

## Federal Budget ignores health, education, housing

Last week's Budget is one of the most cynical, corrupt and politically reactionary budgets of all time. But despite all the carefully targeted largesse, it appears the majority of the electorate has not been fooled by the Government's cynical vote buying.

The Government ignored the wishes of the majority that more money be spent on Medicare, public education, housing, the environment and other public services.

The question is not one of money, but of priorities. The Howard Government is pursuing a definite ideological path, abandoning its responsibility for the wellbeing of society.

It is shifting from social and collective responsibility, where people contribute through a central taxation system according to their ability to pay, to user pays and a flat tax system. Collective social responsibility is replaced by individual greed. Basic human rights become privileges and private gain replaces public benefit.

The majority of people do not support this approach. It is politically reactionary and highly destructive of society.

According to a post-budget opinion poll in *The Age*, 65 percent of people would prefer better funding of health and education to tax cuts.

Neither will the Australian people forget the children overboard lies, the detention of refugee children in brutal conditions and the lies used to justify the invasion of Iraq. Nor will they abandon their desire for a decent education system, Medicare and other services.

The task now is to make sure the Howard Government is thrown out of office in the coming elections and that progress is made in uniting all the left, progressive and democratic forces to present the electorate with a genuine alternative that is in the interests of the people.

### The less you have, the less you get

Those on less than \$52,000 a year receive no tax cuts. It's only the rich and those in higher income brackets who apparently need government assistance. The tax cuts

start on incomes over \$52,000 and will be phased in over two years ignoring the fact that 75 percent or more workers earn less than \$52,000 per annum.

Those on \$55,000 will receive cuts of \$6.92 per week, rising to \$42.21 for those on \$80,000 or more. And those on incomes over \$95,000 stand to make even bigger gains through changes to the taxation of superannuation.

### Flat tax

The Government's tax changes are another step towards achieving a flat tax regime. The process of reducing higher marginal tax rates was commenced by former ALP Treasurer Paul Keating. The aim is to move to a flat rate of 30 cents in the dollar. This has already been achieved for company profits.

The GST is part of the process of flattening the tax rate. It hits everyone on the same rate in the dollar regardless of their income and what percentage of it they spend on goods and services.

The more the tax system is flattened the regressive and unfair it becomes.

### Family handouts

Even the handouts to families and the maternity payment, while being of assistance, are not what is required, particularly by working class women on low wages and in casual employment.

Apart from two \$600 handouts, (timed to be paid out just before the elections) there will be the \$3000 (rising to \$5000) maternity payment and an easing of the loss of benefits if a mother takes up part-time work.

The underlying thinking behind this approach is that the husband is the principle breadwinner and a "woman's place is in the home". Family benefits were to enable her to stay there – what the extreme right-wing Catholic Action used to promote as a "home-makers' allowance".

These latest changes directly counter the push for paid maternity leave and undermine attempts to protect the right of women to return to their job after taking family leave.

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## Enormous Israeli demonstration for Peace

**Under the banners of "Leave Gaza; Start talks" and "Peace Now", an estimated 200,000 Israelis demonstrated in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv last Saturday. It was the biggest demonstration yet held against the disastrous policies of the Ariel Sharon and the Likud Government of Israel.**

Peace organisation Gush Shalom reports: "For the first time in years, peace-minded Israelis were out on the street in force."

"The huge square started filling long before the scheduled time. The people were motivated by two major events of the past two weeks: the so-called referendum, held by Sharon among the registered members of the Likud Party, which had the intolerable result that some 50,000 people – less than one percent of Israeli citizens – decided a major national issue.

"Then came the shock suffered by Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip. The army learned the hard way that

invading Palestinian towns and refugee camps inside armoured vehicles does not always render the Israeli forces completely immune."

Gush Shalom reports differences among the speakers at the rally:

Ami Ayalon, former [Israeli counter-intelligence and internal security service] Shabak head turned peacemaker: "I believe in the sincerity of Sharon. We must not treat the settlers as enemies. Settlements can only be evacuated by one who feels great pain and empathy." This did not go down well with the audience.

### No trust in Sharon

Tsali Reshef of Peace Now said: "We have not the slightest trust in Sharon. We know that he wants to withdraw from Gaza in order to keep the West Bank. But just as he was forced to give up Gaza, we will force him to give up the West Bank settlements just like the Gaza settlements! Yes, they will!" (applause).

Reserve General turned busi-

nessman Yom-Tov Samiya: "Our armed forces bought a lot of time for the political echelon to make a plan, but they can't do it forever. I support Sharon's concept of limited withdrawal from Gaza and a small part of the West Bank. The alternative is headlong flight like from Lebanon, which will encourage terrorism." (scattered applause)

Yosi Beilin, head of the progressive Meretz/Yachad Party: "Those who refuse peace have tried everything, targeted killings which are not always very targeted; re-invading the West Bank and Gaza; destroying fields and groves and houses – 1800 houses destroyed – burning the fact of defeat into the other side's consciousness and doing it again and again and again. The one thing which they did not try is to make peace. Those who say that there is no partner are those who don't want to talk!" (The biggest applause of the evening.)

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# The Guardian

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## Facing defeat

The US is drowning in the crimes and depravity of its own leaders. It has become apparent in the last few days that the US, Britain, Australia and their cabal of pitiful allies are facing defeat in Iraq and will be forced to get out sooner or later.

While it remains true that the US cannot be defeated militarily, it is also true that it cannot win militarily either. This is now being admitted reluctantly by US military leaders. This is not to say, however, that Bush and his warmongering administration is not capable of more manoeuvres or would shy away from the use of its massive military might – irrespective of the consequences.

But, it is not the military aspect that is gnawing away at the vitals of the US occupation – it is the exposure of the atrocities committed by US and British troops that is confronting the US Government with its most devastating political defeat in its history.

It is a defeat that will have long-term consequences, more far-reaching than its defeat in Vietnam in the early 1970s.

From a muted welcome to the US forces by the Iraqi people one year ago, the photos of the humiliation and torture meted out to Iraqi prisoners has turned that welcome into anger and hatred – and the horror of people around the world.

This anger and resentment will make it impossible for any US administration or obvious puppet regime to govern.

By invading Iraq the Bush administration not only told endless lies about weapons of mass destruction but displayed the monumental arrogance of US leaders towards other countries. It is clear that they regard the people of Iraq as some inferior race and the people of the US as the superior, master race.

They are driven by the idea that military force can solve all problems in accordance with their interests and that the people of other countries will tremble in the face of their military might.

They failed to learn the lesson of Vietnam. Military might cannot win over the opposition of a united people who refused to accept occupation by a foreign invader.

In its search for a way out the US will attempt to involve the United Nations, not as an independent international organisation, but as a US puppet. But the UN may no longer be prepared to play that role.

The US will also attempt to hang on to military bases and buy up and control key elements of Iraq's economy, particularly its rich oil resources. But none of these aims are likely to be achieved now. The military and political struggle to kick the invaders out will inevitably intensify. The Iraqi people will never give up their sovereignty nor their honour and dignity which have been humiliated by the atrocities committed by US and British troops.

The worldwide opposition, shown by the huge anti-war demonstrations in February of last year has not gone away either. The slide in support for President Bush is a clear indication of this and brings the real possibility that George W Bush will be thrown out in the US presidential elections in November.

Desperate situations create desperate governments. It was on the background of the wave of revulsion that met the exposure of US prison atrocities that an American citizen was executed in a most revolting and barbaric way.

This atrocity took place precisely at a time when the US administration desperately needed a diversion and is claimed to be the work of al-Qaida. Recall, however, that al-Qaida was set up and financed by the US and as Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11* will show, there are very close financial and personal connections between the Bush and bin Laden families. Is al-Qaida still acting in coordination with the Bush administration to help it out of difficult situations?

The count-down to an American defeat is now ticking. It will be no less a huge defeat for Blair and Howard. It is to be hoped that it comes quickly, otherwise many more thousands will die if the US uses again its military might to hang on.

### PRESS FUND

John Howard said recently: "If you don't give yourself a timetable, you never get there." Mind you, he wasn't talking about getting out of Iraq, for which he has no timetable at all! By contrast, *The Guardian* has both a timetable and a target for our annual contributions to the Press Fund. From now until the end of the year we'll need an average of \$347 per week in order to reach our annual target of \$14,000, and with each week of poor results the average amount needed to get there will get bigger. However, even though at the moment it's looking difficult, we could still make it. So come on everyone, wake up and dig deep for the next issue, please! We offer our sincere thanks to this week's contributors:

I MacCauley \$10, T Bartlett \$100.

This week's total: \$110. Progressive total: \$4035

# Jabiluka owners now have right of veto

**Traditional Aboriginal owners have signed off on an historic agreement ending their long struggle against the controversial Jabiluka uranium mine.**

The landmark deal gives the owners the right to veto the future development of the site in the heart of Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Land Council (NLC), acting on behalf of traditional owners, voted unanimously at its full council meeting to ratify the agreement with the mine owner, resources giant Rio Tinto's Energy Resources of Australia (ERA).

The long-awaited deal was flagged last July but delayed until now to give more time for consultation with traditional owners.

The Jabiluka mine had been the focus of years of bitter and violent protests, which culminated in the late 1990s when ERA won approval to extract uranium from the site.

Thousands of protestors rallied across Australia against the mine, with hundreds arrested in demonstrations.

Extracted uranium ore was never processed and sat in a stockpile at the site until last year when it was put back in the mine as part of the deal.

Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corp

oration, which represents the Mirrar people, said that under the deal ERA had pledged not to carry out any mining activity on the Jabiluka Mineral Lease without the written consent of the Mirrar people.

The Jabiluka mine decline was backfilled and the site cleaned up late last year.

Some of ERA's financial obligations will also be waived under the deal.

ERA has paid out more than \$7.5 million to the Northern Land Council since 1998 as part of an agreement signed with previous mine owners Pan Continental.

"We heartily welcome the NLC's ratification of the agreement", Gundjehmi executive officer Andy Ralph said.

"While it has taken many months for the NLC to finally arrive at this point, we are happy that there is now Aboriginal consensus on giving Mirrar traditional owners true control over their destiny in relation to uranium mining.

"This agreement will see the Mirrar people in the driving seat, for the first time in 30 years, of mining activity on their country."

ERA welcomed the decision and thanked the Mirrar people for their "strong leadership".

"This agreement comes after more than 18 months of nego-

tations between the company and the Mirrar traditional owners through the Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation and the NLC", an ERA spokeswoman said.

"ERA believes this agreement is beneficial for social, economic and environmental reasons."

The agreement must now be approved by Indigenous Affairs Minister Amanda Vanstone prior to it coming into force, Mr Ralph said.

Senior Mirrar traditional owner Yvonne Margarula was present when the vote was taken and sincerely thanked the NLC full council members for their support in progressing the agreement, the NLC said.

"The ratification capped off a successful 86th full council meeting, the last for the present council ahead of full council elections in September this year", the NLC said.

"A number of exploration licence agreements and other development proposals were endorsed, while the full council also hosted a visit by Senator Vanstone who took the opportunity to announce a substantial release of funds from the Aboriginal Benefits Account.

"Senator Vanstone's initiative will see almost \$800,000 allocated to a range of land and sea management projects in the NLC's area."

*The Koori Mail*, May 2004

## Appalling Advertisement

In today's (11 May 2004) *Sydney Morning Herald IT* supplement *Next* (page 5) appears an Army recruiting advert headed "You'll Have Ways of Making us Talk". As revelations of torture and savage brutality flood out of US military prisons in Iraq and elsewhere, this advertisement displays appalling insensitivity and dem-

onstrates that it is the military mindset itself that is to blame rather than the nationality of military torturers. How long will it be before we start getting pictures of our own troops "softening up" Iraqi civilians?

Gareth Smith  
Byron Bay

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**THE ARMY. THE EDGE.**



# Anger in Adelaide over axing of ATSIC

Bob Briton

**There was strong support for ATSIC shown on the streets of Adelaide last week. Around 800 people gathered at Victoria Square to protest the edict from the Howard Government that elected representation for indigenous Australians should be buried along with the Commission.**

Local elder, Auntie Josie Agius, gave the Kaurna welcome to country and added her own plea for unity in the face of this latest blow to Aboriginal people. She said that developments were taking the country back to the bad old days when the Aborigines Welfare Board and the mission superintendent used to set the boundaries on the lives of Aboriginal people.

Tauto Sansbury, the Chairperson of the Patpa Warra Yunti Regional Council, expressed satisfaction at the size of the demonstration and the willingness to fight that it represents. The rally had been called as the result of a decision at a well-attended meeting of community leaders the previous Monday.

Tauto warned that the sinking of ATSIC will also be a blow to Aboriginal employment and the many programs initiated by the commission: the Family Violence Strategy, for example.

Elliot Johnson – former QC, Supreme Court Justice and Chairman of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody – pointed out the hypocrisy of the Government over the ATSIC decision. Both major political parties publicly supported the concept of self-determination underpinning the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody.

The decision to absorb former functions of ATSIC back into mainstream government departments is the opposite of self-determination and exposes the real motives of the Howard Government.

The Reverend Ken Sumner of the United Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress was also stirred by the solid support for the protest. He noted that his community had been “too relaxed.” While the Aboriginal people had been asleep, things had been changed on them. The decision on ATSIC must be taken as a wake up call.

He said that it must also be a wake up call to the churches. “When there’s injustice, the church needs to stand up and say ‘enough!’”

Democrats MLC Kate Reynolds pointed to her party’s proud history of support for the struggle of indigenous Australians for their rights. She



Photo: Avante Media Australia

The Adelaide action – Link Up is an ATSIC program to reunite the Stolen Generations with their families

passed on greetings from Senator Aden Ridgeway, the only Indigenous person in the Federal Parliament and only the second ever!

She said that the Howard Government is seeking to pin its record of “serial underachievement” on the Commission in the same way that the Rann Government in SA does with the Land Councils.

This is being done even though ATSIC controls only 15 per cent of Commonwealth Indigenous money. Nevertheless, it is now getting 100

per cent of the blame for the conditions in Aboriginal communities.

Kate also warned of the effect of wiping out ATSIC which is the foundation of over 900 organisations serving the Aboriginal people and which currently employs over 35,000 people in its programs.

SA Zone Commissioner Klynton Wanganeen voiced his concern that Aboriginal languages could be among the first casualties of the decision. Like his children, he learned his people’s tongue as a

second language and worries that even this link with traditional culture could be threatened by the decision of the Howard Government.

The protest then rehearsed its chants before heading off through the streets of Adelaide before arriving at the office of Amanda Vanstone, the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. A petition calling for the Senate to reject the bill to abolish ATSIC was handed over to the Minister’s staff. ☘

## Budget’s second-class funding for public education

Peter Mac

**Last week’s federal budget was remarkable, not just for its open disdain for the poor, but for its almost total neglect of public education and outrageous failings.**

Far from moving to eliminate funding for private schools, the budget doesn’t even attempt to correct the current gross funding imbalance, with 69 percent of its funding going to the private education sector for the 2005-2008 quadrennium.

As the Australian Education Union has pointed out, by the beginning of the 2007/2008 financial year public schools will receive only 31 percent of the total and 26 percent of the recurrent [as against capital] expenditure provided by the Australian Federal Government for schools!

The government is applying the “funding guarantee” formula for

private schools that would otherwise have lost out over the introduction of the government “socio-economic status” (SES) grants formula. This exercise alone will cost the taxpayer \$4.8 million.

The government has introduced a special “Values for Life Initiative” intended to re-affirm its recent slanderous claims that public schools are “valueless” (i.e. they do not inculcate proper social values in their students). This is not good value in any sense of the word. Apart from the fact that public schools are already heavily involved in introducing such values (not all to Howard’s liking) to their students, the program’s \$34.7 million cost will actually include some \$18 million taken from the New Apprenticeship Program, which has now been axed. What sort of values does that represent?

One of the programs introduced by the government is ostensibly intended to boost the number of

science, mathematics and technology teachers. However, the \$38.8 million allocated to this program is to be spread over seven years. That’s not nearly so impressive! The \$5.5 million per annum this represents will hardly make a dint in Australia’s crying need for teachers in these areas.

The government has discussed its drug education program with considerable pride. However, there has not actually been any increase in the funding for this program. Its funding is part of a program previously allocated for a four-year period.

### Neglect of TAFE

One of the worst aspects of the budget is its total neglect of the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system. Earlier this year the Howard Government refused to provide additional funding for students who missed out on TAFE places. As a result the state and federal govern-

ments failed to reach agreement on future TAFE funding, leaving these students (now numbering some 50,000) still without access to TAFE places.

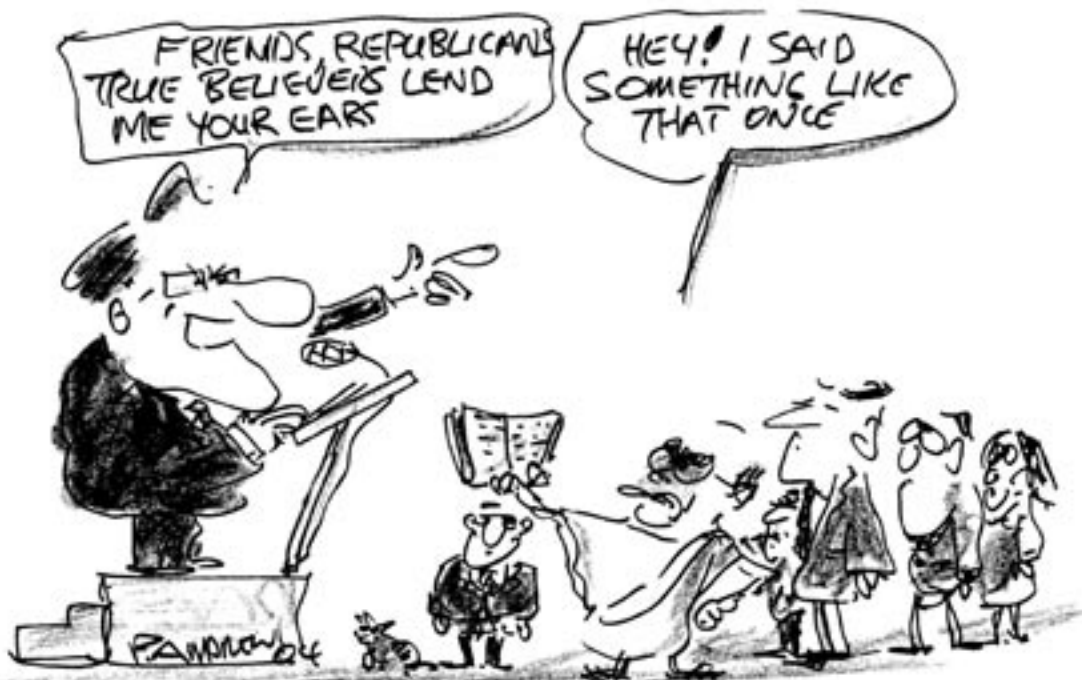
The TAFE system will also suffer increased pressure on equipment and resources, further casualisation of TAFE teachers, increased fee and material costs for students, skill shortages in industry, and particular pressures on regional and remote area TAFE institutions.

Pat Forward, Federal TAFE Secretary for the Australian Education Union, commented:

“Unless additional funds are found urgently for the system, many thousands of young people will be turned away from TAFE. This reduces their options for the future and consigns them to long periods of unemployment.

“Australia needs a well-resourced public TAFE system if it is to provide the skills needed for industry. Most importantly, it needs to provide opportunities for young people to gain employment, and to embark on their life-long path of contribution to Australia’s future.” ☘

### Pete’s Corner



## Thunderbirds are stop

**The Federal Government is operating in a “fantasy world” and has been watching too many James Bond movies, according to an Australian researcher. “It reminds me of the Thunderbirds [television program]”, said Dr Michael Borgas, President of the CSIRO Staff Association. “You have all these gung-ho dynamos and [Thunderbirds character] Brains has to come up with the gadget that’s going to save everyone in some room out the back.**

“It’s the mentality that drives these narrow minded research models. Every project is supposed to have a commercial outcome and if it doesn’t it’s a pariah.

“It’s a fantasy world and it will fail. Science will supply ‘winners’ if you support people, rather than standing over them with a whip.”

Dr Borgas was commenting on moves by the Federal Government to withhold research funding unless it offered a commercial outcome.

The allegations follow the release of the Federal Government’s science and innovation package and moves to cut funding from Co-operative Research Centres (CRC) if their research is not linked to “commercial” outcomes.

The move has been labelled a “disaster” even by the Federal

Government’s own backbench and has seen funding cut for research into the Great Barrier Reef and tropical rainforests, amongst others.

While Dr Borgas labelled not commercialising any research as “quite silly”, he said that there was no “magic formula” to research and that the Federal Government’s policies had made researchers “totally risk averse”.

“It works only if people are able to be confident that they’re going to have a job”, he said.

Unions representing research staff in the CSIRO and public universities say the need is for the Government to inject sufficient funding to arrest Australia’s decline in research and development spending relative to our OECD competitors.

“The whole of CSIRO is in desperate need of increased funding”, said Dr Borgas. “CSIRO is losing science capability right now.”

Reports the Government is planning to introduce a Strategic Research Council are of concern to research workers, who claim that universities and CSIRO are already directly accountable to Government and resources need to be targeted at the researchers themselves, not bureaucracy. ☘

# Built Environs out of bounds on "right of entry"

Bob Briton

Some bosses in the building industry in Adelaide were getting slightly ahead of themselves recently when they called in the Police to remove an official of the CFMEU from a local construction site. In taking the action, Built Environs insisted that the official, Construction and General Division President Ben Carslake, should have given managers 24 hours notice IN WRITING before coming onto the site.

It turns out that, while the Federal Government is pressing a further restriction of that nature with a Bill currently being considered by a Senate Committee, no such requirement exists in the relevant *Workplace Relations Act 1996* (WRA). Following the incident, there were red faces all round. The Superintendent of the Port Adelaide Police later contacted Ben to apologise for his officers' interference on behalf of Built Environs.

However, in view of the seriousness of the illegal efforts to deny a union official right of entry to a workplace, the CFMEU is inquiring as to what legal avenues are available against Built Environs and the Police. It appears that the company could face a fine of up to \$10,000 for failure to grant right of entry to a union official under the WRA.

The violation occurred when Ben sought to speak with members working at a wine storage facility being built by Built Environs

near the port at Outer Harbour. The company had already earned itself a reputation for trying to restrict its workers' access to representatives of their union. Police were involved in a similar eviction incident about 18 months ago.

Most construction firms in Adelaide overlook the current requirement to give 24 hours verbal notification of an official's intention to come onto a site – a recognition by employers that even the existing Reith-era legislation is over the top. Built Environs have a whole other attitude, however.

When Ben entered the site, a company representative confronted him and, after consulting the project manager, insisted that he leave. Ben's protests that the union had members on the job and that he had the right to speak with them about their enterprise agreement were overruled. The CFMEU official left some materials in the on-site shed and said that he would return the next day.

The following day, Ben was accosted by the company rep who, this time, refused to allow him onto the site because he had not given project management "written notice". Ben again explained his right of entry, put on the appropriate safety gear and proceeded to have discussions with members. This time two Police officers interrupted him and insisted that, seeing he had not given written notice, he was trespassing on the site.

Once more the CFMEU



Photo: Avante Media Australia

President's superior knowledge of the WRA was overruled. A Police officer then placed his hand on Ben's shoulder and escorted him off the property. While he was being detained in the back of a Police car, an officer demanded Ben's keys in order to remove his car from the Built Environs site. His complaint that he was capable of driving the car out by himself was ignored.

Ben was released and instructed not to return to the site within the next 24 hours. Some workers came outside to see their union rep and a number walked off the job in protest at what had taken place.

The Police order notwithstanding,

Ben returned later that day and addressed a meeting of workers in the lunchroom. The company once again threatened to call the Police. The workers carried a motion condemning the attempt to deny right of entry. This time, though, the Police did not attend.

Incidents of this nature show just how determined some employers are to eliminate unions from the workplace. The *Building and Construction Industry Improvement Bill* currently being considered by the Senate's Employment Workplace Relations and Education Committee seeks to give them more firepower.

The Committee is due to report within weeks at which time the package will be voted on in the Senate. The Bill has a range of anti-union measures, including the much-anticipated 24 hours written notice for a union official to enter a workplace and ballots for industrial action.

Clearly, attempts on the part of confrontationist employers to assume "rights" not even granted under present legislation must be challenged as they were in this case. The labour movement must also make every effort to see to it that the Senate rejects the so-called *Industry Improvement Bill*. ☘

## Strikebreaking and psyops fail to deter Aust Post workers

Bob Briton

Up to 20,000 Australia Post workers in the eastern states took 24-hour strike action last week in support of their union's stand on a range of issues including a pay claim, privatisation by stealth and the corporation's attempts to replace full-time workers with part-time and casual staff. Workers in other states are set to strike this Friday if Australia Post does not return to the negotiating table.

Management have offered a pay rise of eight per cent over two years and a \$400 "performance bonus". It refuses to discuss the other issues confronting postal workers and makes no apologies for its bellicose attitude. Matthew Pollard, the voice of Australia Post, put it this way:

"The union may carp about the use of full-time employees but the reality is that our business is organised around the interests of our customers, not the desires of the union for increased membership."

The hostility of corporation management to its workers has been underscored during this latest chapter in the months-long negotiations for a new enterprise bargaining agreement. Even though the nationwide 24-hour stoppages were the first such industrial action in over 20 years, Australia Post had made extensive and very costly preparations to break the efforts of its mostly low paid workforce.

"Volunteers" [scabs] from elsewhere in Australia Post were brought in to keep mail centres working. Though Mr Pollard angrily denied it, workers reported some staff enlisting children, friends and

relatives in the anti-union operation in a clear breach of security guidelines. Australia Post has form in this regard – very young casuals from Ready Workforce were used in a strikebreaking exercise when the regular workers went out over inadequate arrangements imposed during the move to the new Ardeer parcel facility in Victoria.

In Queensland, replacement mail sorters were put to work for up to \$25 an hour, contracted interstate trucking companies were brought in for the day and Siemens technicians were used to run machines at the Northgate Mail Centre.

Before, during and after the stoppage Australia Post has done its best to demoralise the workers battling for a better deal and for the service to stay in public hands. Even the much-vaunted \$400 "performance bonus" was said to be put in jeopardy by the workers' actions.

The strike would only inconveniences customers, Mr Pollard warned. Later he was playing the flip side of the bosses' record, maintaining that only minimal disruptions occurred. Of course, the industrial action "disadvantages more than 20,000 of our employees by delaying payment of significant wage increases offered by Australia Post".

Workers are angry that eight per cent over two years is being viewed as significant while executive pay packages in the corporation are so excessive. Australia Post's CEO Mr Graeme John is Australia's highest paid public servant, "earning" \$1.88 million last year. They are angry, too, that plans by Australia Post to franchise more of its retail

outlets would result in workers being forced into a range of inferior contract arrangements with franchisees.

There is also the broader public interest at stake in the struggle. The workers are battling against moves to privatise the entire postal service by stealth. Jim Metcher, the NSW state secretary of the Communications, Electrical, Electronics, Plumbing and Allied Services Union (CEPU) told the media that his union "and workers believe franchise today, privatisation tomorrow, and it's just another way of gift-wrapping a lot of these post offices to be sold off".

Jim pointed out that Australia Post's restructuring had already cost around 3000 full-time positions in



Photo: Avante Media Australia

NSW alone in recent years and that plans by the corporation to split full-time positions into part-time sorting and part-time delivery would undermine the job-security of many more workers.

Well-attended mass meetings in the eastern states last week again rejected Australia Post's offer and approved plans for further industrial action. Workers in other states are due to go on strike this Friday. ☘

## Greed puts profit before children

Australia's biggest child care company is splurging \$200,000 on the Brisbane Bullets basketball franchise while rejecting pay increases for child care workers earning less than \$12 an hour.

The facts came to light when ABC Learning Centres executive director, Michael Kemp, told a work value case in Melbourne his company would not reconsider its Bullets sponsorship in order to lift carers' pay.

The Liberal Party-linked ABC has expanded quickly under the Federal Government's policy of shifting funding for childcare from community to for-profit centres. ABC runs more than 300 centres around Australia, paying youth

carers as little \$5.99 an hour.

Entry level adults get \$11.90 an hour while fully qualified employees, backed by two-year child care diplomas, earn \$14.14 before tax.

ABC is opposing the work value case being run by the child care workers' union, the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU), in Victoria and the ACT. The union is claiming \$17.51 an hour for workers with diplomas and \$13.38 for adults without tertiary qualifications.

"These people are being left behind while others in the industry are getting extremely rich", LHMU industrial officer, Sue Bellino, said.

"Unfortunately, we still have to fight an attitude that childcare is

baby sitting rather than education during key developmental years."

Former Liberal Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Sallyann Atkinson, chairs the company's board while party heavyweights, Andrew Peacock and Jeff Kennett, also have close associations.

Its managing director is Eddie Groves, listed by *Business Review Weekly* as Australia's fourth-richest man with an estimated net personal fortune of \$146 million. Groves is suing the childcare workers union for damages over comments made during the wage dispute.

Kemp confirmed in evidence last week that the company was on track to post a \$20 million after tax profit this financial year. ☘

# Stand up and raise your voice

**"As long as one of us is in chains  
None of us are free"\***

Tom Pearson

Two connected developments, far apart, took place during the past two weeks. Last week the photo of an Iraqi prisoner in Abu Ghraib prison, naked and surrounded by US soldiers with snarling guard dogs straining at the leash, caused shocked recognition around the world. And another shock that may be in the pipeline was raised this week by General Tommy Franks, former commander of US forces in Iraq, who suggested that George W Bush plans to give himself dictatorial powers if he wins the next election.

The means to absolute power are provided for in the US constitution and were used for the first, and only time, by Abraham Lincoln, who invoked them for a short period during the American Civil War. But as Franks noted, "George Bush is no Abraham Lincoln".

The potential for American fascism arises out of the power of the corporations that are now enmeshed in the political system, indistinguishable from the two major parties. The latter can be characterised as "two parties, one class".

Here in Australia the arrogance of the Howard Government – its opportunism and utter contempt for working people – is a reflection of a shift toward authoritarianism. Its allegiance to the capitalist class is deep and unswerving and bound up with reactionary Christian fundamentalist beliefs.

Typically, the Australian Government denied any responsibility for the torture of prisoners in Iraq, as though the Australian troops

– who have taken more than 100 prisoners – are somehow not part of the occupation forces.

Said Defence Minister Robert Hill: "The Australian Defence Force did not manage the prison. The Australian Defence Force did not interrogate the prisoners." The main public stance of the Howard Government is now denial.

The reality is that we are being prepared for endless war and told we must accept the loss of freedoms such as the right to privacy; freedom of association; to speak out in dissent; to protest; to know someone who knows someone else who may have once been associated with an individual or organisation that has since been put on a banned list ... and so on it goes.

We have our own prison camps where men, women and children who have come here seeking refuge, are locked up. We have a \$50 billion plus war chest (over and above ongoing military spending) and a free trade agreement to allow US corporations to plunder our labour and resources.

The introduction of laws which allow for the total seizure of power under a "national emergency" or some such pretext is the next logical step.

Which brings us again to the "F" word. The description by the Communist International in 1933 of fascism in power, that it is "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital", remains relevant today.

Georgi Dimitrov\*\* added that it is a "government system of political gangsterism", a "system of provo-

cation and torture", of "unbridled aggression in relation to other nations".

And so to the shock of recognition of a man cornered and helpless, terrorised by guards and their baying dogs.

In a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (May 12) a former prisoner of the Nazi Buchenwald concentration camp said that the photo brought back "horrific memories" for him. He pleaded – "Please stand up and raise your voices in protest. It shames us all, as human beings."

The war has been sanitised so far as images are concerned. The mutilation and slaughter of innocent Iraqis have not been allowed to taint our television screens and enter our living rooms. Those photos of humiliation, abuse and torture confirm the barbarity we know is taking place beyond the censored version of events.

In a way those photos have humanised the war. They say to us, "See that human being ... that's you and I, that's what they have planned for all of us". This is not mere empathy. It is recognition that ordinary people the world over share a common humanity, and a common enemy.

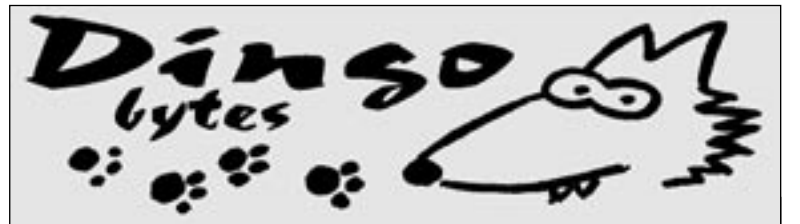
As we now know, from reports (the pictures were censored), a few seconds after his photo was taken in Abu Ghraib prison so they could tear at his flesh.

\*From the blues song *The Indebtedness Of Love* by Fred Pruitt

\*\*Georgi Dimitrov, *Against Fascism and War* ✪



It shames us all – blind folded Iraqis arrested by US soldiers



NSW Premier Bob Carr is bucking for "Hog of the Year": although he's got heaps of competitors he's right up there. Carr and his gang of pro-business thugs took away the right of people to use common law to sue for damages and lay waste the rights of workers to compensation for work-related injury. Consider asbestos victims. Most of their claims target James Hardie Industries, Australia's biggest asbestos producer until the stuff was banned in the 1980s. Hardie knew for decades that asbestos was deadly but criminally kept the information under wraps. Carr secretly planned to cap asbestos claims by setting up a fund and taking away the common law rights of victims. He was saved the problem of doing so when Hardie itself set up a fund last year. How convenient. Then, earlier this year the Hardie fund was found to be \$800 million short. Astonishing! Not only that, Hardie ceased to exist in Australia, setting up its headquarters in Holland, thereby ducking the payment of compensation. How much did Carr know about this in advance? I'll leave it to your imagination.

The Federal Government wants a mentoring program put in place in schools to help wayward boys, who, if they don't knuckle under will be locked up in prison camps in the desert and then deported to a war zone. Or is it that they want to have children asylum seekers in wealthy private schools mentored about their behaviour during riots and tear gas attacks? Children are children, after all, and the Howard Government is using and abusing them in all sorts of ways. So it was that at the same time as Education Minister Brendan Nelson was announcing a mentoring program for "problem" male school students, a report from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was condemning the Government's human rights abuses of asylum seeker children in detention. The report found that the little prisoners have been traumatised by fires, tear gas and water cannons and are carrying out mass self harm. As for the mentoring business, would you let your child be indoctrinated by some individual loaded up with the values of this government?

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is McDonald's. While not wishing to chortle over someone's illness, the colorectal cancer surgery the new president and chief executive of McDonald's has undergone is simply too close to poetic justice to ignore. Charles Bell grew up in Australia with McDonald's, literally. He began his burger odyssey as a teenager and rose through the ranks, no doubt quaffing a goodly amount of the fibreless, high fat product on the way. The millions of obese, junk foodies around the world who have been hoodwinked into the artery-clogging, fast food habit would appreciate the irony. Incidentally, Bell took over from Jim Cantalupo, who recently died suddenly of a heart attack, aged 60.

## Federal Budget

continued from page 1

There is more money for childcare places but much of this money will go to private childcare institutions. There will be more childcare places but no new measures to make them affordable. There is no thought of building up publicly owned long day and after school care.

As for pensioners, the unemployed and struggling students, there is no relief.

Costello showed his true colours in a radio interview when it was pointed out that pensioners don't gain anything through the tax cuts. He claimed that they don't need relief – they don't pay taxes he said. He forgot to mention that pensioners and all others are now paying huge additional taxes by way of the GST.

There is nothing for the unemployed. As Anouk Ride from the Australian Council for Social Services (ACOSS) points out "A single person on part unemployment benefit earning \$10,000 a year through work loses around 75 cents for every extra dollar they earn."

### HECS and TAFE fees

HECS and TAFE fees will continue to rise, putting university and job training out of reach of many more people, not just school leavers but adults seeking retraining, women looking to re-enter the workforce and those wishing to learn English as a second language.

The health budget is noteworthy for what it does not do. There are no measures to ensure universal access to bulk billing. It leaves in place

the \$2.5 billion plus annual private health insurance rebate; does not provide for public dental care; provides no guarantees of GP's rebates being indexed and leaves uncapped the ever-increasing out-of-pocket costs of specialists.

While a few dollars are thrown to aged care, costs will rise by around \$15 per week.

### Scorched earth policies

The prize for dishonesty and doing nothing goes to the Environment budget statement. The government claims that it will spend \$2.37 billion on the environment during 2004-05. If only! Unfortunately many of the items listed have little to do with tackling pressing issues such as logging of old growth forests, salination, water usage, reviving rivers, greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and alternative energy.

### Militarisation

The government is to spend more than **\$45 million a day** on military spending. Apart from the items listed under defence expenditure, there are millions more hidden away in various guises throughout the budget. They are dressed up as anything from aid to environmental protection.

The main aim is the further integration of Australia's military with that of the US – participation in the US Star Wars program, purchase of equipment from the US that is not even appropriate for the defence of Australia and being equipped

and trained to fight US wars in any corner of the globe.

### Homelessness and poverty

The unaffordability of housing is the single biggest factor contributing to homelessness and poverty. Shelter SA reports that in South Australia some people are paying up to 75 percent of their income on rent. Tens of thousands of people do not have access to affordable housing. There are similar problems in other states, yet the government continues to cut spending on public housing and force people into the unaffordable, for-profit private rental market.

Short-term gains, long-term losses

There are around 850,000 children in Australia whose parents cannot find a job and will not receive one cent from the tax cuts. The budget is not neutral for them or for the hundreds of thousands of other low income workers and their families.

The \$14.7 billion of tax cuts for those on more than \$52,000 a year, the one-off handouts to families and the criminal military spending is money that is needed for the benefit of the whole of society – for Medicare, public education, public transport, public housing, social welfare, community services, infrastructure and all the other essential services that the government claims we cannot afford.

The budget is not just a gift to the rich. It is theft from the community. ✪

# Torture was routine – soldiers and Iraqis claim

Susan Webb

**Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia charged nearly two months ago that US intelligence operatives directed torture of Iraqi prisoners. Now, reports by Major General Antonio Taguba and others reveal systematic torture and abuse of detainees by US military and private personnel, carrying out policy from on high. These reports contradict efforts by White House and Pentagon officials to pin all blame on a few low-ranking soldiers.**

Mejia has offered to testify before Congress about torture of Iraqi detainees that he witnessed last year at the Al Assad US air base, northwest of Baghdad. But first he has to get the US military to let him leave Ft Stewart, where he is confined. Mejia, 25, is facing a court martial because he refused to return to Iraq from leave last October. He turned himself in to the military on March 15 this year and applied for conscientious objector status, citing the brutality and suffering he had seen in the conduct of the war.

In his CO application, Mejia provided details of abuse that he saw at Al Assad. Tod Ensign of *Citizen Soldier*, which is supporting Mejia's application, gave the *People's Weekly World* a summary of the allegations.

Mejia's National Guard platoon was assigned to run a prison camp at Al Assad. They were instructed not to call it a POW camp to avoid Geneva Convention rules. Instead, it was to be called a "detention camp" for interrogation of prisoners.

Most of the detainees had been seized in military sweeps.

The platoon was never trained in handling prisoners. There was no medical care for the prisoners. The soldiers were instructed by "three mysterious guys" not in uniform, who did not give their real

names. The first thing they were told, Mejia said, was "your job is sleep deprivation – do anything to accomplish this." "Anything" included yelling, slamming sledgehammers into the wall, or holding a loaded 9-millimetre pistol next to a prisoner's ear.

Instead of acting on Mejia's allegations, his commanders charged him with desertion. His court martial is scheduled to begin May 19 at Ft. Stewart.

## Iraqi Communist Party call for UN supervision

In response to the revelations of torture at Abu Ghraib prison, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) has called for United Nations supervision of human rights in Iraq. The ICP's Centre for Human Rights, which long fought torture by Saddam Hussein at the same prison, said in a May 2 statement, "This new scandal comes in the aftermath of vicious violations that had been highlighted by international human rights organisations ... which included the use of excessive force and a policy of collective punishment and siege of cities as demonstrated in Falluja where hundreds of innocent civilians were killed."

**"The people responsible for violations should be tried under Iraqi law."**

The ICP statement said the Iraqi people "equally condemned" "terrorist acts ... including explosions, assassinations and barbaric attacks targeting mainly civilians."

ICP spokesperson Salam Ali



The head torturer makes a visit – Defense Secretary Rumsfeld in Iraq last week

told the *People's Weekly World* control over all detentions should be handed over to Iraqis under UN supervision. He also called for an international inquiry, with involvement of Iraqi organisations, into the tortures. "The people responsible

the videos, I couldn't sleep all night. The Americans speak about democracy and freedom. Now, we saw another picture."

Her husband's friend, she said, was just let out of Abu Ghraib. He had been held there about four months. He was given very little food, no clean water, and was severely beaten. "There was no reason", she said. He and his brother had been walking down a road. When US vehicles passed, the two became frightened and started running. They were caught and jailed by the Americans, who claimed that they had guns – something they firmly deny.

Saddam Hussein behaved the same way, Al-Jazairy said. "Now, Americans came and did the same." The justification for the war and occupation is "all lies," she said.

"The first thing to do is to get the Americans out."

Military mum Pat Gunn, from Lansdowne, Pa., told the *World* she doesn't know how to react to "this latest horror". She worried that "the retaliation is going to be tremendous." Her son Jason, 25, was badly injured in Iraq last year but was forced to return to combat, and recently his stay was extended.

"I will never speak against a United States soldier, I just cannot", she said. "But I can say, look what President Bush has done to our world! The horror of what he has done is beyond words. So many innocent people caught in the middle of this firestorm with no way out. I only can pray that this will end soon."

*People's Weekly World*  
www.pww.org

## Open letter to Attorney-General on Torture Convention

Dear Mr Ruddock

Could you please explain:

1. The legal basis of Australia's participation in the war on Iraq, given that 43 Australian experts in international law and human rights legislation issued a declaration on February 26, 2003 that an invasion of Iraq would be an open breach of international law and a crime against humanity, even if it took place with the authorisation of the UN Security Council.

2. What are the government's current preparations for the possibility that the Howard Government and Australian military personnel may be liable for prosecution in the International Criminal Court? This was the legal opinion of the experts cited above.

3. What is the extent, definition and legal basis of the jurisdiction the US exercises in Iraq.

4. What is the extent, definition and legal basis of Australia's jurisdiction in Iraq as a member of the Coalition of the Willing.

5. Why the US and only about half the Coalition of the Willing have ratified the Convention Against Torture (CAT)?

6. What steps the Howard Government is taking to enhance ratification of the CAT particularly

by our ANZUS ally the US and particularly in light of the 1800 photos and video clips showing the most appalling torture and inhumane treatment of Iraqi prisoners?

The following italicised quotations are from the CAT.

7. *Each State Party shall ensure that education and information regarding the prohibition against torture are fully included in the training of law enforcement personnel, civil or military, medical personnel, public officials and other persons who may be involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of any individual subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment.* (Article 10.1)

Has the Howard Government ensured that the education of all Australian personnel in the specified categories complies with this requirement?

8. *Each State Party shall include this prohibition in the rules or instructions issued in regard to the duties and functions of any such persons.* (Article 10.2)

Has the Howard Government ensured compliance with this requirement?

9. *Each State Party shall keep under systematic review interrogation rules, instructions, methods and*

*practices as well as arrangements for the custody and treatment of persons subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment in any territory under its jurisdiction, with a view to preventing any cases of torture.* (Article 11)

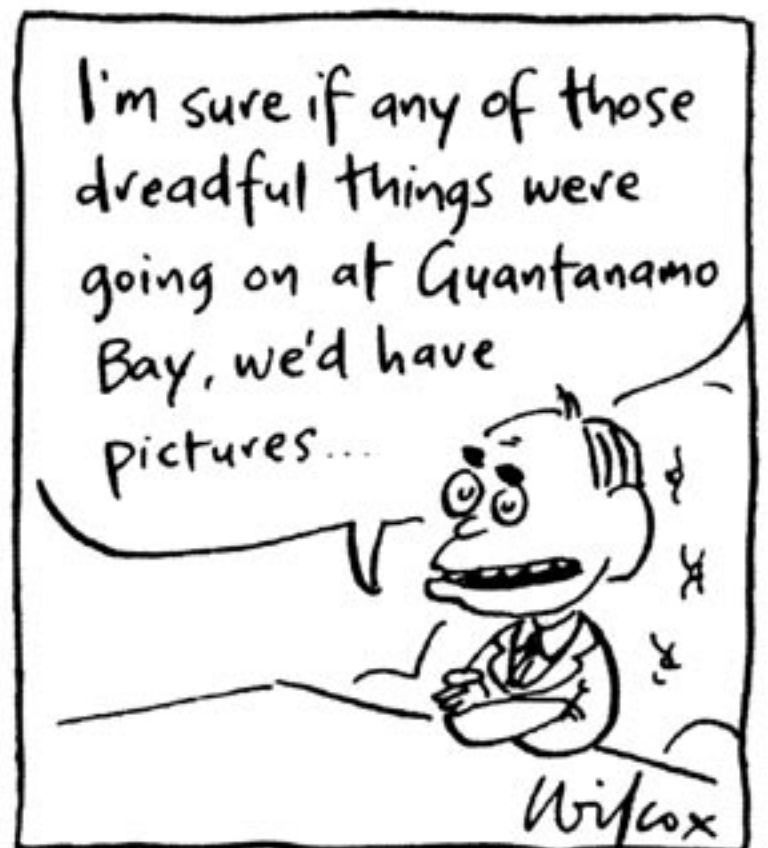
Given that the US, unlike Australia, has not ratified the CAT, how can the Howard Government fulfil its legal obligation under Article 11?

Will the Howard government make it a pre-condition that, before Australian military personnel transfer Iraqi prisoners to the custody of US military forces, the US ratify the CAT?

10. *Each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. In the event of the death of the victim as a result of an act of torture, his dependents shall be entitled to compensation.* (Article 14.1)

11. In what ways is the Howard government implementing this requirement?

Yours sincerely  
Gareth W R Smith  
16 May 2004



# Nuclear disaster in the making

Ken Coates highlights the threat posed to the world's future by US attempts to control the proliferation of nuclear weapons

At a time when British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon and his American co-thinkers of the radical right are repeatedly insisting that they are ready to use nuclear weapons in battle, even against states which do not possess such weapons, it is evident that the nuclear threat has notched up new levels of peril.

Not the least of the casualties of these warlike threats could be the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) which has, hitherto, been an assurance to non-nuclear powers that nuclear powers guaranteed not to use nuclear weapons against them.

Now that this guarantee has been unilaterally withdrawn by two nuclear powers, it is not surprising that these powers themselves feel that the words "non-proliferation" are more and more commonly being replaced by the term "counter-proliferation".

It sounds – and is intended to sound – as if this were the same thing. But it is not.

Non-proliferation is a voluntary agreement not to develop nuclear weapons, which has been underwritten by international law and a powerful worldwide public opinion.

tee of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty will meet at its review conference at the UN between April 26 and May 7.

The committee's last full meeting decided that the renewal of the treaty was dependent upon specific steps towards the actual nuclear disarmament of those nuclear powers which subscribed to the treaty.

Article Six of the non-proliferation treaty requires serious and sustained movement to the disarmament.

The legal position was very clearly summed up by the International Atomic Energy head Mohammed El Baradei when he said: "We must abandon the unworkable notion that it is morally reprehensible for some countries to pursue weapons of mass destruction yet morally acceptable for others to rely upon them for security, and, indeed to continue to refine their use."

In the year 2000, the NPT review conference agreed 13 practical steps for disarmament, which were accepted – albeit reluctantly – by all the states represented there.

These 13 commitments have not only not been implemented but there are numerous signs that they have been abandoned by those

the weak – or "rogue" states, which might cede weapons to terrorists or have weapons stolen by non-state forces.

This is not altogether implausible, but here is a more likely story, as can be seen from the extraordinary story of Pakistan's remarkable relationship with other would-be nuclear powers in sharing the results of research and procurement of technologies necessary for the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

Abdul Qadeer Khan apparently created an amazing network which helped to provide machine tools or centrifuges to enrich uranium to a wide variety of countries. Khan headed a research laboratory, which acknowledged that it had supplied vital technique and resources to Libya, North Korea and Iran.

The precise relationship between Khan and his government, for whom he perfected its own bomb, is still the subject of curious investigation.

Meanwhile, Khan is a national hero in Pakistan.

Shahid ur-Rehman, the author of a book on the Pakistani nuclear program, said this about him: "Abdul Qadeer Khan was a thief, there is no doubt about that. But he did something that was almost impossible – he developed a weapon for this army that did what 100 F-16s (US warplanes) could never do".

The main nuclear powers would have had much greater moral authority in voicing their concern about this matter if they had taken the 13 NPT steps seriously from the beginning.

Now we are all in a mess. Worldwide public opinion does not have an obvious focus through which it can express itself.

The US, with its doctrine of full spectrum dominance, is learning in Iraq that it is difficult if not impossible to dominate an ill-equipped and untrained uprising.

The British Government, which has hitched its wagon to the US star, is about to provide a credible simulation of the dying moments of a comet.

Perhaps the best hope for civil society around the world that all of us should lobby for the implementation of the 13 practical steps.

That we should lobby for consideration of the legal, political and technical requirements for the abolition and dismantling of nuclear weapons.

That we should lobby for the development of guarantees to non-nuclear weapons states which can make them secure from ever needing the services of Khan.

And that we should lobby for the refinement of criteria on verifying the elimination of nuclear weapons and support for disarmament and non-proliferation education in accordance with UN recommendations.

A practical move in this direction was begun by the handful of marchers in England who bravely revived the pilgrimage to Aldermaston at Easter. They certainly followed the maxim "never follow a multitude to evil".

It is enormously important that this kind of agitation should step up, rendering the obligatory CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament] badges, which used to be worn by all members of the present government, once again indispensable to anyone engaged in public life.

Ken Coates is chairman of The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation  
*Morning Star* ✪



**the words  
"non-proliferation"  
are more and more  
commonly being  
replaced by the term  
"counter-proliferation"**

Counter-proliferation, by contrast, presupposes a nuclear policeman, who will enforce the rule of the nuclear power over the non-nuclear powers.

That this enforcement will necessarily be selective is a consequence of the demands of international power play and will not make the doctrine any more coherent or plausible.

Counter-proliferation is a pick and mix policy, completely incompatible with any moral view of international law, which measures with an equal measure and judges – or should judge – with an equal judgement.

Of course, no worldwide forum has appointed the US to regulate these matters.

International law is quite clear – the only forum which is empowered to make this kind of decision is the United Nations General Assembly.

Subject to the control of that assembly, the Security Council is empowered to make specific decisions for determined purposes.

All this will burst into the public eye when the preparatory commit-

tee responsible for disarmament policy in the US and Britain.

The real and insidious nuclear proliferation is called "vertical" proliferation of the refinement and systematic development of the nuclear weapons available to major nuclear powers.

This gives rise to and necessitates mutations in nuclear doctrines.

The US, Russia, China, France and, as a client state of Washington, Britain, possess large nuclear arsenals. Israel probably has a larger arsenal than that of the British.

Uneasy steps towards agreed disarmament are now in abeyance and there is evidence of renewed competition between East and West.

The US possesses an immense nuclear capacity, which could destroy civilisation several times over and probably create a desert of the whole planet.

It is not at all an accident that the US continues to issue threats and to initiate research which invites other powers to follow suite or go to the wall.

[Western] propaganda insists that the largest danger comes from

## Reflections on war

Lynndie England the US soldier in a number of the pictures of naked Iraqi citizens claimed in her defence that she was only following orders... The Nuremberg Tribunal (1945-1946) which tried German war criminals concluded:

"Individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience ... Therefore [individual citizens] have the duty to violate domestic laws to prevent crimes against peace and humanity from occurring."

The Nuremberg Tribunal 1945-1946.

"A modern gentleman is necessarily the enemy of his country. Even in war he does not fight to defend it, but to prevent his power of preying on it from passing to a foreigner."

George Bernard Shaw

We thought, because we had power, we had wisdom.

Stephen Vincent Benét

Patriots always talk of dying for their country and never of killing for their country.

Bertrand Russell, attributed

"War paralyses your courage and deadens the spirit of true manhood. It degrades and stupefies with the sense that you are not responsible, that 'tis not yours to think and reason why, but to do and die', like the hundred thousand others doomed like yourself. War means blind obedience, unthinking stupidity, brutish callousness, wanton destruction, and irresponsible murder."

Alexander Berkman

"The corporate grip on opinion in the United States is one of the wonders of the Western world. No First World country has ever managed to eliminate so entirely from its media all objectivity – much less dissent."

Gore Vidal

# Decisive defeat for India's conservative government

The overwhelming defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government adds to the number of countries that have recently thrown out conservative governments and elected more progressive ones. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India congratulated the people of India for inflicting a decisive defeat on the government of the BJP and its allies.

A statement by the leadership of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) welcoming the election outcome says: "The six-year rule of the Vajpayee-led (BJP) government has come to an end. The verdict is a rejection of the naked communalism [anti-secularism] of the BJP regime, the pro-rich economic policies which were glorified in the 'India Shining' campaign and the pro-imperialist foreign policy."

The statement went on to say that it was "an historic success for the CPI(M) and the Left parties as they have won the highest number of seats ever in Parliamentary elections since independence. This is a recognition of the firm and consis-

tent role played by the CPI(M) and the Left in defending secularism, anti-imperialism and opposing the harmful economic policies."

These sentiments are echoed in a statement issued by the Communist Party of India (CPI).

"The need of the hour is to set up a secular coalition government without any hassles and based on a Common Minimum Programme relating to the immediate basic needs of the people. There should

Vajpayee called early elections thinking that his party and its allies could successfully sell India's surging economy, good monsoon rains, and their peace prospects with Pakistan, to win them another term in office.

That did not happen. Pramod Mahajan, chief campaign strategist for the BJP cynically remarked before the election that "The last person from the Gandhi family who won elections for Congress was Mrs

**Thousands of peasants have starved to death and many suicided during the BJP-led government's six years in office.**

be no doubt about the stability of the government and the stability of the country in international and economic circles."

India is the world's second largest country after China and has Asia's third largest economy.

The BJP Prime Minister

Gandhi's dead body in 1984". He went on "I'm afraid this time they may not even get the three-figure mark."

Jason Overdorf, writing in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, (April 2004) predicted that the BJP "is tipped to do even better this time out. Vajpayee, a 50-year election veteran and brilliant orator, leads India at a time of political détente with Pakistan and with the economy booming".

What they overlooked was that the economy was not booming for the hundreds of millions of people who were not fooled by statements about India Shining.

Thousands of peasants have starved to death and many suicided during the BJP-led government's six years in office. The economy has



Prime Minister elect Sonia Gandhi is congratulated by supporters

been opened up to artificially cheap agricultural products, forcing Indian peasants to sell their produce at dirt-cheap prices.

Peasants starve as grain is exported for consumption by cattle in Europe and the US at low prices. The consumption of food staples such as cereals and pulses has fallen to dangerously low levels reminiscent of famine years.

There is little work for agricultural labourers and what growth there has been in the manufacturing sector has been jobless.

The number of registered

unemployed is over 40 million (a conservative figure from the government). Privatisation and public sector cutbacks have only compounded the situation.

Congress and its allies, including Communist and Left Front parties that have pledged to support it, were leading in 282 seats in the 543 seat parliament as counting continued at the time of going to press. A party must have the support of 272 parliamentary members to form a government.

Mr Vajpayee conceded defeat and has resigned. ☘

## UN must not short change justice for East Timor

The US solidarity group, East Timor Action Network (ETAN), urged that the extension of the United Nations mission in East Timor not be the last word on justice for serious crimes in East Timor. "Justice for East Timor must not be short changed. Doing so threatens to destabilise East Timor, as well as current and future UN missions", said John M Miller, spokesperson for the ETAN.

"Real accountability for East Timor would provide important momentum to end the Indonesian military's ongoing human rights violations."

"Justice must be allowed to take its full course. East Timorese victims should not pay the price for false starts and delays that are largely the result of UN decisions and Indonesia's non-cooperation", added Miller.

"Unfortunately, the Security Council has done nothing to further pressure Indonesia on justice."

Last week's Security Council action downsizes the UN Mission of Support in East Timor and calls for a shift in resources in the Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) from investigations to trials and appeals. Some on the Security Council called for all UN-funded work on serious crimes to end by May 20, 2005, at the latest. The US had argued for an even more rapid phasing out of the UN's support for serious crimes investigations and prosecutions.

Mr Miller said the US must work with the UN Security Council to establish an international tribunal for East Timor. "Only a tribunal would have the resources and political weight to properly try and punish those responsible for genocide and other grave crimes", said Miller.

On May 10, an international

judge at the Special Panel for Serious Crimes in East Timor issued an arrest warrant for Wiranto, the Armed Forces Commander and Defence Minister in 1999 and now a leading candidate for the presidency of Indonesia.

Prior to and after East Timor's overwhelming vote for independence, his troops and their militia proxies conducted a campaign of terror resulting in more than 1400 deaths, displacement of three-quarters of the population and destruction of more than 75 percent of East Timor's infrastructure.

Wiranto was indicted on February 24, 2003, for crimes against humanity before the Special Panel, a joint UN-East Timorese court. Soon after, the US State Department placed Wiranto on its visa watch list.

Remarks by Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Hassan Wirayuda, dismissing the recent arrest warrant issued against General Wiranto, highlight Indonesia's refusal to co-operate with the serious crimes process.

The SCU has filed 83 indictments accusing 373 individuals. Charges are currently pending against a total of 313 accused. 279 of these remain at large in Indonesia, including 37 Indonesian military (TNI) commanders and officers, four Indonesian chiefs of police, 60 East Timorese TNI officers and soldiers, the former governor of East Timor and five former district administrators.

"Indonesian security forces committed countless crimes against humanity as Indonesia defied multiple UN resolutions since 1975 and, in 1999, sought to undermine a UN operation", said Mr Miller

For more information visit:

www.etan.org ☘

## Peru

### Another President on the way out?

After coming to power in 2001 with 59 percent of the vote, Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo's popular support has fallen to just 7.7 percent. Despite its unpopularity, the Government is aligning itself more closely with the US and the "free market" policies that have caused so much suffering already.

Almost 60 percent of people believe he should step down and call a general election – the next one is not due until 2006

Toledo demonstrated his total subservience to the US in Geneva recently when it voted with the US against Cuba at the UN Human Rights Commission. This resulted in friction with Havana and the withdrawal of Peru's ambassador, despite political and parliamentary criticism.

And now is about to enter into negotiations with the United States, for a free trade agreement (FTA) that will only leave the country more indebted and impoverished than ever and create enormous distortions to its economy.

The lack of support for the government has been evident in the large demonstrations that have taken place, particularly in the health and coca cultivation sectors.

A huge protest of coca growers came together in the centre of Lima, from where they were dislodged by police equipped with tear gas, loaded into buses and removed from the capital.

Elsa Malpartida, one of the growers' leaders, charged the Government with being "a dictatorship violating human rights".

The farmers are demanding the approval of a law on coca leaves, their industrialisation and the eradication of crops that could be sold to the drug traffickers. Growers' representatives were able to meet with some deputies who committed themselves to promoting a legislative motion to respond to their concerns.

The health sector likewise shook Lima with its demands. Administrative workers, nurses, technical staff and auxiliaries in the Social Health Insurance (EsSalud) have been on strike for more than one week calling for wage rises and other demands.

Shortly before, state doctors suspended a 20-day stoppage after signing a package with the Minister of Public Health. Certain medical associations, like that in Arequipa department and other localities in the south are maintaining their

strike after describing the government measures as inadequate.

The Peruvian government's current political crisis began last year. In December, in the midst of a political crisis, the President appointed a new cabinet after the resignation of four leaders. But barely five months later, nothing has changed in that country of 27 million inhabitants, more than 14 million of them living in poverty.

Despite national economic growth of four percent last year and a similar figure anticipated for this year, the Peruvian population is extremely poor. The growth has been in the sectors of oil and mining, which are not generating work.

The President's electoral promise to change the unemployment situation has come to nothing, given that only 25 percent of the economically active population has a full-time job.

Acknowledgements to Lidice Valenzuela for material used in this article. ☘

Sydney

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# March in Cuba: "US Hands off!"

**On Friday May 14, a massive sea of people flooded through the streets of the Cuban capital, marching on the US Interests Section to protest the latest brutal measures against Cuba adopted by Washington.**

Just before the march stepped-off, Cuban President Fidel Castro addressed the huge crowd, estimated at more than one million. The leader of the Cuban Revolution read an open letter to US President George W Bush, accusing him of knowing nothing about Cuba and its people – who are ready to not only march, but willing to give their lives to preserve their country's sovereignty.

Fidel Castro said that Cuba could be erased from the face of the earth, but it would never become another neo-colony of the United States.

The Cuban leader said that the objective of his open letter was not to offend or insult the US President – but simply to remind him of reality. Given that Bush has proposed to intimidate and even destroy Cuba's social and political system, Fidel Castro affirmed that to do so would require its physical elimination.

He said that Bush has no moral authority to talk about freedom, democracy and human rights – charging the Bush administration with attempting to impose a worldwide tyranny, ignoring and destroying the United Nations, violating the rights of sovereign countries and launching wars of conquest to take over the earth's resources.

Reading his open letter to the US President, the leader of the Cuban Revolution said: "In the world that you seek to impose on us today,

there is not the slightest notion of ethics, credibility, standards of justice, humanitarian feelings or the elementary principles of solidarity and generosity. Everything that is written about human rights in your world – and in the world of your allies who share in plundering the earth – is an enormous lie.

"Billions of human beings live in subhuman conditions – without enough food, medicine, clothing, shoes or shelter and without even a minimum amount of knowledge or enough information to understand their tragedy and that of the world in which they live."

Fidel Castro said that it is almost laughable to hear the US President talk about the alleged violation of human rights in Cuba – where people are guaranteed free health care and education. The leader of the Cuban Revolution noted that "this is one of the few countries of the hemisphere where there have been no cases of torture, no death squads and no government leader who has become a millionaire."

The Cuban leader emphasised that "while Cuba struggles for life, Bush fights for death". And Fidel said that while Cuba saves the lives of thousands of children and mothers around the world, Bush kills innumerable people with indiscriminate and pre-emptive attacks.

Fidel Castro affirmed that if George W Bush makes the mistake of attacking the island, the leader of the Cuban Revolution will be on the frontline in defence of his country.

After addressing the crowd for about 20 minutes in front of the US Interests Section, Fidel Castro took his place at the head of the march.

The crowd chanted: "Bush, fascist! There is no aggression that Cuba doesn't resist!" and "Down with Fascism!"

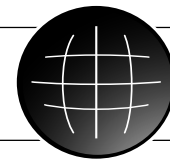
During the early morning hours on Friday, young and old – men, women and children – made their way toward Havana's seaside drive. Hundreds of thousands walked for several kilometres, as many of the streets were closed off to traffic and most of the city's busses were dedicated to carrying people longer distances. People gathered on streets and boulevards leading into the Malecón and the huge march stepped-off just a little past 8am local time – and didn't end until after 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

For more than six hours, well over one million people – initial estimates put the number at 1,200,000 – passed by the US Interests Section. Marchers carried Cuban flags and raised them high as they approached the building on Havana's seaside drive. Some held photos of Bush, sporting a moustache and dressed in a Nazi uniform.

Radio and TV commentators noted that while the marchers are extremely angry over Washington's latest measures against the island, the Interests Section must be one of the safest diplomatic missions in the world; not a single stone has ever been thrown against the building that represents the interests of the US Empire.

One young marcher commented to a reporter from Radio Havana Cuba: "The United States thinks it owns the world. Well, they don't own Cuba... and they NEVER will." <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CubaNews> ☛

And another one ...



## Global briefs

**USA:** Hundreds of American soldiers have been killed in the US's recent wars. But tens of thousands return only to develop terrible medical problems. An estimated 573,000 veterans were involved in the Gulf War (1991). Official reports give the number of casualties in battle as 148 killed and 467 wounded. However, the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs are paying out medical disability payments to 221,000 Gulf War veterans. Another 52,000 have claims in for the same status. In other words, 39 per cent of all the vets who fought in the Gulf War have already been determined by the military to be disabled. If the outstanding claims are recognised then the figure would be almost 50 percent! The rate of approved medical disability claims during World War II was 6.6 per cent; in Korea it was five per cent, and Vietnam 9.6 per cent. Depleted uranium was extensively used in the 1991 war and is being widely used in Iraq now.

**BRITAIN:** Britain has bowed to pressure from the US to keep the name of Victor Bout, an arms trafficker, off a list of those subject to planned UN sanctions. Bout, previously described by British officials as a "merchant of death", is allegedly being used by the US to help supply coalition troops in Iraq.

**CHINA:** China will spend US\$1.4 billion on poverty relief programs in 2004. Government spending on anti-poverty measures has been consistently high in recent years. The 2004 allocation represents an increase of almost US\$100 million over last year.

**INDONESIA:** Indonesia's former ruling Golkar party was pronounced the winner of April's general election with 21.6 per cent of the vote. President Megawati Sukarnoputri's Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDI-P) was second with 18.5 per cent. It was way below the 1999 result when it won more than a third of the votes. The first direct presidential elections will take place in July.

**HAITI:** Hundreds of Haitians, many barefoot, were repatriated by two US Coast Guard cutters after being caught at sea foiling their attempts to start new lives in the USA. Most of those interviewed said that they were fleeing political persecution and an upsurge in violence, looting, vandalism and accompanying fear. The US coastguard said that it had returned 651 men, women and children. A total of 1948 Haitians have been found at sea and returned home so far this year compared with 1490 in the whole of 2003. Earlier in the month Caribbean officials indefinitely postponed a meeting of national security ministers with US Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge because of major differences over Haiti. The 15-member regional bloc, Caricom does not recognise the US-installed Haitian interim government. The Caribbean community has called for a UN investigation of Haitian President Aristide's departure from Haiti in February this year.

## Former US diplomats criticise Bush's policy

**More than 50 former British ambassadors and other senior diplomats wrote recently to British Prime Minister Tony Blair condemning their government's recognition of illegal Israeli settlements and other Middle Eastern policies. Now, in yet another indication of the growing concern over Bush-Blair policies, 16 former US diplomats have written to President Bush critical of his unqualified support for Sharon's policies and actions. The British letter was published in *The Guardian* of May 5, 2004. The US diplomats' letter, dated May 4, 2004, is published below.**

Dear Mr President

We former US diplomats applaud our 52 British colleagues who recently sent a letter to Prime Minister Tony Blair criticising his Middle East policy and calling on Britain to exert more influence over the United States. As retired foreign service officers we care deeply about our nation's foreign policy and US credibility in the world.

We also are deeply concerned by your April 14 endorsement of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's unilateral plan to reject the rights of three million Palestinians, to deny the right of refugees to return to their homeland, and to retain five large illegal settlement blocs in the occupied West Bank. This plan defies UN Security Council resolutions calling for Israel's return of occupied territories. It ignores international laws declaring Israeli settlements illegal.

It flouts UN Resolution 194, passed in 1948, which affirms the right of refugees to return to their homes or receive compensation for the loss of their property and assistance in resettling in a host country should they choose to do so. And it

undermines the Road Map for peace drawn up by the Quartet, including the US. Finally, it reverses long-standing American policy in the Middle East.

Your meeting with Sharon followed a series of intensive negotiating sessions between Israelis and Americans, but which left out Palestinians. In fact, you and Prime Minister Sharon consistently have excluded Palestinians from peace negotiations. Former Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo voiced the overwhelming reaction of people around the world when he said, "I believe President Bush declared the death of the peace process today".

By closing the door to negotiations with Palestinians and the possibility of a Palestinian state, you have proved that the United States is not an even-handed peace partner. You have placed US diplomats, civilians and military doing their jobs overseas in an untenable and even dangerous position.

Your unqualified support of Sharon's extra-judicial assassinations, Israel's Berlin Wall-like barrier, its harsh military measures

in occupied territories, and now your endorsement of Sharon's unilateral plan are costing our country its credibility, prestige and friends.

It is not too late to reassert American principles of justice and fairness in our relations with all the peoples of the Middle East. Support negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, with the United States serving as a truly honest broker.

A return to the time-honoured American tradition of fairness will reverse the present tide of ill will in Europe and the Middle East – even in Iraq. Because the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the core of the problems in the Middle East, the entire region-and the world-will rejoice along with Israelis and Palestinians when the killing stops and peace is attained.

**Richard H Curtiss**, former chief inspector, US Information Agency

**Colbert C Held**, Retired FSO and author

**Donald A Kruse**, American Consul in Jerusalem  
**Ambassador Edward L Peck**, former Chief of Mission in Iraq and Mauritania .... ☛

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

email: guardian@cpa.org.au



## Justice, not charity

**The Howard Government can play with \$37 billion in an election budget, but at the same time has cut its modest aid to East Timor.**

I was in Dili recently and our group visited a family who told us they were hungry. Even so, they brought out some corn and boiled bananas to share with us. They rarely eat meat, saying that they would have a chicken on "happy Christmas". In East Timor, this family's situation is normal. However, they want justice, not charity.

East Timor is requesting that the dispute over its sea border with

Australia be settled by using the internationally accepted standard of a median line, that is, half-way. Such a border would ensure for East Timor a consistent income, about US\$12 billion over 20 years, which would enable the nation to feed and employ its citizens without going into debt.

Since 1999, Australia has taken resources worth a million dollars a day from areas of the Timor Sea whose ownership is under dispute, a total of \$2 billion, a sum which dwarfs any aid we've given to Timor.

Australia is also claiming at least 60 percent of the resources which lie on East Timor's side of a median line, and has withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the Tribunal for the Law of the Sea so that there won't be an umpire to interfere.

Can you imagine the outcry if the Timorese were claiming resources on *our* side of a half-way line?

**Sister Susan Connelly  
Mary Mackillop Institute of  
East Timorese Studies**

## CIA Torture Manual in DFAT Library

**The Howard Government are very vague about when exactly they learnt of US and British military abuse of prisoners in Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and Afghani prisons but they certainly should have been expecting it or is this yet another example of "flawed intelligence"?**

Around 1985 the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) library in Canberra received from the UN, a copy of the CIA Torture Manual. I know because I read and copied it there.

This infamous handbook details all manner of assassination and "interrogation" techniques and advises their use against teachers, nurses, agronomists, technicians and civic leaders in "enemy" villages and towns so that these may be maximally destabilised.

The book was the basis for the curriculum at the School of the Americas (now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) in Fort Benning, Georgia. Notorious Latin American military killers were trained there like Panama's Manuel Noriega and those involved in the slaughter of six Jesuit priests in 1989 in El Salvador.

Nineteen years should have been enough time for John Howard to have read this manual but then, maybe he's a slow reader.

**Gareth Smith  
Byron Bay NSW**

## Iraq a reminder of Ireland

**The horrendous torture of Iraqi prisoners by USA agents is a grim**

**lesson of capitalism's plans for domination. The revelation has drawn the blind on the British Army's torture and murder of Iraqi civilians and combatants.**

During the illegal occupation of Ireland's six Counties since 1921 multiple murders have taken place by British agents, hidden until the last stage of our freedom struggle – Pat Finucane, Rosemary Nelson, Marie Drumm, Bloody Sunday. There was the murderous attack on Bernadette Devlin-McAlskey's family, Jenny Drumm, Alex Maskey – on the list goes.

The burning of farms, the destruction of livestock, the British propaganda machine portraying it as religious conflict, not a freedom struggle.

Notice Blair's attempted apology in France, no admission, Iraqi parents have searched for their children and want answers from the Brits.

Today's news report of young soldiers in Townsville, Queensland, burning kittens, they have been fined and must do community work for RSPCA.

The new world order brings with it a brutal ugliness, unknown in any civilization.

**Anne Duffy-Lindsay  
Surry Hills, NSW**

## Opportunity missed

**When is the ALP going to acknowledge the "real" unemployment figures? On the 7.30 Report on Thursday May 13, Mark Latham allowed Kerry O'Brien to give credibility to the Government's 5.7 percent unemployment claims. These figures are couched in misinformation that**

**is legitimised by the manipulation of the ABS figures. Over 30 percent of workers are underemployed, this is one of the highest figures in all OECD countries.**

Part-time and casual workers, even those working only two hours a week, are counted as employed yet few earn a living wage today.

How can the Government justify ignoring those who live in poverty?

Suicide, mental health, child poverty, violence, crime and homelessness have become real social problems and all the government has done is to ignore families living in poverty today.

Mark Latham missed the opportunity to tell the real story on the *Tonight* show.

The TAFE announcement may sound good but TAFE has been in crisis since devolution ten years ago. Over 40,000 students are turned away every year.

The Government move to privatise TAFE colleges is a microcosm of their community policy. Half the lecturers are casual workers. They work up to 15 hours unpaid and TAFE counselling services closed down at a time when the service should have been increased. There is no strategic plan and no commitment to training for future projects.

The concept of individual business centres has been a complete failure and is seen as a step towards privatisation. This has left TAFE in complete crisis, a basket case. Instead of being the hub of the community TAFE has become another arm of private education that ignores the very students it was originally designed for.

**Mary Jenkins, Secretary  
Australian National Organisation  
for the Unemployed (ANOU)**

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## Culture & Life

by  
Rob Gowland

### Lenin and the Cold War

**If you come across someone talking about the Cold War as something that has been and gone, something in the past, just tell that person to watch the History Channel on Foxtel. There, the Cold War is well and truly being waged here and now.**

Whether dealing with WW2, the USSR or any East European country, China or Vietnam, the Middle East, Latin America – in short, the modern history of virtually anywhere – the History Channel's take on it is not just bourgeois history but the crudest Cold War propaganda.

I don't know if the *Reader's Digest* has any involvement in the History Channel, but the anti-Soviet spin in the channel's offerings is straight out of that esteemed anti-Communist rag, which ran anti-Soviet articles even while the battle of Stalingrad was raging.

Just over a week ago, the History Channel ran a program about Lenin. It made me so angry and disgusted I could only tolerate its abuse of history for a very short time before I just had to turn it off.

There have always been anti-Soviet books, articles and TV programs. But these days, ever since Gorbachev, anti-Soviet propaganda, especially anti-Soviet TV programs, make heavy use of Russian "experts", to add authenticity, apparently.

With genuine Marxist-Leninist Russian experts – academics, political figures and former military leaders – dismissed, reduced to poverty, ignored and otherwise silenced, every urger or opportunist in Russia who wants to advance himself or just make some money knows that the thing to do now is to jump on the anti-Soviet bandwagon.

Attacking the Soviet period in Russian will get you on Russian TV and earn Brownie points from the Putin regime. Doing it in English will get you on *foreign* TV, which pays even better.

So on the History Channel's Lenin program, we had a so-called Russian historian solemnly explaining to us, over a bust of Lenin to give the sequence added "colour", that Lenin was "essentially a writer".

He had, declared this expert, begun as a writer and had done almost nothing else until, apparently to his surprise, he found himself running the country. But because he was a writer, with little or no understanding of real people, the deaths of multitudes of people were "just lines on paper" and meant nothing to him.

There was lots of drivel of this sort, all of it jaw-dropping in its inanity. Indeed, it made one wonder at the intellectual mendacity of the new breed of Russian academics.

There is not just ample, there is *overwhelming* evidence – in official documents, reminiscences, Lenin's own writings, speeches and deeds, and in the whole of Soviet culture and achievement – to give the lie to such nonsense.

Only someone with no more than modest intellectual gifts or someone who deliberately tailors their academic work to suit the prevailing official prejudice could advance such views.

There have always been people



who would do just that, of course: mean minded types peevd at some real or imagined slight, "unfairly" passed over for some promotion or academic honour, who allowed their subjective views to warp their judgement and their intellectual honesty.

In the past, they had to confine their griping to their like-minded friends or else do a runner and defect to the West, where they were liberally honoured while their anti-Soviet diatribes could be given free rein.

Today, however, such people are elevated to the front rank of Russian educators and researchers, heading institutes with formerly high reputations and standards. But now, the intellectual rigour of Marxist-Leninist analysis is replaced with

petty-bourgeois trendiness and a reactionary political agenda.

Soviet research in history and the social sciences had very high standards. Soviet historical studies were astute, detailed and accurately grounded in the relevant class relationships.

It is indeed a pity to see such a rich tradition overthrown and replaced by the kind of spurious scholarship shown on the *History Channel's* Lenin program.

At one point in that program, in an attempt to show how Stalin was supposedly conspiring against Lenin when the latter was being nursed in Gorky, it was revealed, in tones of "here's conclusive proof", that the security services sent *daily* reports on Lenin's health to Stalin.

Frankly, this is a laughable dis-

tortion of history. That the Cheka were protecting Lenin and watching over his health care was no more than would be expected.

Certainly the Soviet people and the Communist Party would expect it. After all, Lenin had already been severely wounded in one assassination attempt on his life, by a Social Revolutionary using notched and poisoned bullets, no less.

That daily reports were sent to the Party's General Secretary is evidence of *concern*, not of conspiracy, for heaven's sake.

No, the Cold War is not dead. Major offensives are still being waged with monotonous regularity.

And they will continue to be waged as long as capitalism continues to exist and the spectre of Communism to haunt it. ☛



Sun May 23 ~  
~ Sat May 29

Programs about Royalty have been popping up like weeds all year, but this week there are no less than *three* of these excrescences being aired, plus one featuring the King of Prussia.

When I asked an ABC publicist why we were being inundated with the tedious doings of Royals past and present, she suggested that it might be connected to the "excitement" over the Danish Royal wedding. That is possible, of course, even though the event in question is of cosmic insignificance.

I think the more likely reason for the spate of Royal programs is the desire of British producers to make programs they can either sell to the US or get US networks to invest in. And US TV has always been partial to programs about people who live in palaces.

Historical programs about Royals have all the ingredients that US TV holds dear: splendid locales, lavish sets, colourful costumes, plenty of attractive bosoms on display and storylines that require lots of bed hopping by all the main characters.

The first of these efforts was actually scheduled for screening on May 9 but got rescheduled after *The Guardian* went to press. It is *Britain's Real Monarch* (ABC 7.30pm Sunday).

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

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

"Baldrick's (sorry, Robinson's) basis for this curious assertion is evidence 'suggesting' that Edward IV was illegitimate. Shock. Horror. Yawn."

I then gave details of Edward IV's origins, marriage, children etc. If you are interested it's in issue 1181 of this paper.

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

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

I offered the thought that "that might even make a good reality TV show".

As soon as *Britain's Real Monarch* ends, there is barely time for a couple of ABC commercials before we are thrown into *Charles II, The Power And The Passion* (ABC 8.30pm Sunday), a "two-part drama set in the corridors and bedrooms of power during the reign of the notorious 'Merry Monarch' [Charles II]".

The death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658 was followed by the collapse of the Commonwealth and the restoration of the Stuarts, specifically Charles II, to the English throne.

Let me quote A L Morton's *A People's History of England* on this subject: "The urban middle classes had proved too weak by themselves to afford a permanent basis for a government [under the Commonwealth] and the restoration of 1660 was in effect a re-combination of class forces to establish a government more in harmony with the real distribution of strength.

"It was less a restoration of the monarchy than a new compromise between the landowners and the upper-classes in the towns."

Despite appearances, it was not a complete counter-revolution. As Morton points out "Charles I had claimed to be King by Divine Right: Charles II knew that he was King by permission of the landlords and merchants in Parliament and could be dismissed as easily as he had been summoned.

"The only way in which the Crown could secure any measure of real power was by exploiting the antagonisms between the various sections of the ruling class. Charles was quite ready to do this, but, for the moment, he kept his intentions to himself."

There is surely the stuff of real intrigue and drama here, but you won't find that in *Charles II, The Power And The Passion*, which is sadly one more conventional costume saga lacking any genuine historical insights.

Alignments of class forces do not figure very prominently in *The Boy Who Would Be King* (ABC 9.30pm Wednesday), the second program this week about Charles II.

A documentary, with contributions from Charles II biographer, Lady Antonia Fraser, this program makes excuses for Charles' amoral behaviour while in exile (and afterwards) and tells us, yet again, that he "became known as 'the merry monarch' and was a welcome change from the joyless Puritan years following the English Civil War".

Not good enough; in fact, not nearly good enough.

The King of Prussia, Frederick the Great, features in the German four-part drama series *Between Love and Duty* (SBS 7.30pm Sundays), although he is a supporting character: the hero of this 18th Century saga is Baron Friedrich von der Trenck, soldier, adventurer, military hero and relentlessly persecuted lover.

I was not sent a preview tape so I have not seen it and can only tell you, for what it is worth, that it is Germany's most expensive historical television drama ever.

Nor have I seen *The Big Picture: Who killed Marilyn Monroe?* (ABC 8.30pm Wednesday). The ABC says it is "definitive" and claims that it "uses



Unlocking the truth? (*Who killed Marilyn Monroe?*)

new documents and interviews with crucial witnesses to unlock the truth behind her tragic demise".

Personally I doubt it, but I will be interested to see what it does have.

The latest no-longer-young actress to take on the role of senior police officer, after the likes of Pauline Quirk and Helen Mirren, is Caroline Quentin, star of *Men Behaving Badly*, *Jonathan Creek*, etc.

In the new two-part Granada series *Blue Murder* (ABC 8.30pm Fridays) she plays newly-promoted

Manchester DCI Janine Lewis. As she tells her son, "people commit murders and I catch them".

The program balances a well-observed police investigation with Janine's efforts to cope as a working mum (she has three kids and another on the way, and a husband she's thrown out for playing around - in her bed).

Caroline Quentin is excellent in the part and the series is a good "police procedural". This first two-part series has the look of a pilot so we may see more episodes of the cases of DCI Lewis. ☆



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May 21

**ATSIC: What should replace it? Where's the national policy?**  
Olga Havnen, National Indigenous Leader  
Phil Glendenning, National Pres ANTAR

May 28

**Banks: serving whose interests?**  
Catherine Wolthuizen, Australian Consumers Association  
Evan Jones, Assoc Prof Political Economy Sydney Uni  
Chair Frank Stilwell, Prof Economics Sydney Uni

June 4

**Intelligence? Politics of deceit.  
What a labour government should do**  
Alison Broinowski, former diplomat, and author *About Face: Asian Accounts of Australia* and forthcoming *Howard's War*  
Tony Kevin SIEV X whistleblower, author of forthcoming book *The Sinking of SIEV X* and independent commentator on Australian foreign policy and national security issues

June 11

LONG WEEKEND

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# Capitalism & jobs – the fundamentals

The following article appeared in a recent issue of the *People's Weekly World*, the newspaper of the Communist Party USA. It was written by Pat Barile, a member of the National Board of the Party and deals with aspects of the question of jobs under capitalism. Its message is as valid for Australian workers as it for their US counterparts.

**The US working class is facing a new, powerful, ominous and ongoing crisis. Despite a profit recovery, it is suffering growing chronic unemployment.**

Alan Greenspan [head of the Federal Reserve], explaining why interest rates should not be raised at this time, put it like this: "The rate of layoffs is slowing ... but job growth is lagging."

The first half of Greenspan's statement, "the rate of layoffs is slowing", deals with the boom-bust capitalist cycle. The second half of Greenspan's statement,

trade policy with other countries is needed.

Both runaway jobs and jobs lost through productivity growth are vitally important. Both have a jackhammer impact on the well-being of the US working class. But there is a downside to focusing solely on runaway jobs.

It often leads to pitting workers against each other and fosters isolationist thinking that promotes dead-end and backward steps, as in the case of making Chinese workers the "enemy". This takes the focus off both the job export crisis and

through the application of new technology. Technology impacts on every phase of the economy, from heavy industry to the service sector. All are computerised, automated and in many cases dehumanised.

Technology continually improves. Billions are spent on research, both government and private. Today's technology makes new, qualitative breakthroughs. Each application of advanced technology at the point of production brings with it new layoffs.

Should this job elimination be accepted passively? Shouldn't it arouse the same passion and anger as exporting jobs? Shouldn't technology benefit the people, not profit-hungry corporations?

Technology – that's the real crisis facing the US working class. That's why more and more millions join the ranks of the long-term and permanently unemployed. Every week, on average, there are 350,000 first-time applicants for unemployment insurance benefits. That's the crux of the crisis. Look behind the headline statistics.

The unemployment rate isn't 5.7 per cent. There are millions more not included in the official tally, part of the surplus labour force no longer needed or wanted by capitalism. We know 308,000 "new" jobs are just election Bushmaths. When is that going to stop, Mr President!

Government reports for over 20 years show that US workers are the most productive in the world. Among the happiest thoughts running through the minds of Wall Streeters in this decade is the continuing rise in US workers' productivity, with no new hiring involved.

Greenspan's pronouncements are reports on the fundamental nature of capitalism and the current status of its health. He proposes



**Among the happiest thoughts running through the minds of Wall Streeters in this decade is the continuing rise in US workers' productivity, with no new hiring involved.**

"job growth is lagging", deals with the maturation of a key part of the commodity production process, the sophistication and ever-spreading use of technology, increasingly replacing workers.

There are those who blame this job-loss "recovery" only on the export of jobs by greedy US corporations. Their anger at the flagrant nose-thumbing abuse of trade agreements is wholly understandable. A struggle to set a sane, equitable

the job-killing use of more and more technology.

That's where the main battles of the working class have to be aimed, ideologically and practically.

## Job killers

Why pay low wages here or abroad if you can get away with paying no wages? The number of jobs that have been sent abroad is relatively small compared to the number of jobs lost permanently

remedies to keep it functioning so that it can produce maximum profits for the capitalists. He has no other function. Pure and simple, Greenspan is dealing with the capitalist system, how to preserve it, extend its life, expand its domestic and world control and keep the profits rolling in. It's "profits before people".

He is trying to apply as many economic tools as he can to keep capitalism afloat. Juggling interest rates is one of those tools. Key to his agenda for helping his capitalist master is maintaining a murderously high level of unemployment.

Every working class leader, trade union economist, Marxist, Communist, socialist, and others who understand the gravity of this job-killing process, has a big task: to explain to millions of workers how and why they are being ripped off and laid off, and to help them organise. When workers see how they are being ripped off, who is doing it and that they can do something about it, they will get rightfully angry and demand jobs and control over the wealth they create.

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## Enormous Israeli demonstration for Peace

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### Humanity and social justice

Amir Peretz, trade-union leader and head of the One People Party: "We should end the cruel occupation, we should disengage from Gaza, but that is not all; we should re-engage with Israeli society, with the values of humanity and social justice".

Radical groups, that were excluded from the speaker's platform, were busy among the enormous crowd, adding points which none of the speakers made.

"It will not end if you don't refuse!", said the Refuser Parents Forum as they collected signatures in support of the six conscientious objectors to military service.

Gush Shalom peace bloc leaflets were distributed: "It should be said in clear words: Arafat is the partner; an agreement without his signature has no value; he is the only one who can convince his people to a compromise".

People flocked around the Gush Shalom stall, taking up the "Truth Against Truth" leaflet and their stickers "Destruction of Rafah – War Crime".

The whole spectrum of moderate and radical groups was there: Women's Peace Coalition, the Geneva Initiative, the Communist Youth, the Ayalon-Nusseibeh plan, the Labour Youth, Ta'ayush, Yachad Youth, Socialist Workers League, MachsomWatch, the Working and Studying Youth and the Anarchists.

There was a forest of signs, official and unofficial, printed and hand-made:

- Evacuating settlements is choosing for life
- Get out of ALL the territories
- The Likud is disengaged from the people
- Elections Now! / Stop the Apartheid Wall
- The Likud is Against Peace and Against the Poor
- There is a partner
- Life is cheap – settlements are expensive
- Right or Left? History will

prove that we were RIGHT to have LEFT

- We buried our sons – save those still alive
- The life of our sons is more important than the settlements
- Dear settlers, come back home
- Cruel barbarian

Meanwhile, well-known Israeli academic Uri Avnery prophesies the defeat of both Bush and Sharon. He writes:

### This week starts the countdown to the end of the careers of George W. & Ariel Sharon

"The strange creature named Busharon is in serious trouble. The front half of this animal – George W. Bush – is having trouble with nude photos. Not only those of the hapless Iraqi prisoners, with the exuberant female soldier pointing at their genitals, but also of Bush himself, whose nakedness was exposed for all to see.

"The saviour of the Iraqi people

from a cruel tyrant, the gallant leader bestowing democracy on Mesopotamia, the representative of Western civilisation fighting against barbarism – has himself been exposed as a cruel barbarian.

"George Bush lost his world with the publication of these photos.

"If I may be permitted a prophecy: this week starts the countdown to the end of the career of George W.

"The animal's rear end – Ariel Sharon – is also in great trouble.

"This started with the rejection of the 'Unilateral Disengagement' plan by the Likud members, a tiny part of the population, manipulated by the settlers.

### Two terrible blows

"A week after the Likud referendum, two terrible blows were

delivered. An armored vehicle carrying a large quantity of explosives entered Gaza City in order to blow up buildings, and was hit by a roadside bomb planted by Palestinian guerillas. It exploded, tearing the six soldiers to pieces.

"The day after, the very same thing happened [again]. An armored personnel carrier full of explosives, which was sent there to blow up tunnels under the border, was hit by a Palestinian rocket and blew up with its five crew members.

"For the first time, the Israeli public saw the real picture of Gaza: not "terror", not "terrorists", but a classic guerilla war, with the whole population taking part in the struggle against the occupation forces.

"In such a struggle, we cannot win. One can kill Palestinians wholesale, destroy whole neighbourhoods, as is happening now. But one cannot win. The public is beginning to understand that.

"If I may be permitted a second prophecy: this week starts the countdown to the end of the career of Ariel Sharon." ☺



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