from detention on humanitarian grounds.

The government hopes to limit the political fallout from the case

But this would undermine its asylum seeker policy, by introducing the precedent of humane considerations for child asylum seekers. The same principle – humane considerations – might then be extended to members of the child's immediate family, and to other detainees.

The declaration by Minister for Immigration Amanda Vanstone that the home and school of the five children are detention centres for legal purposes has pre-empted a further Federal Court decision on the rights of the children.

The government's claim that it has already released the children from the detention centre will in effect inhibit the Federal Court's decision from setting a legal precedent for other child detainees. This will allow the government to retain discretionary control over deten-

tion, rather than establishing clear legal rights for detainees based on humanitarian principles.

By not forcibly returning the children to the misery of the Baxter Detention Centre, the government also hopes to limit the political fallout from the case.

By retaining rigid restrictions on the admission of asylum seekers it hopes to confirm its standing with "redneck" voters, and perpetuate the

climate of xenophobia that it has deliberately generated through the asylum seeker issue.

The government's behaviour is patently cynical, and although the children's situation is not as vile as being in the detention centre, they are still under a form of arrest.

As Democrats leader Andrew Bartlett commented, "Even though the conditions in housing are far better, the lack of freedom, the separation of families and the absence of hope are just as damaging."

And an angry Federal Court judge Bruce Lander condemned the government's action, declaring: "What the minister has done has frustrated the application before it was heard and determined by me. ... It's not for the minister, by executive decision, to frustrate these children's rights." ☼



Memory Lines – a workers' memorial

The NSW union movement has unveiled a spectacular sculpture in memory of workers who had lost their lives at work and for those who had died as a result of a workplace illness.

Designed by a famous Sydney Artist, Ingrid Skirka the sculpture was officially unveiled at a ceremony marking the 15th International Day of Mourning for Deaths in the Workplace.

The beautiful two-storey high sculpture called "Memory Lines" represents the lifecycle of a person's working life; the void in our life when a loved one is lost, and the memory lines that are left behind. It stands in Sydney's Darling Harbour and is set to become a rallying point for unions and their members cam-

paigning for health and safety in the workplace.

Relatives and family members of Sydneysiders who had died at work attended the unveiling, including the family and friends of 16-year-old Joel Exner who died last year in his first week on the job.

Joel fell 15 metres to his death from the roof of a western Sydney building site.

Unions also placed a lily at the base of the sculpture in memory of lost workers.

Families who had lost loved ones placed a white lily in the void and tied memory cards of their loved ones onto the "memory lines" that make up part of the striking sculpture.

The first Workers International

Day of Mourning was observed on April 28, 1989. This date was selected on the basis that it was the anniversary of the United States' Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the day of a similar remembrance in Canada.

Every year, people in hundreds of communities and worksites recognise workmates who have been killed or injured on the job. Workers around the world, including those in Australia, now mark April 28 as an International Day of Mourning.

Each year there are more deaths in the workplace than on our national roads.

Other events and rallies were held around Australia to mark the day. ☼

Rolling out the budget pork barrel

Anna Pha

As *The Guardian* goes to press a few hours before the federal budget is handed down, the government spin is on the pros and cons of tax cuts, who should receive them, whether the government should spend more or hold on to a big surplus. It is a pre-election budget and the pork barrel is being rolled out with enticements for key sections the electorate. There may even be a few surprises.

There are, however, some certainties.

The overwhelming majority of Australians want the government to spend more money on health, education, public transport and other services. They prefer this to tax cuts.

And, in a survey of some leading big business figures by *The Australian Financial Review*, over 90 percent of those interviewed gave as a priority concern the need to spend more on infrastructure, including health and education! Not tax cuts.

Australia's basic infrastructure is failing to meet the needs of a modern, growing society.

The Howard Government has got it very wrong. Years of cutbacks, deregulation, contracting out to the private sector and privatisation have resulted in neglect, shortcuts, failure to carry out necessary maintenance or even plan for future needs.

It is no coincidence that nurses around Australia are taking action, that schools have teacher shortages, that there are power cuts or that trains are in chaos.

As private corporations have made decisions on water, gas, electricity, and other services, quality

has deteriorated, supply failed and prices risen.

The private sector – the market – is incapable of planning or meeting the needs of people or business.

Each corporation looks after its own interests and the service it provides is secondary – the vehicle by which it makes profits.

The prime aim of a private hospital, private electricity company or private bus service is to make profits – ever-increasing profits – to please shareholders.

If a particular bus service is not profitable, then it is shut down. If the cost of electricity on a day of peak usage is very high (and will eat into profits) then operators buy less leading to blackouts.

We were promised that the GST would result in adequate funding for health, education and other state provided services. It did not. All it did was slug working people, push up prices and bury small business under paperwork. It also drove a great deal of business into the black market.

The GST was not the answer. Tax cuts are not the answer.

The government has billions of dollars at its disposal – not just a budget surplus but also the billions of dollars that it is spending on military hardware to be integrated into the US killing machine.

This money could and should be redirected to rebuilding public infrastructure, to expanding the public sector.

This would create jobs; ensure quality public education; provide enough funding for universal bulk billing, more nurses, properly maintained public transport systems; and address many other pressing needs of society. ☼

Pete's Corner



Unions fined hundreds of thousands of dollars under Trade Practices Act

Bob Briton

Last week the Federal Court imposed penalties totalling \$300,000 on three unions for what it found to be violations of Section 45D of the infamous Trade Practices Act 1974. The Australian Workers Union (AWU), the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) were also ordered to implement a "trade practices compliance program" and to publicise the details of the Court's findings in their respective journals.

The harsh and humiliating decision resulted from a case brought by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission against the unions who the ACCC held responsible for the mounting of a community picket on the site of the Patricia Baleen gas plant near Orbest in Victoria between October 2 and 23, 2002. Proceedings

unions and employed non-union labour under Australian Workplace Agreements, instead.

ETU Victorian State Secretary Dean Mighell pointed out at the time that Upstream was planning to pay workers \$350 a week less than their counterparts performing the same work in other parts of Victoria.

Workers refusing to cross the picket were ordered to do so by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Unions complied with AIRC directives and ordered the workers back to work. But still the community picket held.

Transfields then took the matter to the Federal Court, seeking to have the AIRC orders enforced. Tony Abbott, the then Minister for Workplace Relations, intervened to back up the case against the unions. "It's a strike against the national interest and that's why the federal government's involved", he said.

His real interest in the case

Section 45D of the Trade Practices Act (TPA) – the section dealing with "secondary boycotts". It was considered a secondary boycott because the target of the action was not their employer, Transfields, but the petroleum company, in support of its future workforce.

The penalties handed down by Justice Gray last week were "at the very highest end of the range appropriate for conduct of this kind", as he put it. In addition to the sanctions mentioned above, an injunction was placed on the unions against respecting community pickets at any other land-based gas processing plants. The Justice noted that contempt of court could be added to future sanctions.

The announcement was met with glee in pro-boss circles. Ken Phillips of the Institute of Public Affairs led three cheers for the Trade Practices Act:

"... the Patricia Baleen case and the experiences of many firms show



The Government wants to put the boot into unions

The effectiveness of community pickets during the MUA dispute is still stuck in the bosses' craw

had previously been instituted by Transfield Constructions, the company contracted by Austrian petrochemical giant OMV to build the \$120 million gas plant.

The protest at the development began when the future operators of the plant, Upstream Petroleum, refused to negotiate certified contracts for workers with the relevant

was to set an example and lay the boot into three of the most militant unions and exclude them from the new plant.

On November 20, 2002 the Court ordered an end to the picket but that was not the end of the matter. The ACCC then took up the cause in the Federal Court, insisting that the actions of the union violated

that the WRA [Workplace Relations Act] is not effective, because orders under the act are routinely ignored. Without the force of the TPA, competition would systematically be rorted."

ACCC Chairman Graeme Samuel, a Howard appointee who recently replaced Alan Fels, also likes a firm application of the Act: "I also welcome the court making both injunction and compliance program orders as they may reduce the risk of future contraventions and will ensure the unions better appreciate the effect and scope of the Act."

In 2000, the International Labour Organisation of the UN responded to complaints from the ACTU, the Maritime Union of Australia, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the International Transport Workers' Federation about the behaviour of the Federal Government during the Patrick's dispute in 1998.

Among its recommendations, the ILO advised the Federal Government to take "necessary measures", including amending the Trade Practices Act, to ensure that workers can take sympathy action.

It also recommended that changes be made to Australian Workplace Agreements so that they do not undermine the right to bargain collectively.

Of course, the Federal Government did not take the recommendations on board and had no intention of jettisoning some of its favourite anti-worker legislation. The decision of the Federal Court last week and its warm reception in government and business circles is another two-fingered salute to the United Nations and its labour organisation.

It is another step towards a corporate state where unions are powerless to defend workers' interests. Clearly, the effectiveness of community pickets during the MUA dispute still stuck in the bosses' craw. The latest Federal Court decision gives wealthy elites

hope that this method of self-defence will finally be denied to the people.

Furthermore, the Howard Government and many of its employer mates want to extend current legislation so as to treat industrial action by employees of contractors as secondary boycott action against the company that the contractor is providing labour for.

Mark Latham has committed a future Labor Government to transferring the offending sections of the TPA to the Workplace Relations Act where it might give unions a breathing space and a chance to halt action and avoid massive fines.

When the Hawke Government took similar action, it gave the trade union movement some relief, but did not safeguard unions from the Act for ongoing action or against failure to carry out court orders.

The sections of the TPA on secondary and primary boycott actions should be repealed, once and all. The trade unions will only achieve this with an all out struggle against the legislation. ☘

LABOUR NOTES

A "foreseeable" accident that claimed the life of a Newcastle electrician has cost his employer Tomago Aluminium Smelter just \$146,000. The NSW Industrial Relations Commission imposed the penalty just one week after workers unveiled a permanent memorial at Darling Harbour to fallen colleagues. "What should have been a routine maintenance task resulted in a fatality because the appropriate safeguards were not in place", NSW WorkCover CEO John Blackwell said. The incident occurred in November 2001.

Victorian nurses have voted to accept the State Government's revised wages and conditions package, which includes maintaining minimum nurse patient ratios and a 12-15 percent pay increase over three and a half years. Australian Nursing Federation Victorian Branch Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick said, "This is a good agreement and like all negotiations it has involved some compromise from both sides, but importantly for nurses and their patients it maintains the existing mandated, minimum nurse patient ratios which the State Government wanted to replace with the computerised patient dependency system TrendCare." Victorian nurses have had a long battle with the Bracks Government and would like to thank the Victorian public for their overwhelming support during their dispute.

The Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) has responded to a new report by the Office of the Employment Advocate on Freedom of Association, strongly defending the right of union members to use moral persuasion to encourage fellow workers to join a union. CFMEU Construction Division National Secretary John Sutton said last week that the Office of the Employment Advocate has been a dedicated anti trade union agency. It has been funded by the Howard Government to weaken trade unions and is run by people like Jonathon Hamberger who previously worked for former Workplace Relations Minister Peter Reith.

SA Govt stalls on nurses' claims

Bob Briton

Public sector members of the SA Branch of the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) are now well into their latest enterprise bargaining period and the signs are there that the struggle with the State Government is set to take off over a range of long-overdue changes.

The enterprise bargaining agreement campaign was given a major media launch on March 22 and hopes were high that an improved agreement could be reached with relatively little obstruction. Nurses in SA have widespread sympathy in the community for the problems facing them at work and the ANF's claims go to the root causes of these difficulties.

The main claims are aimed at increasing recruitment and improving the retention rates for nurses and midwives. Central to this is the creation of family-friendly work environments.

Nurses are demanding more flexibility in rosters, and initiatives like access to breast-feeding rooms and increased paid maternity, paternity and adoption leave. They are also seeking free or subsidised childcare for nurses working in rural or remote areas. The ANF has identified a need for greater assistance for professional development, refresher and re-entry courses, and clinical supervision programs.

These steps to ease the conflict between working and family life and to open up the career path for nurses are modest and constructive. The nurses also want enforceable minimum staffing levels and a 22 percent pay rise over three years. This figure includes the 10 percent needed to bring nurses' pay in SA into line with their interstate colleagues.

However, up until last week, the government had not given a formal response to the log of claims. ANF Senior Industrial

Officer Rob Bonner was exercising restraint when he spoke with *The Guardian* recently, describing meetings between the union and Government as "not going particularly well."

The Government is now proposing a 15 percent pay rise but has refused to address the other major issues in the nurses' claim. Industrial Relations Minister Michael Wright says he will continue to work with the ANF to achieve the "best outcome for nurses, patients and all South Australians".

SA Nurses appear to have had a gut full of high-sounding phrases. They were due to meet earlier this week to consider industrial action to back up their claims. ANF State Secretary Lee Thomas told the media that nurses might start walking off the job from Friday. A lot depends on the success of their campaign, including the capacity to deliver of the state's health system. ☘

Carr star-struck by profits

Chalk up a win for the environment. A movie company filming in environmentally sensitive areas of the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, has abandoned its plans to make a movie there. Environmental activists and local residents who were harassed and arrested at a blockade against the project, which was backed to the hilt by the Carr Labor Government, say they can show the movie's producers at least 30 other areas where they can make their film.

The NSW Greens are calling for an investigation into the granting of wilderness areas in the Blue

Mountains to a Hollywood movie company, despite explicit laws and regulations against it. The Land and Environment Court ruled that filming of the movie could not go ahead in the Grose Wilderness, near Mount Hay, in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Premier Bob Carr threatened to introduce special legislation to allow the filming to go ahead. That was not a first: last December Carr rushed through legislation to overturn a Land Environment Court decision against an environmentally disastrous waste reprocessing plant in Auburn, a high-density

population area in Sydney's inner west.

The Greens say that Carr broke his own laws governing wilderness areas to allow the filming and must be held accountable for his actions. The project contravened the National Parks and Wildlife Act, the Wilderness Act and the National Parks and Wildlife's own filming policy.

"The Carr Government was star-struck by Hollywood's glittering lights and forgot its own environmental laws and policies", said NSW Greens MP, Ian Cohen. Mr Cohen said regulations and management policies should be strengthened to ensure there are no "grey areas" where commercial operators could exploit the law in the future.

"The community and the courts have proven to be the champions of the state's precious wilderness areas, not the government." ☺



Carr and Queensland Premier Beattie on a PR wilderness jaunt

"The community and the courts have proven to be the champions of the state's precious wilderness areas, not the government."

More funds for spy agencies Fewer rights for the people

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The amendments to the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002* are also designed to settle old scores. The new Act would allow the assets of a person to be confiscated if they were to be found guilty of a "foreign indictable offence". This is tailor made to fit Australians who might decide to write about their experiences in detention in the US concentration camp at Guantanamo Bay. It would recognise and legitimise the US military commissions that are set to try Australians David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib.

While this is happening, the rest of the world is condemning the lack of due process and concern for justice that is embodied in these "military commissions".

Remember, too, that the government is also trying to get a crime of "consorting with terrorists" on the statute books. "Caught in the

ever-widening sphere of 'terrorist' activity would be the acquaintances of trade unionists and political activists who have engaged in a 'terrorism' offence", is how the Civil Rights Network explained the threat.

The government wants secret evidence from intelligence agencies and the police to be admissible in "terror" trials - evidence that neither the accused nor their lawyer may see. It has the Surveillance Devices Bill 2004 before the Parliament at present. It would permit spying devices to be placed in the premises used by suspects of a wide range of offences without a warrant.

And do not forget, the states have been busy, too. The latest from NSW is a proposal for new sanctions against "cyber-terrorism". Police would be given extra powers in the lead-up to and aftermath of a terrorist event. A permanent task

force is to be established to analyse and update current laws. One would be forgiven for thinking that a lot of terrorists are simply slipping through the cracks of existing laws!

The current wave of "terror" legislation and the increased spending on the infrastructure to enforce it are grave threats to trade unions and industrial action, to left and progressive political parties and any individual expressing dissent with the government's policies or actions. The government has democratic rights and political action in its sites.

This week may produce another serious setback to the interests of the people and their ability to struggle for a more just society. Whatever the case, it must be taken as a wakeup call and a reminder that a strong movement against this push must be built. ☺

A few thoughts to think about

If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.

George Washington

To believe is very dull. To doubt is intensely engrossing. To be on the alert is to live, to be lulled into security is to die.

Oscar Wilde

Liberty has never come from the government. Liberty has always come from the subjects of government. The history of liberty is the history of resistance.

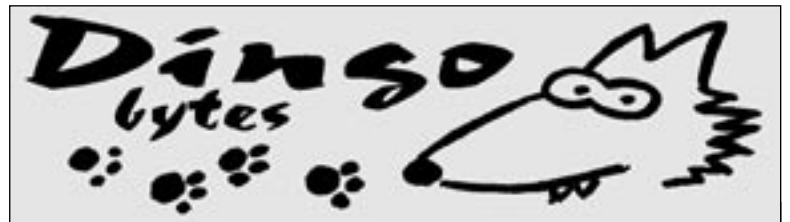
Woodrow Wilson

If the bible is universally diffused in Hindustan, what must be the astonishment of the natives to find that we are forbidden to rob, murder and steal; we who in fifty years, have extended our empire...over the whole peninsula ... and exemplified in our public conduct every crime of which human nature is capable. What matchless impudence to follow up such practice with such precepts! If we have common prudence, let us keep the gospel at home, and tell them that Machiavelli is our prophet, and the god of the Manicheans our god.

The Reverend Sydney Smith (1771 - 1845)

War paralyses your courage and deadens the spirit of true manhood. It degrades and stupefies with the sense that you are not responsible. War means blind obedience, unthinking stupidity, brutish callousness, wanton destruction, and irresponsible murder.

Alexander Berkman ☺



The GST imposed a higher cost of living on everyone, regardless of whether particular goods and services were officially exempt or not. In the coming federal budget there's a strong chance that the Education Textbook Subsidy Scheme will be scrapped. The scheme came as an attachment when the Democrats allowed the Gargantuan Sucking Tax through the Senate. It subsidises textbooks bought from participating booksellers. So we have the meaning of economic rationalism: the imposition of user-pays and privatisation is rationalised by the stitching together of deals to pass legislation that facilitates user-pays and privatisation. These deals have an inbuilt mechanism which gives the whole process increased momentum. Thus the rational Textbook Subsidy Scheme helped the Government to rationalise its privatisation program for education.

A natural part of economic rationalism is war, which goes hand-in-hand with free trade i.e. the plunder of nations by transnational corporations. Next month PM Howard will be winging his way to the US with a bag of economic rationalist give-aways i.e. more of Australia's economic independence. Flackjacket Johnnie will be preceded in Washington by Trade Minister Mark Vaile who will have already signed off on the free trade agreement. In the US, Flackjacket will meet with fellow war criminal George W to deliver Australia's sovereignty on a plate. Said Flackjacket: "I will consult on the challenges ahead [the next target for invasion] as we as we confront together the threat of global terrorism [endless war for the plunder of nations]."

Q: When is a newspaper article not a newspaper article?
A: When it's an advertisement. "Who wants to be a Big Brother millionaire?" ran a headline in the *Australian* newspaper last week above a piece with a byline that was actually a promo for the so-called reality television show. It talked about the show's host, the participants, the cost, what it's about, the number of camera's and microphones involved ... all masquerading as journalism. It's called the capitalist press.

Good news, everyone. Anglican archbishop and Flackjacket Johnnie's choice for G-G, Peter Hollingworth (he who covered for paedophile priests), has been brought to the revelation that child sexual abuse is bad! In a forward to a book by an abuse victim, Hollingworth announced, "I did not understand the 'emotional mechanics' of child sexual abuse ..." Certainly not when he was clinging to the prestige and money that goes with the G-G job.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: has to be our Federal Government. In the coming budget military spending will increase, including the purchase of two US airborne early warning aircraft - cost \$250 million. And the secret police, ASIO and ASIS, will get a big chunk of a \$400 million increase for "intelligence gathering". You can't have economic rationalism's grand plan - globalisation - and democracy.

Revolution versus Em

Speech given by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the celebrations in Revolution Square on May Day

This is the 45th time we have celebrated a glorious Labor Day since the triumph of the Revolution.

Extremely important things are taking place both inside and outside our country.

The Revolution is following its triumphal course with more strength and success than ever. We have had proof of this recently: the Geneva meetings on April 15 and 22 will go down in the history of revolutionary diplomacy. They mark the moment when a crushing blow was dealt to the enormous hypocrisy, permanent falsehood and cynicism the masters of the world use to try to preserve the rotten system of political and economic domination they have imposed on the world.

Our country had been placed in the dock yet again. The new US administration and the states in the European Union made the mistake of forgetting that at the extreme eastern end of Cuba one of the most horrendous examples of human rights violation ever to take place in this world was underway at that very moment in a 117.6 square kilometre section of land occupied by force, where the Guantánamo naval base is located — which in itself is a gross violation of the sovereign rights of a small country and of international law.

We were never consulted beforehand. We were simply informed of the decision taken by the US Government to transfer the prisoners to that base.

On January 11, 2002 the Cuban Government published a statement in which it clearly set forth our country's position.

The world knows that the horrible crime committed against the Twin Towers in New York was unanimously condemned by all conscious people on the planet.

Enormous hypocrisy

Nevertheless, the government of the most powerful nation on earth, showing contempt for all norms concerning what the world understands as the elementary principles of human rights, created this horrible

prison where hundreds of citizens from many countries, including some from the United States' own allies, are kept locked up, without having been tried, incommunicado, without having been identified, with no legal defence, no guarantee for their physical integrity, with no criminal, no procedural law and for an indefinite length of time. They could have used their own territory for such a bizarre contribution to civilisation, but they did it on a stretch of land that they occupy illegally and forcibly in another

Still, as could be seen just a few short days ago in Geneva, Cuba and 20 other countries — some acting out of principle and others showing amazing courage — opposed the resolution and 10 abstained, thus maintaining their dignity and self-respect. Only 22 of the 53 members of the Commission, including the United States, joined in this infamy.

There were seven from Latin America, four of whom suffer from great economic and social poverty, are highly dependent and have governments obliged to be totally

When this year Cuba suggested sending a Commission representative to see what was going on in the Guantánamo naval base, panic spread through the herd of hypocrites, especially those from the European Community. Morale collapsed.

country, Cuba, whom every year in Geneva they accuse of human rights violations.

In spite of that, admirable things do take place in the Commission on Human Rights.

In current world conditions, there is a generalised fear of the fierce empire, of its threats, pressure and reprisals of all kinds, especially those against the most vulnerable countries of the Third World. It is almost suicidal to vote in Geneva against a resolution drafted and imposed by the United States, especially if it is against Cuba, the country which for almost 50 years has defied its arrogance and imperiousness. Even the strongest and most independent states find themselves obliged to take into consideration the political and economic consequences of their decisions.

subject. Nobody could consider them to be independent states. Up to now they have been pure fiction.

Peru, the fifth Latin American government which voted with the United States against Cuba, provides an example of the degree of servility and dependence into which imperialism and its neo-liberal globalisation have led many countries in Latin America, whom they ruin politically in the twinkling of an eye.

The Peruvian head of state has seen his popularity drop to only eight percent in just a few months. It is absolutely impossible to tackle the colossal economic and social problems affecting that country with such insignificant support. In fact, he does not govern, nor can he govern, anything; the transnationals and the oligarchies take care of that, until society explodes, as has

already begun to happen in more than one country.

Then we have the Chilean and Mexican Governments.

Servility and dependence on the empire

I am not going to judge the former. I prefer that the way the President of Chile behaved in Geneva be judged by Salvador Allende, who went down fighting and who now occupies a place of honour and glory in the history of this continent, by the millions of Chileans vanished, tortured and murdered by design of those who drafted and proposed this resolution to censure Cuba — where not a single act of that sort, nor anything similar ever took place — and by

Will such an inequitable and unfair situation really be solved by voting for anti-Cuban resolutions in Geneva, by accusing her of violating human rights?

The worst and most humiliating part for Mexico was that the news about its vote in Geneva, both on April 15 and 22, were announced in Washington.

The European Union, as usual, voted as a bloc, like a Mafia mob allied with and subordinate to Washington.

These sempiternal dirty, immoral displays against the Cuban Revolution never had any success until the socialist bloc disappeared. A plague of renegades, anxious for the credits and goods of consumer society added their votes to those of the European Community mafia. Thus they completed those petty deliveries in the Commission on Human Rights: resolutions pulled out with forceps, in the hard-fought battle which Cuba has never ceased to wage against the loathsome comedy which the empire, its allies, followers and vassals push through in order to gain an advantage of one or two votes over the opposition and abstentions of 60 per cent of the Commission's members. The empire calls these Pyrrhic victories successes and condemns Cuba, despite the fact that the political effort and cost are greater every year.

Shame of Guantánamo naval base

When this year Cuba suggested sending a Commission representative to see what was going on in the Guantánamo naval base, panic spread through the herd of hypocrites, especially those from the European Community. Morale collapsed. Some European governments were truly ashamed, they had to confess their failure to act according to their principles and their hypocrisy, or do the impossible — disobey the empire. This was too much for such august defenders of human rights whose darts are only aimed at those who for centuries were their colonies, where they wiped out tens of millions of natives and to which they brought countless human beings from Africa whom they turned into slaves with less freedom than work horses.

And that is how they treat millions of people in the Third World, victims of the plunder, unequal terms of trade and looting of their natural resources and all the hard currency reserves in their central banks, which are deposited in US or European banks, for the most part, and which are used to finance investments, trade and fiscal deficits and for the military adventures of the empire and its allies.

As a result of the Cuban proposal in Geneva, Bush himself and his senior officials had to work frantically, personally calling presidents and heads of state. No one knew where he found the time, nor how



The people of Iraq are today struggling for their independence, their lives and the lives of their children

The world cannot be saved unless a path of international peace and cooperation is pursued.

Empire

he could attend to Iraq, the financial problems of the government, fundraising banquets and matters related to the elections. Perhaps it is not fair to call him Führer; perhaps he is a genius.

Why can Bush talk of a fiscal deficit of US\$512 billion and a similar trade deficit, a total of a trillion dollars in just one year? Because he manipulates and spends the hard currency of the immense majority of the world's population in order to defend those and other privileges. They are armed to the teeth with the most sophisticated war machinery and they wage wars of conquest in search of raw materials.

The international situation is complex. The adventurist policies of this administration have given the world increasingly insoluble problems. The economic order imposed is ever more unsustainable.

Spain an extraordinary achievement

An impressive, encouraging event took place in Spain. It was an extraordinary achievement, accomplished almost exclusively by the Spanish people, especially the younger generation. Its heroic political battle, scarcely 48 hours after the tragedy and on the eve of the elections, dealt a devastating blow to the treacherous manoeuvres of the previous Spanish Government to manipulate the awful acts of March 11 in its favour and in the warmonger interests of the United States.

The present government has kept its promise to pull Spanish troops out of Iraq. This is undoubtedly a commendable act. But the Spanish state, under the previous administration, had taken upon itself to recruit a considerable number of young Dominicans, Hondurans, Salvadorans and Nicaraguans to be sent as canon fodder to Iraq with the Spanish Legion, something unique in the history of this hemisphere. Spain, which as the former colonial power in Latin America aspires to be given respect and consideration and even to play a certain role in Latin American and the Caribbean, has the responsibility and moral duty to fight for the return home of those young Latin Americans who were sent to Iraq due to the actions of the previous government.

The peoples of the world, including the Cuban people, do not hate the American people nor do they want young American soldiers to die – many of whom are black, mixed race or Latin American – who were induced by poverty and unemployment to take up soldiering and who today are the victims of an unnecessary, stupid war.

We do not support any government in Iraq or any given political system; this is the exclusive prerogative of the Iraqis. We felt solidarity with those who died in the attacks in New York and Madrid and we condemn such methods. The enormous and growing world sympathy with the Iraqi people was generated by the brutal bombings of Baghdad and other cities which sowed terror and death among innocent civilians, totally ignoring the terrible trauma which will affect millions of children, adolescents, pregnant women, mothers and old people all of their lives, bombings for which there is no possible justification, based as they were on barefaced lies.



Castro – "There is a generalised fear of the US"

Growing sympathy with people of Iraq

This sympathy is growing, because billions of people have come to realise that it is a war of conquest to gain possession of the country's resources and raw materials, because there was no justification, nor legality whatsoever, because international laws were breached, because the United Nations' prerogatives and authority were ignored.

The people of Iraq are today struggling for their independence, their lives, the lives of their children and for their legitimate rights and resources.

"Whenever there is a tragedy like this, even when they are sometimes so difficult to prevent, I see no other way but to keep calm. And if at some point I am allowed to make a suggestion to an adversary who has been tough on us for many years knows [...] if under specific circumstances it were correct to suggest something to the adversary, for the well being of the American people and based on the arguments I have given you, we would advise the leaders of the powerful empire to keep their equanimity, to act calmly, not to be carried away by a fit of rage or hatred and not to start hunting people down dropping bombs all over the place.

and another one there, that is, by using similar methods to theirs, sacrificing innocent lives. It is resolved, inter alia, by putting an end to State terrorism and other repulsive crimes, by putting an end to genocide and by honestly pursuing a policy of peace and respect for unavoidable moral and legal standards. The world cannot be saved unless a path of international peace and cooperation is pursued".

The Iraq war brings to many people memories of the Vietnam War. To me, it brings back memories of the Algerian war of liberation, when French military might shattered against the resistance of a people with a very different culture,

terrorists until now – and ask them with humility to help in the solution of the Iraqi conflict. It is still more amazing that, according to press dispatches, two days ago the US marines were pulled out of Fallujah and replaced by Iraqi soldiers led by an ex General from Saddam Hussein's army.

I do not criticise any peace effort or initiative which the current US administration decides to take, but I doubt very much that there can be any solution other than withdrawing US troops from Iraq – where they should never have been sent – and returning full independence to the Iraqi people. This would have the support of the international community, which would no doubt find a way to resolve the complex situation that has been created there.

Meanwhile, we Cubans will continue to observe what happens and will continue to wage our most resolute battle against those who give themselves the luxury of advocating political changes based on the physical removal of some of us. The worst thing is that those who talk of speeding up the aforementioned changes are characters whose same old murderous ideas are quite familiar to us.

Now they are once again making themselves hoarse shouting threats of upcoming measures to affect our economy and destabilise the country. They would do well to return our five prisoners of the empire to us, who with unequalled dignity are withstanding the most shameful and cruel case of human rights violations. Their fate in federal government prisons, where they are kept completely separate, is hardly any better than that of those held captive in the Guantánamo naval base. But despite all that, we do not hesitate in suggesting to those who govern the United States that they be calmer, more sensible, saner and wiser.

To those who persist in their efforts to destroy the Revolution, I simply say in the name of the crowd gathered here on this May 1st, as I said at Girón and at other decisive moments in our battles:

Long live socialism!
Homeland or Death!
We shall overcome!

(crossheads added by
The Guardian) ☪

This superpower can conquer a country with its enormous power but it is impossible to administer and govern that country if its population battles resolutely against the occupiers.

The US Government is facing a complicated situation because of this, as it insisted on taking the path of violence, war and terror. I have the moral authority to propound this point of view, because long before this warmongering policy was unleashed, on September 11, 2001, the very same day as the horrendous attack on the Twin Towers, in a ceremony to inaugurate the school year for 4500 young primary school teachers I said, and I quote:

"It is very important to know what the reaction of the US Government will be. Possibly the days to come will be dangerous for the world, and I do not mean Cuba. Cuba is the most peaceful country in the world for several reasons: our policy, our kind of struggle, our doctrine, and also, comrades, for the absolute absence of fear...."

"The days to come will be tense both inside and outside the United States. A number of people will start voicing their views.

"I reiterate that none of the world problems, not even terrorism, can be solved with the use of force, and every act of force, every reckless use of force anywhere would seriously aggravate the world problems.

"The way is neither the use of force nor war. I say this here with the full credibility of someone who has always been honest, with the sound conviction and the experience of someone who has been through the years of struggle that we have lived through in Cuba. It is only guided by reason and applying an intelligent policy based on the strength of consensus and the support of the international public opinion that such a predicament could be definitively solved. I think this unexpected episode must be used to undertake an international struggle against terrorism.

"However, this international struggle against terrorism cannot succeed by killing a terrorist here

language and religion, in a country which in places is just as desert-like as many regions of Iraq, a people that managed to defeat the French troops and all their technology, which was fairly advanced for its time. The French had previously sustained defeat in Dien Bien Phu, where Bush's predecessors were on the point of using nuclear weapons.

Withdraw US troops from Iraq

In this type of war the entire arsenal of a hegemonic superpower is superfluous. This superpower can conquer a country with its enormous power but it is impossible to administer and govern that country if its population battles resolutely against the occupiers.

I never thought that one day Mr Bush would address a kind letter to the President of Syria and the authorities of the Iranian government – both countries considered

Bush must answer for torture of Iraqis

Army Major General Antonio Taguba used blunt language: "US Army soldiers have committed egregious acts and grave breaches of international law at Abu Ghraib ... sadistic, blatant, and criminal abuses".

These were the conclusions in a 53-page report on the abuse of detainees at the Abu Ghraib and Bucca prisons in Iraq which he delivered to the Pentagon in February. The administration covered up the explosive report for more than two months until the story was finally aired on CBS' *60 Minutes*. At Pentagon request, CBS delayed airing the story for two weeks until they learned that the *New Yorker* planned to break the story with an exposé by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh.

The findings are buttressed by dozens of photographs proving that US occupation troops engaged in torture against Iraqi civilians, most of them innocent men and women caught up in US military sweeps.

That torture was carried out in the very prison that gained infamy under the rule of Saddam Hussein. The US military police officers considered their practices so routine that they snapped photos and shot videos as they forced their captives to strip naked, and engage in simulated sex and masturbation.

Taguba reported that the soldiers broke fluorescent light tubes over their captives' backs and poured phosphoric liquid on them, raped a detainee with a chemical light and a broomstick, and unleashed attack dogs that in one case severely maimed a prisoner.

The report reveals that many detainees were beaten or shot to death, some while attempting to escape. Taguba quotes Commander Bruce Falcone of the 220th Military Police Brigade saying that MPs shot three inmates dead last November 23 when "detainees rioted in protest of their living conditions".

The photographs of these US war crimes are now on the front pages of newspapers everywhere, aired on television in every corner of the globe. It has re-ignited long-ignored reports of torture and abuse in other US military prisons around

the world, notably Afghanistan and the US Navy Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

These revelations expose the hypocrisy in George W Bush's claim that he ordered the pre-emptive invasion of Iraq to "liberate" the Iraqi people. On the streets of Baghdad, Iraqis now say angrily that the "occupation troops removed Saddam Hussein and gave us George W Bush".

This scandal comes on top of 134 dead and 900 wounded US soldiers in April, the worst month since the war began. The numbers of Iraqi dead are unknown but at least 600 civilians have died in the abortive US siege of Falluja, according to Iraqi doctors there.

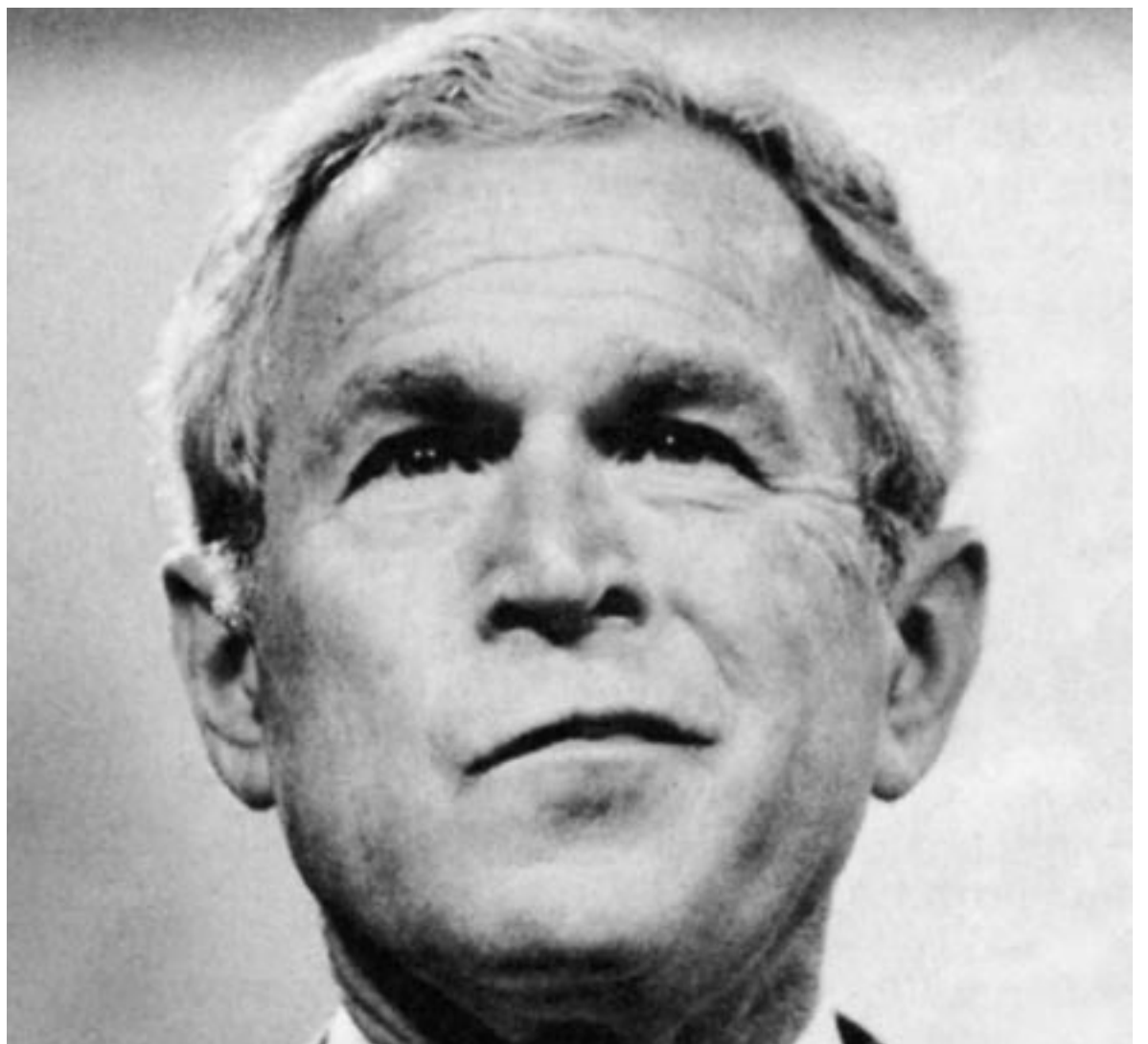
Polls show American support for the Iraq war plummeting. The White House is in "damage control" mode, pinning blame for the Abu Ghraib atrocities on low-ranking military police. But the responsibility does not stop with a few MPs or commanders. George W Bush, the commander-in-chief, must answer for these crimes. General Taguba's report makes clear that "this systemic and illegal abuse of detainees was intentionally perpetrated" and the perpetrators were encouraged by military intelligence to use torture to "soften up" the detainees to "insure a successful interrogation".

It brings home with full force why the Bush administration exempts itself from international tribunals on war crimes even as it insists that other nations be held accountable for violations of those same laws.

The Bush administration should be held fully accountable under international law. But we the people must also hold this administration accountable for crimes carried out in our name.

Thirty-five years ago, Americans and the world heard revelations of the massacre of hundreds of Vietnamese civilians by US soldiers in the village of My Lai. Those reports, accompanied by graphic photos of the slaughtered women and babies, sent shock waves through our nation, and US public opinion began to tilt heavily against the Vietnam War.

The My Lai atrocities were part



and parcel of a bloody US foreign policy. So, too, the Abu Ghraib crimes must be laid at the doorstep of George W Bush and his administration's arrogant war policy, with its utter contempt for truth and for human lives. Bush and his top offi-

cial are war criminals who should face an international tribunal.

It's high time to end their immoral imperial crusade. Iraq must be returned to the Iraqi people. Bring the UN in and bring the US troops home.

And we must redouble our efforts for a huge vote to remove George W Bush from the White House – the most lawless chief executive in history.

From the editorial of *People's Weekly World* ✪

US committed war crimes in Fallujah

US troops committed unprecedented war crimes in the Iraqi city of Fallujah during the two first weeks of April, according to the Israeli paper Haaretz.

Of the 600 civilians killed by the occupation forces during those 15 days, some 450 were women and children, according to one article on the web site from Prensa Latina reporting from Washington.

The "images of maimed Iraqi children, rows of women's bodies and the scene of a soccer stadium converted into a giant cemetery, which were only shown

by the Qatari television network Al Jazeera" were shocking, says the *Haaretz* article.

The Marines even occupied the hospitals, according to *Médecins Sans Frontières*, and prevented the injured from receiving medical assistance by placing snipers on terraces to keep people from approaching.

"This was a retaliation operation, carried out by the Marines, supported by F-16 combat planes and combat helicopters, under the code name 'Vigilante Resolve', in revenge for the deaths of four US

security guards on March 31", the doctors' organisation stated.

Haaretz pointed out that the death of the four mercenaries' deaths was diffused widely as a propaganda tool by the Pentagon and the US media, while the US troops' crimes in Fallujah were virtually a military secret.

Since the Anglo-American aggression began in March 2003, more than 16,000 Iraqis have been killed by the invaders, some 10,000 of whom were civilians, a large proportion of them women and children. *Granma* ✪

Terrorists captured in Venezuela

Terrorists infiltrated into Venezuelan territory from Colombia and made up of paramilitaries from that country were captured by the country's security forces last week. President Hugo Chávez said it was further evidence of how the internal and external enemies of "the Bolivarian Revolution are still preparing violent action in order to destroy it."

Given the gravity of the incident, it was circulated on radio and television to again demonstrate to the world the accuracy of the President's alert on the existence of groups funded from outside the country and supported by the opposition media with the intention of overthrowing the legitimate government of the country.

One of the captured terrorists – whose identity was not revealed – admitted to having received money in Colombia to engage in acts of terrorism on Venezuelan soil.

"We are ready for anything", the subject stated during an interview, adding that he and the rest of the

group (more than 100) had received instructions not to give away any information or members of their families would be murdered.

At the time of the announcement 88 members of the terrorist group had been captured and an operation was underway to locate and neutralise approximately 50 more who managed to escape. Investigations continue to uncover those responsible inside Venezuela.

Food supplies and other equipment have been seized in the area of Baruta and Chacao, whose mayors have displayed "remarkable complacency" in the face of the disturbances and other subversive actions organised from there against the Bolivarian government.

In an address, the Venezuelan leader described as "incredible, but a fact" that the five major reactionary media (*Globovisión*, *Venevisión*, *Radio Caracas Televisión*, *El Nacional* and *El Universal*) had ignored this extremely serious incident, thus denying the people their right to information. ✪

Bush on Arab TV

In a clumsy attempt at "damage control" in the wake of the outrage provoked by the exposure of the US torture of Iraqi prisoners President Bush gave brief interviews to the Al Hurra satellite station, the American government propaganda outlet, and the Al Arabiya network.

Bush's aim was to transform the President (or at least his image), with a record of sadistic pleasure in violence and death (from the execution of condemned prisoners in Texas to the killing fields of Iraq and Afghanistan), into a sensitive, caring soul.

Bush told Al Hurra that America "sent troops into Iraq to promote freedom" and that the US goal "was a peaceful, democratic, self-governing Iraq".

The President said, "We want to help Iraq. We've made a commitment. And the United States will

keep that commitment because we believe in freedom and we believe the people of Iraq want to be free".

But everyone knows that it is waging a colonial war of plunder aimed at controlling Iraq's natural resources.

After telling his viewers that what had happened in the Baghdad prison were the "actions of a few people", he went on to say that "I want to know the full extent of the operations in Iraq, the prison operations. We want to make sure that if there is a system-wide problem that we stop the practices." In other words, Bush does not know whether or not the torture is the "actions of a few people".

To admit the possibility of "systemic" abuse of thousands of Iraqi prisoners makes a mockery of claims that the US mission is to bring freedom and democracy to Iraq.

In this TV broadcast Bush made the idiotic and ignorant statement that "Iraqis are sick of foreign people coming in[to] their country and trying to destabilise their country".

Will the US Government change its ways following these disclosures? The answer is NO! US imperialism has for many years employed assassins and death squads in many countries – Nicaragua, Chile, Colombia, and El Salvador – to name but a few.

The US ruling elite, which is now represented by the most depraved leaders ever to occupy the White House, has set out on a course of world domination and it will respond to the current exposures by committing even greater crimes. That is the logic of these enemies of humanity – the new Nazis. ✪

Vicious Sharon-US plan on hold

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered an overwhelming defeat within his own Likud Party when 59.5 percent of members voted in a referendum to reject his plan to withdraw a small number of settlers from the Gaza Strip. The vicious plan, given unconditional support last month by US president George W Bush, would have deprived the Palestinian people of their homeland.

The plan for unilateral separation from the Palestinians established that the extensive blocs of colonies in the West Bank would be maintained under Israeli control, behind the apartheid wall that Israel is constructing in that territory.

Following his defeat, the Palestinian Authority called on Sharon to apply the Road Map, the latest international peace plan that until now Israel has refused to implement.

"After this failure, the Israeli Government should take up negotiations immediately with representatives of the Palestinian people in order to seriously apply the Road Map", said Nabil Abú Rudeina, principal advisor to the Palestinian Authority's President, Yasser Arafat.

the annexation of large parts of the West Bank – that would have been part of the new Palestinian state – and he has ruled out the return of Palestinian refugees and their descendants who were evicted from their homeland by Zionist settlers in 1948-49.

Sharon's plan proposed that Israel would withdraw from the Gaza strip and wind up the small settlements of Jewish occupiers, around 7000. All the major West Bank settlements would remain and Israel's new borders would be drawn around them.

It would in effect have meant only four out of the 120 settlements scattered over the West Bank being dismantled, annexing big chunks of West Bank territory into Israel. But even the prospect of this wholesale dispossession of the Palestinian people was unacceptable to the reactionary settlers.

Up to this point the United States had officially maintained that there has to be a negotiated settlement between Israelis and the Palestinians on the question of the occupied territories, which Israel annexed in the 1967 war, even though the United States tacitly supported the Jewish settlements in the

If Sharon's plan were implemented it would rule out completely an independent Palestinian state. Sharon and the US have not abandoned these aims, and will attempt to revive them in some form or other in the future.

Proposed in June 2003, the Road Map anticipates the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Giving his backing to Sharon's proposal, Bush had declared that Israel will not have to return to the pre-1967 borders. He sanctioned

West Bank and Gaza.

The implication of this new US stance is to nullify the two-state solution, even though Bush reiterates support for it. If Sharon's plan were implemented it would rule out completely an independent Palestinian state. Sharon and the US

have not abandoned these aims, and will attempt to revive them in some form or other in the future.

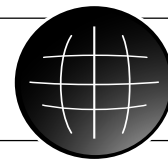
Meanwhile, in a demonstration of just how out of step Bush and Sharon are with the rest of the world on these issues, the 191-member United Nations General Assembly last week overwhelmingly reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people "to exercise sovereignty and to achieve independence in their State, Palestine".

With a vote of 140 in favour to six against (Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and the United States) and with 11 abstentions, the Assembly adopted a resolution that also confirmed "the status of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, remains one of military occupation." The text further stated, "the Palestinian people have the right to self-determination and to sovereignty over this territory".

Australia again displayed its craven foreign policy position on the crisis by joining the abstainers. ✪



"WOULD YOU SAY YOU ARE (A) OPPOSED TO AN ACCORD? (B) TOTALLY OPPOSED? (C) ADAMANTLY OPPOSED? (D) VIOLENTLY OPPOSED?"



Global briefs

COLOMBIA: The "Bogota Three" who were accused of being IRA members, were released after being cleared of training FARC guerrillas. They were jailed in Colombia in August 2001. They were, however, convicted of travelling on false passports. Niall Connolly, Martin McCauley and James Monaghan had travelled from to Colombia to observe the ongoing peace process and to share their experiences of the Irish peace process. Peace advocates from around the world, had travelled to Colombia to take part in the process.

USA: The United States has demanded that the European Union abandon its ban on growing of genetically modified (GM) crops and pay at least \$1.8 billion in compensation for loss of exports over the past six years. The World Trade Organisation has to adjudicate at the end of May and if it finds in favour of the US, the WTO will decide what trade sanctions can be imposed on the EU. The case has global implications because if the US can force the EU into submission, then no country will be able to remain GM-free without facing strong trade sanctions. There is a very strong consumer resistance to genetic modification in Europe and several countries have already introduced rules banning GM imports for growing or in food.

IRAN: Iranian victims of chemical attacks said they would take the USA to the International Court of Justice in The Hague for supplying weapons of mass destruction that had scarred them. Iran's society of Victims of Weapons of Mass Destruction demanded compensation from Washington and US firms, saying they supplied poison gases to Saddam Hussein's Iraq during his 1980-1988 war against Iran. Iran has thousands of invalids, victims of chemical attacks. "The US Government issued over 780 licences allowing US companies to export sensitive weapons components", the group said in a letter delivered to the Swiss Embassy, which covers US interests in Tehran. An Iranian court said that the US should pay US\$600 million in compensation to survivors of attacks on the town of Sardasht which borders Iraq.

IRAQ: The tribunal that will try former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is taking shape, following the appointment of US-trained Iraqi magistrate Salem Chalabi to head the court. Mr Chalabi is the nephew of Ahmad Chalabi, a member of the US-appointed interim Governing Council who is known for his close links to the Pentagon.

AFGHANISTAN: Three young girls in eastern Afghanistan were in a critical condition last week after being poisoned by militants as punishment for attending school. Vikram Parech, from the International Crisis Group, said there had been a series of attacks on girls' schools in recent months, but this was the first time children had been attacked.

POLAND: The Russian newsagency Itar-Tass reports that the new Polish premier Marek Belka plans to pull out Polish troops from Iraq by the end of the year unless there is a UN resolution. Vice-premier Izabella-Novacka said, "I personally was against dispatching our troops to Iraq from the very beginning without a UN sanction. They are treated now as invaders." The agency also quotes the Ukrainian Prime Minister as saying that the Ukraine might recall its servicemen from Iraq if the UN does not exercise control over the situation.

Striking Colombian workers will be treated as terrorists, police say

Maria Engqvist

Colombia's ultra-rightist President Uribe's move to declare an oil strike illegal has sparked worldwide protests. More than a dozen union leaders have been arrested and police have announced that anti-terrorism measures will be taken against striking workers at the country's national oil company, Ecopetrol.

The International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) is calling on its affiliates to come to the assistance of Colombian oil workers, members of Unión Sindical Obrera (USO), who have been on strike now for over two weeks against the country's national oil company, Ecopetrol.

The ICEM has 425 global affiliates and around 20 million members. ICEM General Secretary Fred Higgs is calling on trade unions across the globe to write to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe to protest not only government actions that caused the strike, but the Uribe Administration's response to the strike.

A day after the strike began on April 22, the government declared the walkout illegal on the ill-

conceived notion that petroleum refining is an "essential service" of a nation.

"Declaring the strike by members of USO illegal and citing petroleum refining as an essential service to Colombia contradicts ILO jurisprudence on what constitutes a nation's essential services", wrote ICEM General Secretary Fred Higgs to President Uribe.

"Case after case has omitted oil refining from that category."

Higgs also said in the letter the act of making the strike illegal, "considering Colombia's volatile political circumstances" has brought "harsh repercussions" to the striking oil workers.

The strike, affecting 5500 workers, is primarily over the government's decision to restructure Ecopetrol, which likely will mean a reduction in workers' benefits. USO is also seeking a new collective wage agreement through the strike.

Since declaring the strike illegal, the Colombian Government has placed legal sanctions on the officers of USO, arrested 17 strike leaders from different petrol plants and has threatened military force to bust the strike. Police announced that anti-terrorism measures will be

taken against striking workers, and the USO reports a great many death threats have been made against workers and USO leaders alike.

The restructuring, announced in June 2003, has seen the government sign new and extended contracts over exploration and production of oil fields with private sector operators, most of which are foreign based. USO contends that such rewritten contracts with relaxed terms will plunder Colombia's natural resources and eventually will lead to the privatisation of Ecopetrol.

"We know that the national economy, the workers, and Colombian people in general will be seriously affected", said USO Secretary General Juan Ramon Rios in a public statement.

USO calls the Ecopetrol dispute the most important strike in Colombia in over 20 years and is asking oil and petrochemical unions across the world to monitor exports of refined products to Colombia in the event the country's reserves dwindle. The union is also asking the global trade union movement to protest directly to Colombian embassies in their home countries.

ANNCOL ✪

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

State violence against nurses

Our nurses are working overtime and double shifts due to lack of staff to relieve them. There is not enough time for lunch, tea or even toilet breaks until they finish work. Because of insufficient government funds to hospitals and inadequate staff/patient ratios, nurses are required to work beyond safety levels.

In Midwifery, two midwives

are all that the government sees as necessary to care for three labouring women. Labouring women require constant one-on-one care to ensure the health and well being of both the mother and the baby.

The staffing requirements are assessed three times a day and, if there are any empty beds, staff can be redeployed elsewhere in the hospital, often to areas that require different skill levels. This means that the nurse/midwife and the patients are at risk.

Often, as soon as the "assessor" has left the ward area, several women are admitted in labour, with no adequate staffing to cover their needs. My daughter is a midwife who will not leave a mother in labour when there is no midwife to relieve her.

A maternity unit is an intensive care area and women deserve to be given excellent care to ensure

the safe birth of their baby. Many incidents occur directly because of insufficient staff to care for the patients.

Midwives are becoming increasingly stressed due to constant pressure from administrators who will not meet required levels of staffing due to budget restraints.

Many midwives are leaving the profession because of these pressures. Agency staff can not be employed to fill vacant roster positions or annual leave – only sick leave. This means that an understaffed ward remains continuously understaffed until more staff are employed. Unfortunately, finding a midwife is extremely difficult.

These situations occur right across the health system. Dedicated nurses in every area are feeling the pressure and are leaving the profession because they cannot give

patients the safe and efficient care they would like to.

Government intransigence forced nurses to commence work bans so that safe and effective staff/patient ratios, e.g. five nurses to 20 patients in general wards and one midwife to one labouring woman, can be the norm.

In spite of budget restrictions, governments must ensure that hospitals receive essential funding, especially in ensuring an effective staff/patient ratio.

Nancy Smith
Aberfeldie, Vic

Role of unpaid labour
Karl Marx described surplus value as unpaid labour power, the capacity for labour as the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities in human beings which are exercised

whenever use value is produced of any description.

When homo sapiens came down from the trees, they stood erect, used a stone or stick to gather food, and find shelter.

The modern worker, he or she, must also gather food, eat, be clad and sheltered to maintain life.

Food, clothing and shelter are not free. They are bought as goods and services for a percentage of the commodity and the worker sells to the owners of the means of production. That percentage is the weekly wage.

In a 40-hour working week, the worker is paid for four hours for his labour power, the commodity that he sells, and the boss gets the 36 hours in surplus value.

The old time judge Higgins who presided over the Harvester Award, knew a thing or two about surplus (unpaid) labour. He likened the work of a hired horse to that of a working person both, he said, needed food, water shelter and rest.

The working horse pulls the heavy load for hay.

The worker toils day in day out for the goods and services he provides in social production of goods privately owned.

Unpaid labour is the source of untold wealth for the ruling class.

In 1516 the British Communist, Sir Thomas Moore, at the beginning of the capitalist system, wrote about the perfect and ideal system, the utopian phantasy.

Today the struggle for a new and different system of production is in use not profit.

Socialism is in the interests of the working people, not in the interests of the private appropriation of surplus value. *Populus iamdulcum defutus est.* (People have been getting screwed long enough)

Phyllis Johnson
Padstow, NSW

Sydney

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Opening: Saturday 15 May

Time: 4:00pm – 7:00pm

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An event organised by ICBL-AN and AUSTCARE.

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Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Waste, chaos and striped toothpaste

I have remarked before on the fact that capitalism is a damn silly system. And in saying this I am well aware that as a system it has made some capitalists filthy rich and given some corporations more wealth than many countries enjoy.

For the majority of the people, however, capitalism is a system not of sharing the wealth, but of sharing the poverty. Look at the colossal growth in credit card debt, as people try to stave off poverty by juggling debts and interest payments.

Even supporters of capitalism – sick, twisted creatures that some of them are – must acknowledge that it is a very *wasteful* system. So many companies crash and burn every week that the rate of business bankruptcies is one of the regular measures of the state of the (capitalist) economy.

When confronted with the large number of businesses that go belly up in any given period, capitalist pundits airily respond that roughly the same number of new companies started up in that period, as if this ludicrous situation made everything OK.

Consider the waste of resources, time, money and effort that is involved in this nonsensical way of doing things. I am told that every

week in Sydney three new courier businesses are launched.

That's three lots of people replicating one another's efforts – designing and printing stationery, sign-writing their van (perhaps *acquiring* their van), placing ads in all the recommended spots, going around hunting up customers, keeping accounts and much more.

Usually they are guys working as couriers who decide to "go into business for themselves". After all, capitalist governments and finance institutions go out of their way to make it look dead easy to become an "entrepreneur".

But the truth is that it is not easy. Capitalism is *not* a system for making workers into capitalists. So every week three courier firms, that started out with high hopes, go under in the face of mounting debts.

And that's just couriers! All that wasted effort has to be multiplied by all the other short-lived businesses that crash and burn under capitalism.

But what else can we expect from a system whose essential method can only be described as trial and error on a huge scale?

Capitalism's main approach to meeting human needs is to wait for someone to figure out a way to make money from something that (almost coincidentally) people may need. If the profit margin is high enough, it will get produced and the need will be met.

Its other approach is to spend money on a campaign to convince people that something a capitalist already produces is in fact something people have a need for. Liked striped toothpaste.

Now let's be honest: striped toothpaste is the kind of product socialism probably would not have come up with. It's also probably

true that the human race could well do without it.

Capitalism, on the other hand, cannot exist without that sort of product, a product that consumes raw materials, production processes, labour power, capital, etc, without advancing the human condition one iota.

There is hardly any aspect of capitalism as an economic system that does not display its essential chaos and waste. Plenty has already been written in these pages about the chaos of capitalist manufacturing in Australia, its under-utilisation of production capacity, its regular and hefty business failures, its flight offshore to countries with lower wages, and so on.

Let's turn instead to agriculture. The bulk of our primary produce must be exported, and various marketing boards have been set up to facilitate this.

However, despite the best efforts of these authorities, capitalism is still dependent on the chaos of "free competition", and hence is unable to maintain stable, long-term sales for our rural products.

Some years ago, faced with the failure of capitalism to provide Australian farmers with even a living income, governments and economic "experts" encouraged the farmers to diversify into "alternative" types of farming.

Images of prosperity were painted for those who would venture into emu or ostrich farming, deer farming, growing canola or pyrethrum, or raising alpacas, Cashmere or Angora goats, or Boer goats for meat.

The national alpaca herd is still growing exponentially, most of the fleece being exported. Alpacas may prove to be as viable as predicted.

On the other hand, the ostrich,



"Pray they run a race record, Crawley! I'm deducting every second of listening time from your salary!"

emu and deer farms in my part of the country (and almost everywhere else) have mostly closed, their elaborate fences now a mocking waste.

Cashmere and Angora goats have been much slower to establish themselves as a viable industry, but may get there yet. If so, it will be a tribute to the tenacity of the farmers involved, not the capitalist system.

The most popular of these new rural industries, certainly with farmers seeking an alternative to traditional beef and wool production, has been the Boer goat meat industry.

These stocky, short-legged white goats with black or brown heads have become a familiar sight in Australian paddocks. But the growers reckoned without the chaos and waste of capitalism.

The Mudgee abattoirs closed. Already struggling with the effects

of the prolonged drought, many growers were now obliged to ship their goats to Broken Hill in the far west of NSW or even Queensland from places like Dubbo in the central west of NSW for slaughter.

That's a long truck journey and inevitably means the goats will have lost condition by the time they arrive at the abattoirs. And of course the farmer is paid on the basis of weight when killed.

It's a substantial whack off the farmer's income just because capitalism can't manage a rational organisation of abattoirs.

Growers have had to respond by organising among themselves and buying their own small abattoir, establishing their own administration, trans-shipment depots, and so forth.

What's that system called again? Oh, yes, a *Co-operative*. ☘

Disney pulls plug on new Michael Moore film

The Disney corporation announced last week that it is banning its subsidiary, Miramax Films, from distributing the latest film by comedian and best selling author of *Stupid White Men*, Michael Moore. *Fahrenheit 9/11* explores the decades-long relationship between the Bush family and that of Osama bin Laden. It also probes the details of the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 and the role of the Administration in events like the evacuation of bin Laden's relatives from the US after the terrorist outrage. Until last week's announcement, the film looked set to follow up the success of *Bowling for Columbine*, which grossed US\$58 million worldwide. Michael Moore recently wrote to his supporters to give the background to the latest bombshell from Disney:

Dear Friends,

Thank you for all the incredible letters of support as my film crew and I once again slog our way through the corporate media madhouse. Does it ever end? Are we ever going to get control of our "free press" again? Can you wish upon a star?

The Disney spin machine has been working overtime dealing with this censorship debacle of theirs. I don't think they thought they would ever be outed. After all, they know that all of us are supposed to adhere to the unwritten Hollywood Code: Never tell the public how business is done here, never let them have a peek at the man behind the curtain.

Disney has been hoping for nearly a year that they could keep this thing quiet. As I promised on Wednesday, here are the details behind my sordid adventure with the Magic Kingdom:

In April of 2003, I signed a deal with Miramax, a division of the Walt Disney Co., to finance and dis-

tribute my next movie, *Fahrenheit 9/11*. (The original financier had backed out; I will tell that story at a later date.) In my contract it is stated that Miramax will distribute my film in the US through Disney's distribution arm, Buena Vista Distribution. It also gives Miramax the rights to distribute and sell the movie around the world.

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A month later, after shooting started, Michael Eisner insisted on meeting with my agent, Ari Emanuel. Eisner was furious that Miramax signed this deal with me. According to Mr Emanuel, Eisner said he would never let my film be distributed through Disney

even though Mr Eisner had not seen any footage or even read the outline of the film. Eisner told my agent that he did not want to anger Jeb Bush, the governor of Florida. The movie, he believed, would complicate an already complicated situation with current and future Disney projects in Florida, and that many millions of dollars of tax breaks and incentives were at stake.

But Michael Eisner did not call Miramax and tell them to stop my film. Not only that, for the next year, SIX MILLION dollars of DISNEY money continued to flow into the production of making my movie. Miramax assured me that there were no distribution problems with my film.

But then, a few weeks ago when *Fahrenheit 9/11* was selected to be in the Cannes Film Festival, Disney sent a low-level production executive to New York to watch the film (to this day, Michael Eisner has not seen the film). This exec was enthusiastic throughout the viewing. He

laughed, he cried and at the end he thanked us. "This film is explosive", he exclaimed, and we took that as a positive sign. But "explosive" for these guys is only a good word when it comes to blowing up things in movies. OUR kind of "explosive" is what they want to run from as fast as they can.

Miramax did their best to convince Disney to go ahead as planned with our film. Disney contractually can only stop Miramax from releasing a film if it has received an NC-17 rating (ours will be rated PG-13 or R).

According to yesterday's *New York Times*, the issue of whether

to release *Fahrenheit 9/11* was discussed at Disney's board meeting last week. It was decided that Disney should not distribute our movie.

Earlier this week we got the final, official call: Disney will not put out *Fahrenheit 9/11*. When the

story broke in the *New York Times*, Disney, instead of telling the truth, turned into Pinocchio.

Here are my favorite nuggets that have come out of the mouths of their spinmeisters (roughly quoted):

"Michael Moore has known for a year that we will not distribute this movie, so this is not news." Yes, that is what I thought, too, except Disney kept sending us all that money to make the movie. Miramax said there was no problem. I got the idea that everything was fine.

"It is not in the best interests of our company to distribute a partisan political film that may offend some of our customers." Hmmm. Disney



doesn't distribute work that has partisan politics? Disney distributes and syndicates the Sean Hannity radio show every day? I get to listen to Rush Limbaugh every day on Disney-owned WABC. I also seem to remember that Disney distributed a very partisan political movie during a Congressional election year, 1998 – a film called *The Big One...* by, um... ME!

"*Fahrenheit 9/11* is not the Disney brand; we put out family oriented films." So true. That's why the #1 Disney film in theaters right now is a film called, *KILL BILL, VOL. 2*. This excellent Miramax film, along with other classics like *Pulp Fiction*, have all been distributed by Disney. That's why Miramax exists – to provide an ALTERNATIVE to the usual Disney fare. And, unless they were NC-17, Disney has distributed them.

"Mr Moore is doing this as a publicity stunt." Michael Eisner reportedly said this the other day while he was at a publicity stunt cutting the ribbon for the new "Tower of Terror" ride (what a pleasant name considering what the country has gone through recently) at Disney's California Adventure Park.

Let me tell you something: NO filmmaker wants to go through this kind of controversy. It does NOT sell tickets (I can cite many examples of movies who have had to change distributors at the last

minute and all have failed). I made this movie so people could see it as soon as possible. This is a huge and unwanted distraction.

I want people discussing the issues raised in my film, not some inside Hollywood fracas surrounding who is going to ship the prints to the theaters. Plus, I think it is fairly safe to say that *Fahrenheit 9/11* has a good chance of doing just fine, considering that my last movie set a box office record and the subject matter (Bush, the War on Terror, the War in Iraq) is at the forefront of most people's minds.

So what will happen to my movie? I still don't know. What I do know is that I will make sure all of you see it by hook or crook. We are Americans. There are a lot of screwed up things about us right now, but one thing that most of us have in common is that we don't like someone telling us we can't see something. We despise censors, and the worst censors are those who would dare to limit thoughts and ideas and silence dissent. THAT is un-American. If I have to travel across the country and show it in city parks (or, as one person offered yesterday, to show it on the side of his house for the neighborhood to see), that is what I will do.

More to come, stay tuned.

Yours,

Michael Moore

www.michaelmoore.com
mmflint@aol.com



Communist Party of Australia

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

The Guardian

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

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

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

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

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