

Israel's terror campaign

Israeli troops unleashed a campaign of terror on the Palestinian residents of the Rafah refugee camp in the Gaza Strip last week, using tanks, helicopter gunships, missiles and bulldozers to demolish hundreds of Palestinian homes and render thousands of people homeless in a matter of days. At least 19 Palestinians, including several children, were killed on May 18 alone.

Eyewitnesses reported hundreds of panic-stricken residents gathering up whatever household belongings they could – clothes, blankets, mattresses, refrigerators, school books – and loading up horse-drawn carts, cars, and pick-ups to flee the advancing Israeli tanks and bulldozers.

“Two years ago, they tore down my first house on top of me”, one of the daughters of the a-Sha’ar family told a reporter from the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz*. “Now, the moment I heard them approaching, I fled.”

The Israeli military operations – including a horrible massacre of many children and teenagers at a protest demonstration on May 19 – provoked a worldwide outcry, with the notable exception of US President Bush, who refused to condemn the terror campaign.

Israeli officials claimed they needed to demolish hundreds of homes in the area to render a huge swath of land between the Gaza Strip and Egypt more secure against weapons smugglers.

However, the massive and indiscriminate destruction was widely denounced as an act of collective punishment against the Palestinian people in the wake of the deaths of 13 Israeli soldiers killed during

an earlier incursion. Thirty-two Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops in that same episode.

Peter Hansen, the commissioner-general of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, decried the terrible humanitarian crisis in Rafah, adding, “With these disproportionate military operations, Israel is in grave breach of international law. This collective punishment can do nothing to calm the situation in Gaza or enhance Israel’s own security.”

Jeff Halper, coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, said that attacks on non-combatants, collective punishment, and the demolition of homes constitute war crimes. He also said virtually all of the weapons and bulldozers used against the Palestinians are American-made.

Palestinian cabinet minister Saeb Erekat urgently called for the world to intercede and block the Israeli actions.

Earlier in the week, at least 120,000 Israelis attended a peace rally in Tel Aviv May 15 under the slogan, “Leave Gaza and start talking.” Rally speakers from widely different viewpoints called for a speedy exit from Gaza.

Meanwhile in a related development in the US, United for Peace and Justice and the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation called for a national week of action June 1-5 to demand that the Washington end its military, economic, and diplomatic support for Israel’s illegal military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.

Acknowledgements: People’s Weekly World Newspaper. ☼



Defiance: Palestinian youths throw stones at an Israeli bulldozer

BHP’s deadly greed

Five employees from a company accused of overseeing “plummeting” safety standards are fighting for their lives in Western Australian hospitals. A gas explosion at BHP Billiton’s Port Hedland briquette plant last week left four men suffering horrific burns and battling for survival after being airlifted to Perth by the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Then a teenage apprentice was critically injured at a Pilbara mine operated by the same multinational corporation.

BHP’s Billiton’s Port Hedland iron ore operation has been the focus of ongoing accusations of bad safety conditions which two weeks ago resulted in the death of AMWU activist, Cory Bentley, whose head was crushed in an early-morning accident.

After Mr Bentley’s death, management began removing bright red posters that urged employees to “aim high, move fast” and spelled out massive tonnage targets required by the company.

Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union Secretary, Jock

Ferguson, said BHP Billiton had put production before safety.

The claim was amplified by ACTU Pilbara organiser, Will Treacy, who said safety standards had “plummeted” since the company launched a 1999 campaign to de-unionise its Pilbara operations.

BHP Billiton lured nearly 40 percent of the workforce onto non-union AWAs (individual employment contracts) with massive inducements, worth up to \$100,000 to some employees.

“The thing with these contracts is that they inhibit people from speaking out on safety for fear of being hammered in performance reviews”, said Mr Tracey. “Anyone who speaks out on safety is labelled a trouble maker.”

A stunned Jock Ferguson repeated his call for an independent safety audit of the whole BHP Billiton operation.

One of the men burned at Port Hedland after hydrogen exploded during maintenance work, was said to have suffered severe burns to 90 percent of his body.

Three contract workers sustained “bad” burns to their faces and bodies in the same incident.

Their injuries sparked the *West Australian* newspaper to go digging and within 24 hours it was bringing readers stories from other workers who had been injured in explosions at Port Hedland.

Ken Te Wano told the paper he had been in an “almost identical” accident in July, 1999, while Mary Halls, the cousin of one of the injured workers, confirmed she, also, had been burned while working at the facility.

“I can’t believe this has happened twice to the same family, it is a really dangerous place”, she said.

The teenager hurt in the mine accident was being sustained by a life support system.

“BHP makes a massive amount out money out of its Pilbara operation but this senseless loss of lives has to stop”, said Mr Ferguson. “There has to be a change to its culture of production at all costs.” ☼

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The Guardian

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Stealing East Timor's oil

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) declared recently that East Timor will become a "failed state". This is the first indication that the Australian Government is considering doing what has already been done to the Solomon Islands – occupying it with military forces, sending in Australian officers to take over the economy, the government and judiciary of the country.

The take-over of the Solomon Islands was justified by using the "failed states" concept. States that are claimed to have "failed" and are to be taken-over by bigger powers are described as having weak institutions, corrupt governments, poor law and order, insufficient revenue, economic stagnation, disaffected and alienated youth, collapsed government services and a plentiful supply of guns.

Arguing that Australia had the right to intervene in the affairs of another sovereign country, John Howard declared that "the rest of the world expects Australia to shoulder a lot of the burden because this is our part of the world, this is our patch".

East Timor is one of the poorest countries in the world. Instead of giving genuine help to put the nation back on its feet, the Australian Government is complicit in stealing the one resource – oil – that East Timor has that could finance, schools, hospitals, develop the economy of the country and provide other services to the people. This course would soon lift the East Timorese people out of poverty.

Australia's Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, is the Australian Government's main hatchet-man. As long ago as March 2003, soon after East Timor had won its independence, Alexander Downer berated the East Timorese Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, telling him that "Your claims [for oil rights] go almost to Alice Springs. You can demand that for ever for all I care ... We are very tough. We will not care if you give information to the media. Let me give you a tutorial in politics – not a chance."

Here we see naked force being used against a small and weak country by a predator power, stuffed with arrogance. Downer is displaying the smash and grab mentality of a bandit. East Timorese officials said that Mr Howard and his ministers had treated Mr Alkatiri "as if he was a child" (*Far Eastern Economic Review* March 15, 2003).

It is not surprising that demonstrations are taking place against the Australian Embassy in Dili by disillusioned East Timorese who see for themselves that the Australian Government's attitude to East Timor is that of a robber baron, not that of a friend willing to help a neighbour. The friendship and goodwill towards Australia that had been generated at the time when Australian soldiers came to East Timor as part of a UN contingent to help expel the Indonesian occupiers is being thrown away.

Some time ago the United Nations established a mechanism for the settlement of disputes between nations over Law of the Sea matters. Knowing that its theft of East Timor's rightful oil-fields would not stand up in law, the Australian Government withdrew from the legal jurisdiction so that it would be free to do whatever it liked.

The intention of the government and the corporations to consolidate Australia's theft of East Timor oil is indicated by the plan to build an oil pipeline from the oilfields to Darwin and the construction there of an oil refinery. This move is being sold to Australians with the claim that this will create jobs for Australian workers. It is to be hoped that Australian trade unions see through this ploy and refuse to become complicit in the Howard Government's crime.

A genuinely friendly neighbour would extend assistance to establish an oil refinery in East Timor to refine the oil that is rightfully theirs. It would help to train East Timorese workers to operate the refinery and help them with all the technical matters involved. This course would also provide jobs for Australians and relieve East Timor's poverty.

The long struggle of the East Timorese people has made them much more politically aware and steered them in armed resistance as well. If Australia attempts to implement another occupation using the "failed states" doctrine it will not be Indonesian troops who would become the oppressors but Australian military forces.

PRESS FUND

It's growing ever more likely that the Howard Government will be turfed out in the coming federal elections. And the sooner the better! Their policies on health, education, housing and many other areas have led to the progressive impoverishment of many working people. *The Guardian* is fighting for the defeat of the Howard Government and its replacement by a government that is not beholden to the corporate sector but puts people first. The Press Fund is an important means by which *The Guardian* raises funds to keep up this fight. *The Guardian* has no corporate sponsors. It relies on its readers and supporters. So please dig deep, send us a contribution for the next issue. We offer our sincere thanks for the generous contributions of the following, this week:

Bert Appleton \$20, L Gowland \$60, C (Digger) Murphy \$10.

This week's total \$90. Progressive total \$4125.

Indigenous Australians face global gag

Statement made at the UN by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) NSW Metropolitan Zone Commissioner Cliff Foley

It has been my sad duty to inform the United Nations this week that Australia is marking this final year of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples by robbing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of their democratic right to be heard.

As ATSIC's representative at the third annual meeting of the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues I have informed delegates of our deep anger and regret that Indigenous Australians will no longer be represented by elected leaders at international forums. I have made recommendations to the UN Permanent Forum with regard to the effect of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States on Indigenous peoples.

I have also made recommendations on self-determination including that the UN Permanent Forum conduct technical workshops in the near future with regard to the self-determination of Indigenous peoples. ATSIC will continue to make further contributions to the Forum as the meeting progresses until the end of this week (last Friday).

When the UN Permanent Forum concludes on Friday in New York it will mark the end of ATSIC's strong and effective role as an international advocate as well as its official UN status as the true representatives of the Indigenous peoples of Australia.

These disgraceful events come only two years after the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan told the world's Indigenous peoples: "You have a home at the United Nations."

ATSIC is sorry to inform Mr Annan that this is no longer true. The Australian Government has evicted its nation's Indigenous peoples from the premises. It is very unfortunate that there will be at least some Australians in powerful positions who will welcome this development.

The same people who have applauded the proposed overnight elimination of self-determination for Indigenous peoples in this country will no doubt welcome the fact that they will also be gagged on the international stage.

These people have always hated the fact that Indigenous people, through ATSIC, have had a regular opportunity to tell the truth to the world about Australia's shameful treatment of its first peoples.

The Federal Government has also resented being made internationally accountable and continues to ignore the findings of the UN's Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that its native title laws are racist and discriminatory.

All right thinking Australians should be concerned that elected representatives of Aboriginal and



Photo: Avante Media Australia

Torres Strait Islander peoples will no longer be heard or seen in international forums.

This is a national and international shame which has been engineered by both the Federal Government and the Federal Opposition. Both major parties are committed to abolishing ATSIC and its democratically elected leadership although at least the Opposition is promising a new national Indigenous representative body.

The government's own \$1 million ATSIC Review acknowledged the widespread support among Indigenous Australians for ATSIC's international advocacy and its essential roles of informing all Australians about global human rights issues and providing a voice for our people overseas.

The Review also recognised ATSIC's contributions to international standard-setting with its involvement in the UN's Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its leading participation in key UN Indigenous forums.

We have already had a taste of the future of Indigenous Australia's representation overseas with the speech made by the Australian Delegation last week at the Permanent Forum.

The Australian Government Delegation presented the Permanent Forum with fictional claims of "steadily improving" education, income and employment out-

comes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and barely hinted at the reality of life for most Indigenous Australians.

This government has actively opposed international standard-setting on human rights and human rights monitoring for Indigenous people. It has proven this with its opposition to the continued operation of the UN's Working Group on Indigenous Peoples and the original text of the UN's Draft Declaration.

Now it expects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to cop having a government hostile to their interests deciding for them who will speak on their behalf both nationally and internationally.

We are witnessing a blatant attempt to turn back the clock about 30 years when Indigenous peoples all over the world were virtually invisible at the UN and other international forums. I have witnessed at this Forum the goodwill of many other governments towards the real self-determination of their Indigenous peoples.

The Australian Government is a glaring omission to this trend with Australia moving to put its Indigenous people back where it seems to want them – out of sight and out of mind. How many more years or decades will we have to wait before we find a similar level of goodwill from an Australian Prime Minister?

Why should the Australian people also be denied? ☪

Correction

In the letter "Iraq a reminder of Ireland", *Guardian* May 19, 2004, from Anne Duffy-Lindsay the reference to Jenny Drumm should have said Jimmy Drumm. Our apologies for the error which was a technical one.

The CPA on the WEB

For more information on the Communist Party of Australia, documents, *Guardian* archives, campaigns, links to other parties, papers and organisations and much more, visit our websites:

Central Committee: www.cpa.org.au

Blacktown Branch: www.agitprop.org.au

Maritime Branch: www.geocities.com/cpamaritime

Sydney Central Branch: www.red-sydney.com



ABC forced to fund witch-hunt against itself

Peter Mac

The management of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation has been directed to commission a private firm to monitor so-called political bias in ABC broadcasts.

The project has all the hallmarks of a witch-hunt. The firm in question will be assessing not only the words used in news and current affairs broadcasts until the coming federal elections, but also their mood, emphasis and intonation, in order to determine which side of politics benefits from the coverage. And funding for this gross and dangerous waste of public money will, of course, be drawn from the ever-diminishing resources of the national broadcaster itself.

The object of the exercise is clearly to ensure that the ABC offers no criticism of the Howard Government, its policies or its political alliances. It is also aimed at providing the Liberals with material to mount further attacks on the independence and even future of the public broadcaster, particularly if it were re-elected.

Until now an ABC "in house" team has monitored the ABC's performance with regard to allegations of bias. This arrangement was criticised by the former Minister for Communications, Richard Alston, after he twice failed to prove that the ABC had been guilty of bias in

its coverage of events leading up to the beginning of the war in Iraq last year.

Alston has since left parliamentary politics, but his obsession with muzzling and destroying the public broadcaster continues – as the ABC's *Media Watch* program described it – "beyond the political grave".

It was Alston who originally proposed the monitoring of the ABC by private consultants. His former chief of staff, David Quilty, revived the idea in conversations with an ABC Board member, Maurice Newman. Newman raised it with the other conservative Board members, including the government's latest appointee, Ron Brunton, and persuaded the Board as a whole to accept the idea. The Board then directed the ABC management to hire a private media monitoring company to do the job.

It has been estimated that the exercise will cost the Australian taxpayers \$200,000.

Privatisation by stealth

Mind you, the government seems intent on making other areas of the ABC turn a handsome profit, even if it means ditching some fundamental principles of the national broadcaster's charter of operations.

One such commitment is

children's television. The ABC's children's TV department was originally set up with the specific intention of developing quality children's programs. In this it has been highly successful, having won awards for its work in this field, such as the popular series *Playschool* and the internationally famous *Bananas in Pyjamas*.

But this, it seems, is not good enough for the Howard Government or the ABC Board. What is needed is commercial success, not quality broadcasting, they say! From now on ABC children's programs are to be provided by outside contractors, and decisions about program

selection are to be made not by the children's TV department on the basis of quality programming, but by the ABC's commercial arm, ABC Enterprises on the basis of profitability.

ABC Enterprises was originally set up as an adjunct to the other ABC departments in order to provide supplementary funding for ABC projects. However, it now appears to be calling the tune for children's TV, and the dominant principle of commercial profitability will undoubtedly be extended to other areas of ABC broadcasting as well.

And just to help them on their

way, the government has allocated ABC Enterprises a fat \$5 million for the purchase of children's programs this year.

The president of the community group Young Media Australia, Jane Roberts commented bitterly, "It is very worrying that ABC Enterprises now appears to be in charge of what is coming on to our screens for children and not the children's TV department, which has a wealth of experience and a proven track record when it comes to high quality, educational, and appropriate programs that parents and educators in this country have come to trust and love".



Dissident Australians tortured by US military

Peter Mac

Hard on the heels of revelations that Australian prisoner of war David Hicks was beaten by the US military comes the story of the torture of the other Australian detainee, Mamdouh Habib.

Both men are still being held by the US at the infamous (and illegally occupied) military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, after allegedly having been involved in the military resistance to the US invasion of Afghanistan by Taliban forces in 2001.

Habib was captured in Pakistan

and handed to the US military. With the complicity of Australian officials they subsequently flew him to Egypt, where for five months he was tortured by the use of electric shocks and beatings, in between being interrogated at gunpoint.

He was later taken to Guantanamo Bay, where he was subjected to beatings and pepper spray, and was dragged around the prison by chains attached to his feet. He was detained for long periods in solitary confinement, was subjected to the sort of sadistic humiliation for which the US military has now become notorious,

and became mentally unbalanced after being told that his wife and children had died.

Hicks was captured in Afghanistan by soldiers loyal to the Northern Alliance warlord group, which was then an ally of the US. While in captivity there, and later on a US naval vessel, he was repeatedly bound hand and foot and beaten by US personnel, was subjected to sleep deprivation and was kept shackled during interrogation sessions.

A fellow prisoner, Pakistan-born Shah Mohammed, said that because of his ethnic background

Hicks was given especially vicious treatment by US military personnel, who called him "the white boy". At Guantanamo Bay he was kept in solitary confinement for nine months.

The Howard Government has rejected claims of mistreatment against the two Australian prisoners. However, their stories have now been confirmed by fellow prisoners who have since been released. One prisoner recalled seeing Hicks undergoing beatings and interrogation, while another stated he witnessed Habib screaming in agony as he was dragged about the Guantanamo Bay prison by his shackled feet.

True to form, the government has dismissed these allegations. The Prime Minister John Howard retorted that the witness to Habib's mistreatment had been a Taliban supporter, and, by implication, was therefore incapable of telling the truth.

In point of fact, the witness, a Pakistani baker, was simply employed by the Taliban to bake them bread, and was rounded up with all the others when the Taliban compound was overrun. He was later released after being officially classified as posing "no threat to the United States military and its interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan".

In reply to Howard's statement, Hick's lawyer, Stephen Kenny, pointed out that the government had accepted the Bush administration's assurances that the Australians were being well looked after in Guantanamo Bay, but that the same administration had assured the government there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq prior to the US invasion. "I wish the govern-

ment had treated that story with a grain of salt", Kenny added.

The Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, also poured cold water on the reports of abuse of Hicks, on the grounds that he had not heard of these matters even though they occurred a considerable time ago.

However, the government is almost certain to have heard these reports, since Hicks claimed to have told representatives of the Australian Government and the Red Cross of his maltreatment, and a former British prisoner claims to have heard Habib tell Australian Embassy officials everything that had happened to him.

For his part, Kenny pointed out that as Downer would undoubtedly have been aware, under the terms of the agreement Kenny was forced to sign with the US military, he is unable to make public the details of the prisoners' allegations. Fortunately, the US authorities recently made a false statement about the case, which under the agreement Kenny is entitled to refute, thereby revealing the substance of Hicks' allegations.

There are certain to be more revelations about the sufferings of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere. According to witnesses, the interrogation sessions were filmed by the prison authorities.

Despite their long captivity, none of the Guantanamo Bay prisoners has been tried. But in a terrible twist, the unfolding evidence of the brutal American occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan has become part of a public trial, not of the Guantanamo Bay inmates, but of US imperialism itself and its monstrous activities in those long-suffering countries.

Pete's Corner



Bracks Government hits sick & elderly

Last week the Victorian Government robbed more than 10,000 frail, elderly, chronically and terminally ill aged care residents of nursing care, secretly changing its drugs and poisons regulations to make Victorian hostels exempt from the laws that require all other health facilities to ensure that dangerous medications are administered only by a registered nurse.

This means elderly hostel residents suffering from a complex combination of chronic and terminal illnesses and diseases will be able to receive their care and medications from people with no qualifications.

A recent Federal Court ruling

the safe and proper level of care for elderly Victorians regardless of whether they live in a hostel or a nursing home.

In 1997 the Government determined that nursing homes were a health service and governed by the drugs and poisons regulations because they cared for high care residents, and that hostels were exempt because they solely cared for low care residents.

"Victorian baby boomers better not have high hopes about the standard of aged care they expect to receive when they can't live at home any more because the Bracks Government is about to lower

tinence, cancer, asthma, arthritis, diabetes, Parkinson's disease and strokes.

"The government's changes will mean a nursing home resident, with one or a combination of these conditions, will receive medication and drugs from a registered nurse, but the same resident living in a hostel will receive the same dangerous medications such as insulin, morphine, pethidine, digoxin from someone with no qualifications.

"A resident with a combination of these conditions could need up to 11 tablets a day. These are dangerous medications and often require an assessment of a resident's vital signs before they are given – a mistake or a missed vital sign can be fatal.

"The Federal Court has recognised that high care residents live in hostels, but the State Government is still refusing to recognise that high care hostel residents need the same nursing care as high care nursing home residents."

The ANF accuses the government of abandoning its duty of care to thousands of elderly residents with complex chronic and terminal illnesses and says Victorian nurses will not stand by, "and watch it happen and neither will the voting community".

The Bracks Government's



plan to make it legal for unqualified staff to give residents like Martha Brown their medications is dangerous and puts the lives of the Victorian elderly at risk: 87-year-old Martha Brown lives in a Victorian aged care hostel. Martha has dementia, arthritis, diabetes and she has suffered from two strokes in the past six months. She

requires 11 tablets and four insulin injections every day. Martha's medical and health conditions are typical of a high care resident living in a Victorian aged care hostel or nursing home.

Do you think Martha should be cared for by a registered nurse? The Bracks Government doesn't think so. ☘

high care hostel residents need the same nursing care as high care nursing home residents

recognised that many Victorian aged care hostel residents suffer from the same complex chronic illnesses as nursing home residents and require nursing care. The court recognised that aged care hostels should be considered a "health service" which require that only registered nurses administer dangerous medications.

Victorian nurses are demanding the Bracks Government guarantee

the bar on the very people who can't lobby for change", warned Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) State Branch Secretary Lisa Fitzpatrick.

"A lot has changed over the last seven years and hostels now also care for elderly residents with a complex range of illnesses including dementia, mental illness, heart conditions, kidney failure, incon-

LABOUR NOTES

Unions around Australia have slammed a move by Federal Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews to abolish the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC). The commission, which is made up of employer, union and government representatives, co-ordinates campaigns and researches ways of preventing workplace deaths. "With over 50 construction deaths per year, our industry needs stronger health and safety standards and more investment, not less", says Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) Construction National Secretary John Sutton. The Minister's announcement would see the commission become nothing more than a "ministerial advisory group" within the Department of Workplace Relations. "To suggest that the work on health and safety is done and can be relegated to a small committee is an insult to those who have been injured or died on the job", Victorian Trades Hall Council Secretary Leigh Hubbard said.

Community workers are rallying in support of a sacked colleague after she complained about her boss' bullying at a Tweed Heads Family Centre. Staff there have instituted a range of work bans and, along with concerned community members, rallied outside the Centre last Friday to send a clear message to management to reinstate the employee and sack the boss. The boss responded to their action by threatening to hold back wages of the centre's employees. "All workers have a right to raise concerns with management without fearing reprisals and the boss' actions, in this case, are a clear breach of power", Australian Services Union (ASU) President Sally McManus said.

The Senate Building and Construction Inquiry held three days of public hearings in Melbourne last week and questioned two union secretaries, Martin Kingham and Tom Watson, who had had a number of adverse findings against them from the Cole Royal Commission. Both union officials pointed out to the inquiry that, even though there had been adverse findings in the Commission, they had never been asked by Terence Cole (Chair of the Commission) anyone else for their side of the story. This latest inquiry was set up to examine the proposed *Building and Construction Industry Improvement Bill 2003* arising out of the Royal Commission. If the bill is passed through Federal Parliament, it will result in the outlawing of pattern bargaining, and significantly weaken the rights of unions to represent workers in the construction industry. It could also open the way for similar legislation to be implemented in other industries. To find out how you can stop this legislation log on to www.cfmeu.asn.au/construction/campaigns.

Floundering Mitsubishi throws 1000 Adelaide workers overboard

Bob Briton

A very poorly kept "secret" became official last Friday when Mitsubishi Motors Corporation (MMC) chief executive Yoichiro Okazaki announced that Adelaide's Lonsdale engine assembly plant would be closed in 18 months time. Details of the decision had already appeared in *The Advertiser* that morning, dressed up as informed speculation.

SA Treasurer Kevin Foley was going along with it. Asked whether he felt whether one of the two Mitsubishi plants in Adelaide might close, he said: "I am not going to begin to go there. It is too important to be speculating and I don't want to jeopardise the final decision."

As if they were listening! In the same announcement, Mr Okazaki

said that MMC's global workforce would be reduced from 26,400 to 18,800. The job cuts were made in response to the corporation's massive \$14 billion debt. MMC has suffered declining sales in recent years and been the subject of a series of scandals to do with vehicle defects, recalls and cover-ups.

As a result of these management failures, 650 local workers will be out of work in the near future. Initial optimism that some of the workers could take up positions in the Tonsley Park vehicle assembly plant has been dampened by a further announcement by Mitsubishi Motors Australia (MMA) President Tom Phillips over the weekend that another 350 jobs would be going from MMA's remaining Adelaide plant.

Tough talk from the State and Federal Governments about

demanding their previous financial incentives back from MMC has died away. Federal Finance Minister Nick Minchin has set the new tone. "This should be seen as a good news day", he said. \$40 million of Federal money is now on offer for any operator wanting to take over the Lonsdale site.

Good news? The government is prepared to throw another \$40 million at another private corporation to do the same thing further down the track. It might be good news if the government directed taxpayer money (taxes on workers' wages) into taking over the plants and demanding returns for previous handouts.

In other news, Mr Phillips has denied as "rubbish" reports coming from Japan that the Tonsley Park plant may itself be closed in 2012. ☘

NSW ALP Govt MPs set to break their own workers' strike

Greens MP and Industrial Relations spokesperson Lee Rhiannon has called on Labor members of parliament to refuse to accept mail deliveries by other services, as State Mail Service workers launch industrial action to halt deliveries.

The State Mail Service has responsibility for the delivery of all Government papers, including sensitive documents such as Higher School Certificate (HSC) Exams and police documents.

"All MPs and parliamentary staff have just received a letter telling us that industrial action has gone ahead and no more deliveries will take place from the State Mail Service", said Ms Rhiannon.

"This strike is a result of

State Government's plans to sell off its mail and printing division, which currently operates out of the Department of Commerce*.

"MPs were notified in an email today (May 19) that alternative arrangements are being made through Australia Post to deliver any mail the State Mail Service won't.

"Not only is this Labor Government hell-bent on privatising public assets, but it also has no qualms about breaking a strike by its own workers.

"What leg do workers have to stand on now that the Minister for Commerce, Mr Della Bosca is also the Minister for Industrial Relations? The only hope is for all Government MP's to refuse to stand

up to this attack on workers and to not accept any affected mail.

"The three Greens MPs are contacting all State Labor MPs asking them to oppose the privatisation of the State Mail Service and to refuse deliveries by anyone other than the Service's own workers", said Ms Rhiannon.

* The Department of Commerce was the result of a merger after the 2003 State Election of the former Department of Industrial Relations, Information Technology, Fair Trading and Public Works. When the Department merged the new Director-General, Kate McKenzie said, "the recent changes will not affect any existing initiatives or services..." ☘

Fahrenheit 9/11 wins top prize in Cannes

From Michael Moore

Sunday, May 23, 2004

Friends,
Hello from Cannes! I'm sure by now many of you have heard the good news – *Fahrenheit 9/11* has won the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival. It is the first time in nearly 50 years a documentary has won the Palme d'Or (the Golden Palm).

Myself and 26 members of our crew are here in Cannes and we are in a state of shock. None of us expected this. First came the critics' reviews on Monday (*The New York Times* called it my best film

back home and show you all this wonderfully powerful film we've made.

No, we still don't have a distributor in America as I write this but after winning the world's top film prize I'd give it about one more day (if that) before we have someone brave enough (and smart enough) to show Americans what the world can already see (Albania, this week, became the final country – other than the US – to sign on with a distributor).

I am still hoping for a July release (4th of July weekend?) both

the film raises – namely, that they are a pack of liars and the American people are on to them. And, if the early screenings of *Fahrenheit 9/11* are any indication, those who see this movie will never view the Bush administration in the same way again.

Even if you already can't stomach George W Bush & Co, I think this movie will take you to places you haven't gone before, with laughter and with tears.

Thanks everyone for your support.

Yours,

Michael Moore

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P.S. When you hear the wackos on Fox News and elsewhere refer to this prize as coming from "the French", please know that of the nine members of the Festival jury, only ONE was French. Nearly half the jury (four) were Americans and the President of the jury was an American (Quentin Tarantino). But this fact won't stop the O'Reillys or the Lenos or the Limbaughs from attacking the French and me because, well, that's how their simple minds function. ☺



Michael Moore takes the prize at Cannes

Those who see this movie will never view the Bush administration in the same way again.

ever), then the audience reaction at our premiere (a 20-minute standing ovation, a new all-time record for the festival), the International Federation of Film Critics Award on Friday, and then the best film prize last night. It's all been an incredible week for us and I can't wait to get

in the US and around the world.

I fully expect the right wing and the Republican Party to come at me and this film with everything they've got. They will try, as they have unsuccessfully in the past, to attack me personally because they cannot win the debate on the issues

NSW teachers strike after govt interference

Teachers walked out of schools across NSW last week as Premier Bob Carr was accused of "contempt" and "blatant political interference" by trying to "intimidate" the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC). The allegations flew after the State Government successfully moved to re-open a wage case that finished six months ago.

The NSW Teachers' Federation has since announced a campaign of further industrial action, including two 24-hour strikes on May 27 and June 2.

The IRC announced its decision to admit the government's "new material" in the teachers' salaries case last Friday, even though hearings had concluded on the December 19, 2003.

At the same time the IRC acknowledged that a judgement on the case had been "imminent". The IRC decision was widely expected to have been favourable to teachers who have waged a long-running campaign to improve pay and conditions in public schools.

The "new material" turned out to be, according to Government's Counsel, simply "numbers". He argued that the state budget had deteriorated from a \$303m surplus to a \$300m deficit.

The Federation argued that reopening the case raised the issue of prejudice.

"If this information on the state's finances were to be accepted, further information could be presented about any other aspect of

the case, including work value and teacher supply, for example.

"This is the Pandora's Box that the IRC is being asked to open."

Unions have vowed to draw a "line in the sand" over the stand-off, warning Premier Carr that continued interference in IRC deliberations will reap a backlash against his government.

Labor Council Secretary John Robertson said workers would not stand back and watch the IRC compromised by veiled threats or outright pressure from politicians.

"The IRC is due to hear a number of important Work Value cases this year – involving nurses, teachers, fire fighters and general public servants", said Robertson. "In all these cases the government has a vested interest in the outcomes.

"I have no doubt the Premier has sought to intimidate the Commission. This from a Premier who says NSW has the best IR system in the country and he supports the role of the independent umpire.

"These threats are verging on contempt."

Acknowledgement to *Workers Online* ☺

SA Nurses call for urgent government intervention

South Australian Health Minister Lea Stevens and Industrial Relations Minister Michael Wright are being urged to urgently intervene in the nurses' enterprise bargaining dispute to avoid an escalation of industrial action.

Nurses and midwives have imposed a series of low level bans across all public hospitals in protest against the government's failure to a satisfactory pay and conditions deal.

Australian Nursing Federation Secretary Lee Thomas said the government's staffing offer was worse than existing arrangements which were agreed to in 2002.

"Nurses and midwives will not put patient care in jeopardy, and will not sign off on an agreement which places patients at risk", said Ms Thomas.

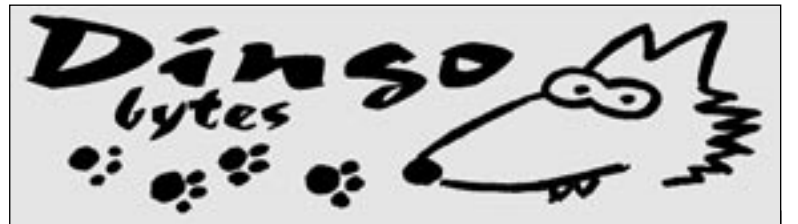
She said the Government has also failed to adequately deal with recruitment and retention issues

and nurses needed both ministers to "take a hands on role in resolving the dispute in a timely and fair manner".

"It is in no-one's interest for industrial action to escalate, but nurses have made it very clear that they will no longer tolerate inaction from the Government", said Ms Thomas.

"Nursing shortages are already critical and require urgent attention. This claim is about ensuring we not only attract people in nursing, but also stop the current exodus of highly skilled nurses out of the profession.

"We are currently losing 400-500 nurses a year from the profession. If the current trend continues figures suggest there will be a nursing shortfall of 1500 by 2006, which equates to the current nursing complement at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, said Ms Thomas. ☺



Big tobacco is at it again (did they ever stop?). This time it's a pushy campaign to stop a plan to put graphic photos on cigarette packets. British American Tobacco Australia has written to all government backbenchers saying the new warnings – depicting diseased mouths and eyes – will do nothing to reduce the smoking rate. Their behaviour is somewhat at odds with that claim.

The Howard Government has launched a new campaign to sell Australia as a tourist destination (they've already sold off every thing that rings and whistles). Called Brand Australia with the slogan "Australia: a different light", it's a marketing ploy aimed at tourists who see holidays as "an opportunity for self-development". Dingo wonders if the itinerary includes visits to remote Aboriginal communities who are forced to live in third world conditions, and to asylum seeker prison camps. That'd be seeing the place in a different light.

Australia's orchestras are on the chopping block. The Government has appointed hatchet man James Strong, who headed the privatised national airline Qantas, to run an inquiry into their funding. A look at Strong's CV gives an idea of what's in store for the nation's six orchestras: chairman of Woolworths, Insurance Australia, the Rip Curl clothing company and the Australia Business Arts Foundation, a body set up by the Government so it could abandon funding of the arts and hand them over to the parasitic vagaries of that corporate largesse known as philanthropy. Like the obedient little white ant that he is, Strong is also the chair of the Sydney Theatre Company and sits on the board of Opera Australia.

On May 15 the families and friends and others concerned about Australia's draconian new arrest and detention terror laws gathered for a rally at Goulburn Jail, south of Sydney, to demand entry and access to people charged with terrorist offences. The prisoners are being kept in the jail's High Risk Management Unit. In a statement the protesters said, "Following the exposure of the torture of such prisoners in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay by Australia's coalition partners, the inference is clear that breaches of UN standards are happening here too". For more info contact Brett Collins 0438 705 003.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is US Secretary of State, Colin Powell. In February 2003 Powell told the UN in relation to Iraq's alleged biological weapons factories: "Every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. There can be no doubt that Saddam Hussein has biological weapons and the capability to use them." The information came from the brother of an Iraqi defector. The informer's code name was Curve Ball who it turned out was lying to the CIA. Well, that's the story anyway. Tens of thousands of lives and an occupation later and Powell last week described the information as "inaccurate and wrong, and in some cases deliberately misleading". And Curve Ball even provided incontrovertible proof – he did some drawings of the alleged laboratories.

Sydney
Stop Coke from killing trade unions in Colombia

Coca Killer

Worldwide day of boycott against Coca Cola.

Come and protest!
Come and help us!

71 Circular Quay East
Thursday 22 July
11.30 am

Children in detention: A Last Resort?

HREOC report condemns treatment of asylum seekers

Bob Briton

Since September 11, 2001, Australians have been subjected to a vastly increased amount of propaganda about the supposed threat that asylum seekers pose to the Australian community. A new layer of anxiety about terrorism was added to the perennial warnings from conservative governments and a mostly compliant media about waves of uninvited aliens arriving from the north to take "our" jobs and change "our" culture.

For a long time this has proven to be a potent electoral brew for the Coalition parties. The "War on Terror" provided a suitable pretext for the Pacific Solution of warehousing the refugees fleeing intolerable conditions in Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. Though it sounds ludicrous now, it was argued that Australia must be protected from the arrival of terrorist "sleepers" aboard the wretched, overcrowded fishing boats from Indonesia. This was used to suppress a fuller public debate and a more sympathetic response that might have been possible.

Another aim and consequence of the policies and the media war was the destruction of the electoral base of the then thriving One Nation party. The crude arguments being made by the Howard Government in support of being "tough on boat people" were the same as those the more overt racists advanced for being "tough on immigration". Many credited Howard's infamous "we will decide" speech for his government's re-election in 2001.

Lies exposed

However, times appear to be changing. The public, once very open to these anti-human ideas, has become more sceptical. The glaring absence of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq has, no doubt, contributed to this scepticism. The spectacle of US and other forces supposedly opening the way to the establishment of democratic institutions with their violent and lewd abuse of prisoners has also fuelled the doubts.

Over the years, braver media voices have spoken out. Books about the misguided policy of detaining asylum seekers and its shocking consequences have appeared on the bookshelves – Tom Mann's *Desert Sorrow* and Father Frank Brennan's *Tampering with Asylum* among them.

It was inevitable, too, that we would get to know the people caught in Australia's bristling, unwelcoming defences and grow to like them. TV audiences were introduced to an unassuming young Afghan former detainee when SBS broadcast the documentary *Molly and Mobarak* earlier this month.

Findings damning

Condemnation of government policy has now reached the official level. Two weeks ago the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) released the results of its extensive two-year investigations with the *National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention Report – A Last Resort?*

The Commission's stated goal is to "foster greater understanding and protection of human rights in Australia and to address the human rights issues facing a broad range of individuals and groups". It is an independent statutory authority of the government and in this instance it was examining the most outrageous and indefensible of the many violations of the human rights of the asylum seekers in detention.

Even so, few would have predicted such a comprehensive condemnation of the Federal Government in its findings or such a radical departure from its policies in the recommendations from the HREOC. The Commission found that the government's mandatory detention policy violates the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which stipulates that detention of children should only be considered as "a last resort" and for the "shortest possible time".

The report found that the children in immigration detention have

immediately, then their release from detention centres or residential housing projects should take place no more than four weeks after the tabling of the report. It also recommended changes to relevant legislation to reflect a presumption against the detention of children.

Other recommendations deal with the need for the granting of humanitarian and "bridging" visas for children waiting for their cases to be assessed. There was a lot of criticism of the negative psychological effects on detainees released on the restrictive Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs). There was a call for standards of treatment of children in detention to be codified and a further review of the impact on children of legislation that has created "excised offshore places" and the "Pacific Solution".

In fact there was not a single bouquet in the report for any aspect of the government's odious policy of mandatory detention of children or, for that matter, of mandatory detention of asylum seekers in general.

It should be noted that these findings and recommendations were not plucked out of the air. The report was the result of a two-year inquiry, which took 346 submissions (including 64 confidential ones) from a substantial number of professional groups including lawyers, doctors, nurses, psychologists, social workers and education specialists.

Of course, the Commonwealth and state governments contributed.



Protesting children at the Nauru Detention Centre

Criminal conditions

The statistics in *Last Resort?* reveal just how contemptuous the Commonwealth has been of the needs of these children. For example, at Woomera during 2000,

after eventually being assessed as refugees.

It is when the statistics give way to individual cases that the report's conclusions become most compelling. Australians may have already seen details of some of these cases in the media over the years. To see the examples brought together in the HREOC report is quite confronting.

In 2001, a six-year-old child stopped, eating, drinking, talking and sleeping after seeing an adult detainee attempt suicide. In May 2002, a psychiatrist diagnosed a 13-year-old boy and an 11-year-old girl in a remote centre as suffering from a major depressive disorder. They had been in detention for over a year. They are still in detention!

Another child with severe cerebral palsy was detained for two years at Curtin and 12 months at the Baxter Centre before being released. His mother had such difficulty caring for him that, after 16 months, she handed him over to ACM to be looked after. Once she got the help she needed, she resumed care of her child. However, for seven months the child was wheeled around in a baby's pram because no suitable wheelchair was provided.

Suffering was avoidable

HREOC shows that all of this suffering was avoidable – even

Children in immigration detention

Nauru	70
Villawood	36
Port Augusta HP	18
Community detention (e.g. foster care)	17
Christmas Island	16
Baxter, SA	11
Maribyrnong, VIC	2
Port Hedland, WA	0
Perth, WA	0
Total:	170

(children in immigration detention)

Source: DIMIA, Senate, NauruWire

The longest period in detention for a child was five years, five months and 20 days. The child and his mother were released from Port Hedland in May 2000 after eventually being assessed as refugees.

suffered numerous and repeated breaches of their human rights. The Commonwealth has failed to protect the mental health of children, to provide adequate health care and education, failed to protect unaccompanied children or meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Release the children immediately

Among the major recommendations was the immediate release of children and their parents into the community or home-based detention. If this were not done

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) gave evidence as did present and past staff of Australasian Correctional Management (ACM) – the corporation that administers the detention centres for the government.

Inquiry staff visited ALL the immigration detention facilities and interviewed 112 children and their parents. There were 29 focus groups involving about 200 children, parents and other former detainees. The Inquiry held 61 public sessions involving 105 witnesses and 24 confidential sessions with 50 witnesses. It heard oral submissions from the Department and ACM in December 2002 and provided them with opportunities to respond to the initial findings and a second draft.

Nobody has dared to suggest that the report is light on evidence or based on a narrow range of predictably "anti-government" sources. Neither can it be claimed that the report deals with "ancient history". While numbers are down from the shamefully high figure of 842 in 2001, there are still 173 children in immigration detention in facilities throughout Australia and on Nauru and Christmas Island.

despite the best efforts of the overwhelmed teaching staff, children received only between one and three hours of teaching per day. In 2001 there were no more than five staff to meet the needs of 456 children. By contrast there is one teacher for every 25 to 30 children in Australian primary schools. Even today, not all detainee children have access to regular schools.

From January to June 2002, there were 760 major incidents recorded by the Department in the centres involving 1149 detainees. Of these, 321 were alleged, actual or attempted assaults (19 involved children), 174 involved self-harm (25 involved children) and about 30 per cent involved contraband, damage to property, disturbances, escapes and protests. No special measures were taken to protect children from the effects of these incidents.

For the record, the average period of detention for a child expanded from one year, three months and 17 days at the beginning of 2003 to one year, eight months and 11 days by year's end. The longest period in detention for a child was five years, five months and 20 days. The child and his mother were released from Port Hedland in May 2000

Sydney

CHILOUT FUNDRAISER

The architect of the HREOC's National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention comes to talk to Children Out Of Detention! Join us for an overview of the HREOC Inquiry and its report 'A Last Resort?' with Human Rights Commissioner, Dr Sev Ozdowski at our fundraiser on Monday 31st May.

6.30pm for a screening of *Punished not Protected*

7.30pm for Dr Ozdowski's address

a capella entertainment, refreshments and a glass of wine

NSW Nurses Association

43 Australia St, Camperdown, Sydney

Cost: \$10

"Don't steal our future!"

East Timor independence celebrations overshadowed by resource theft

Bob Briton

Last Thursday was the second anniversary of the declaration of independence of the Democratic Republic of East Timor (or Timor Leste). The occasion was marked with a ceremony at the UN helicopter compound in the capital of Dili, where military and policing control over the country was handed over to the East Timor Government. Judging by the speeches and the displays put on for senior UN officials, diplomats and government representatives, everything would appear to be in order and going to plan.

However, in major Australian cities and in Dili itself the occasion was most notable for the protests against the actions of the Australian Government in denying the poorest country in the region its proper share of the income from its offshore oil and gas resources.

"Under current revenue sharing arrangements, Australia takes 60 percent of revenues from oil and gas resources closer to East Timor than to Australia – resources which under international law should belong entirely to East Timor", Dan Nicholson of the Timor Sea Justice Campaign, told the Melbourne gathering.

Mr Nicholson concluded, "Today, instead of celebrating East Timor's independence, we are protesting against an Australian government that is stealing East Timor's future".

Since the middle of April there have been protests outside the Australian Embassy in Dili involving thousands of East Timorese. Their regular chants have included: "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie – Oil Oil Oil!" and "Don't steal our future!"

Relations between the governments of the two countries are now strained. Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer has accused the East Timorese government of stirring up sympathy in Australia for the economic plight of the new nation and its position on the disputed maritime border between the countries. A leaked transcript of a meeting between Downer and East Timor PM Mari

Alkitiri records the Foreign Minister laying down the law in his best deputy sheriff style:

"We are very tough. We will not care if you give information to the media. Let me give you a tutorial in politics!"

The pressures are causing cracks to appear in the government of East Timor. The more pro-globalisation Foreign Minister Ramos Horta has had an open disagreement with President Xanana Gusmao over an interview the head of state did with a Portuguese newspaper. In the piece, Gusmao criticised Australia's behaviour in usurping control of most of East Timor's offshore oil and gas resources. "I have told him I do not agree with what has been said

However, at issue in the maritime border dispute are royalties estimated at between \$10 billion and \$20 billion over the next 30 years. Australia has sucked in roughly \$2.1 billion from royalties on the oil and gas in question since 1999. With its fair share of these funds, East Timor could meet the needs of its people and build some financial security. Without it, as Oxfam's policy director James Ensor points out, the country runs the risk of joining the ranks of "failed states" in the region.

In its treatment of East Timor, Australia appears to be following its pattern of behaviour of setting its less powerful neighbours up for "failure" and then intervening to "rescue" them on terms that are

Foreign Minister Ali Alitas toasted a deal to share out the oil and gas resources off the coast of Timor from the comfort of a jet flying high above the stolen territory.

In 2002, the Australian Government withdrew from UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) negotiations in the International Court of Justice. In circumstances like those involving Australia and East Timor, UNCLOS lays down that the border of the states should be the median line drawn halfway between them.

Such an arrangement would see East Timor in charge of 90 per cent of the Sea's oil and gas. As it stands, it gets 90 per cent of the royalties from the Bayu Undan field within the Joint Petroleum Development Area (JPDA) described in the Timor Sea Treaty of 2002. However, the largest fields by far – Laminaria and Greater Sunrise – are located outside the JPDA and from these East Timor will only get 20 percent of the royalties on the Greater Sunrise gas field. It should be noted that the Laminaria field is totally within East Timor's half of the Timor Sea as are most of the Sunrise and Troubadour fields.

East Timor has refused to ratify the Timor Sea Treaty. It wants Australia to return to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice and UNCLOS for the adjudication of the maritime boundary. It wants the royalties from the fields outside the JPDA to be held in trust (escrow) until the dispute is finalised. The East Timorese are also seeking monthly meetings with Australian Government representatives to move the issues along. At present Australia will only agree to meetings every six months.

The international solidarity movement with East Timor supports these calls. In Australia, we could add the demand that Mark Latham and the Parliamentary Labor Party should drop its support for the government's bullying stand and its endorsement of the renewed military co-operation with KOPASSUS – the "elite" section of the Indonesian military which is surely the biggest terrorist organisation in the region. ✪

Timor's control of the oilfields means the difference between a future of self-sufficiency or as a beggar state.

publicly... I do not believe in demagogic statements whipping up people's sentiments in relation to Australia", Horta told the media.

Gusmao is on record as saying that Timor's control of the oilfields means the difference between a future of self-sufficiency or as a beggar state. So far, the republic is in the latter category. A meeting in Dili of 26 donor nations agreed last week to reduce East Timor's budget deficit of \$43.8 million. Even with this deficit, the Government was making scarcely any progress in the task of overcoming poverty, the rebuilding of destroyed infrastructure or the provision of basic services in the country.

Japan is East Timor's largest donor followed by Australia. In last week's Federal Budget, \$40 million was earmarked for aid to our northern neighbour from tax monies contributed mostly by Australia's wage and salary earners. Since 1999, \$234 million has been given in aid in total.

advantageous to the interests of Australian corporations.

The current dispute has its origins in Australia's relations with and support for the brutal Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia. In 1972, Australia obtained an agreement from Indonesia that the end of the continental shelf to our north west would be the boundary between Australia and Timor even though the border is only 60 km from the coast of East Timor.

On the eve of Indonesia's invasion in 1975, Australia's then ambassador in Jakarta, Richard Woolcroft, advised the Whitlam Government that Indonesia would be easier to deal with over the natural resources in the Timor Sea than the government of the newly-independent, former Portuguese colony of East Timor. Australia stood by and 24 years of genocidal occupation by Indonesia's military followed.

In 1989 Labor Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and Indonesian

under existing legislation. Though laws demanding mandatory detention while awaiting a visa or deportation have been on the statute books since 1992, the Minister has had the power to declare any place in the community a "place of detention" since 1994. All unaccompanied children could have been placed in foster homes using these provisions. All other children and their parents could also have been placed in the community under certain conditions.

However, only two families have ever been transferred to "home-based detention". It was not until detainees went on a hunger strike, sewed their lips together and entered into a suicide pact in January 2002 that about 20 unaccompanied children were transferred to foster home "detention" in Adelaide.

After the Tampa incident such humane acts were off the political agenda. Racism and militarism were being promoted ahead of compassion. Now, it seems, the pathetic excuses advanced for mandatory detention are falling away as quickly as the justifications for the war on Iraq. The "security" arguments have evaporated.

Last week – three years after Howard vowed that none of the desperate souls aboard the Tampa would ever be allowed into the country – the last of the detainees from the Norwegian freighter was found to be a refugee and not a "queue-jumper" or an "illegal" after all. Over the years, 93 per cent of all detainees have been found to be similarly deserving of refugee status.

Now, Minister Amanda Vanstone is left with only one defence: the "message" that the release of children and their parents would send to the people smugglers. Even this point is sounding lame. Cara Minns of Peshurst wrote for most Australians in her letter to the Editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald* last week:

"Release the children from detention, Senator Vanstone. I don't care what message it sends. If these children are being sacrificed to achieve my security, then the price is too high to pay. Release them all and release them now." ✪



Adelaide protest

"Former Military Officers Speak"

On May 9, the anniversary of the anti-fascist victory of the people in Europe 59 years ago, the "Former Military Officers Speak" initiative was launched with the publication of an appeal against NATO and in defence of peace. This initiative took place in the framework of the "Peace Olympics" campaign launched by the Greek peace movement (EEDYE) and supported by the World Peace Council. The appeal (see below) has already been endorsed by more than 320 retired officers, many of them high ranking, from different countries including Greece, the Russian Federation, Germany, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Portugal, Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

APPEAL: "FORMER MILITARY OFFICERS SPEAK"

We have served in our countries' armed forces, in which we underwent training and prepared for warfare for decades. We therefore know well what force can be – and is – used to impose the will of the stronger over others. Many of us have seen from within the role played by offensive coalitions such as NATO. We clearly see the distortions caused in the armed forces by the new doctrines and by the deployment of troops outside of their own countries into war zones as imposed by the regulators of the

new world order. After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact we had hoped that NATO would also dissolve and that the huge allocations for armaments would be channelled into healthcare, welfare, education and to meet other needs of our peoples.

Out of love for our homelands, for civilisation and the history of countries, and out of deep belief in the ideals of freedom and justice, aware that without independence and peace the peoples cannot make progress,

We Profess Our Concern And Disagreement

- With the wars being unleashed by the leaderships of the USA and its allies on peoples and states that refuse subservience and the exploitation of their countries' wealth and their own labour by foreigners.

- With our governments' support for the aggressors, the provision of facilities, the participation in operations against third parties to confront supposed threats that exist, are invented or are provoked by the attackers.

- With the successive arms build-ups which are supposedly necessary in order to keep stocks up to date, whereas they actually serve the needs of the arms manufacturers, traders and middlemen and are for the implementation of the new doctrines and missions of the USA and NATO within the framework of their plans for global domination.

- With the way our peoples' human rights and liberties being violated and crushed through legislation and action imposed on them. We note that the human rights of peoples are being crushed in those countries where their leaders are terrorising the entire world by means of the operations and wars they unleash.

- With the centrally controlled reorganising of the armed forces of NATO member-countries, which is not being undertaken in order to improve their own defence but rather so that the NATO administration, that is the US power team, can manage and exploit these forces. It is not accidental that the same thing is gradually happening with the armed forces of the countries in the



Communists to support secular govt in India

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) met in New Delhi on May 16-17, following the national parliamentary elections. The following is an abridged text of a statement on the elections issued by the CC meeting:

Election Victory

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) hailed the verdict of the Indian people in the 14th Lok Sabha elections. The BJP and its allies have been decisively defeated. The verdict of the people is against the communal platform assiduously propagated by the RSS-BJP combine, its brazen pursuit of pro-rich, pro-big business economic policies and its abject capitulation to the US hegemonic designs.

This is a mandate given against the naked policies of liberalisation and privatisation which have harmed the livelihood of farmers, the rural poor and the common people.

The defeat of the BJP is a victory for the secular, democratic and Left forces. Many parties and forces have contributed to this historic mandate. The Central Committee congratulates all these parties and forces. The threat posed by the BJP and the communal forces continues to exist, despite their ouster from the Central government. All the secular and democratic forces should remain vigilant to foil their designs.

CPI(M) and Left Strengthened

The Central Committee expressed its deep satisfaction that the CPI(M) and the Left have emerged as a strengthened force. The Left's tally of seats is the highest registered so far since 1952. The CPI(M) has got the highest ever tally of 44 seats. This is a recognition of the firm and consistent role of the CPI(M) and the Left in the fight against the harmful policies of BJP-led government and its unblemished record in defending secularism and national unity. The Central Committee greets the

people of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura who have played a major role in enhancing the strength and role of the Left.

Attitude to new government

The stage has been set for the formation of a secular Government at the Centre. The CPI(M) is of the opinion that various parties who have contributed to the defeat of the BJP should form the government. The Congress party which has the largest number of seats is in a position to constitute the coalition government and lead it.

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) decided to support such a government. The CPI(M) cannot be part of the Congress-led alliance which will form the government, but it will, in order to ensure a stable and viable government, extend support to it from outside.

The CPI(M), along with the Left, while supporting the government will also play an independent role in asserting the interests of the working people, in protecting the secular edifice and opposing imperialist penetration in our society.

The Central Committee appreciated the concern of a large number of intellectuals, prominent personalities and Left sympathisers that the Left should play a direct role in the government. The Party assures them that it will discharge its responsibilities to ensure that under a new government, the democratic and secular forces are strengthened and will in no way permit the communal forces to stage a come back.

The Central Committee decided that the Polit Bureau will consider the draft proposals for a Common Minimum Programme and take whatever necessary steps thereafter.

The CPI(M) and the Left parties fought these elections on a platform of isolating the communal forces, initiating economic policies which are in the interests of all sections of the working people and an independent foreign policy.

For full text visit: www.solidnet.org ☛

so-called "partnership for peace" (PEP), which are being brought into NATO in stages.

- With the way the new NATO doctrine is being identified with that of the European Union and those organisations' member states. It is this doctrine, which aims for and implements the objectives of the new world order through the use of our countries' armed forces.

- With the way the nightmare of nuclear weaponry is being brought back, with the militarisation of space and with the monopolisation of terror by the superpower with its imperialist world ruling practices.

- With the hypocritical "Olympic truce" with its limited duration, the goal of which is not a LASTING PEACE, which every simple person desires, and struggles for, but rather for the trade fair

called the Olympic Games to be carried out in Greece.

To Confront All The Aforesaid We Appeal

- To the United Nations
- The peace-loving people
- To our colleagues now serving and to former military personnel in all countries and mainly
- To those being used by the new world order to impose its will through use of force.

Athens, May 9, 2004

For further information, new endorsements, signatures etc you may contact EEDYE (eedye@otenet.gr) and the "Movement for the National Defense" (a.kakkaras@stf.aegean.gr). Information from International Section of Communist Party of Greece ☛

Call for solidarity with Colombian oil workers

One hundred oil workers have been sacked for going on strike. There are reports of arrests, death threats and other forms of harassment against the trade unionists and their supporters as the strike enters its second month. The ICEM, a 20-million member strong international federation of chemical, energy and mine workers has strongly criticised the Colombian Government for its brutal attempts to break the strike at Ecopetrol, Colombia's national oil company.

The USO strike is over the government's restructuring of oil reserves and production, in which rewritten contracts have been awarded to several of the oil transnationals creating more favourable terms.

The strike directly challenges the Uribe Government's preparations for the privatisation and opening up of the oil industry to transnational oil companies. Privatisation would rob the Colombian people of their wealth and future means of sustainable development and independence.

Expressing support with the USO, ICEM General Secretary Fred Higgs stated in a letter to

Colombian President Alvaro Uribe that Colombia's use of "armed military personnel in and around Ecopetrol's petroleum facilities has escalated the conflict", making it even more difficult to resolve.

The Uribe Government declared the April 22 strike illegal, citing petroleum refining as an "essential service" in Colombia, despite previous contrary findings by the International Labour Organisation.

The USO is also seeking a new collective wage agreement through the strike, something the government and company oppose.

Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade unionist. Amnesty International reiterated its fears for the safety of trade unionists in this country,

following the recent shooting of Gabriel Remolina, a leader of the SINALTRAINAL union, by gunmen linked to security forces.

According to Amnesty International, "the concern for the security of trade unionists in Colombia is heightened, not only by these latest killings, but by the on-going failure to bring to justice those who kill and threaten trade unionists".

Please support the striking USO workers.

To send a protest to President Uribe, visit www.labourstart.org and click on Colombian strike article.

Information is also available at www.anncol.org - click on "English". ☛

Sydney

World Environment Day

Tasmania's Forests

A Global Treasure – A National responsibility

Public Meeting & Concert

Saturday 5 June 3.30pm Sydney Town Hall

The Wilderness Society 02 9282 9553 www.wilderness.org.au



Is there a limit to their gall?

W T Whitney Jr*

The Bush administration has released a 450-page report by its Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba. The report outlines steps the US Government is taking to bring down the Cuban Government. They seek to isolate Cuba, promote internal opposition, and make people there suffer, presumably to "soften them up".

The report is arrogant, clueless, and belittling of our intelligence. It calls for launching a nationwide childhood vaccination program in Cuba, once the revolutionary government is gone. But 99 percent of Cuba's children today receive both polio and "DPT" immunizations.

Talk of a US takeover team upgrading public health in Cuba is, of course, ludicrous. Health statistics in Cuba are tops among the world's poor countries and rival those of the United States, where 44 million people have no health insurance.

The White House report offers "support for pro-democracy efforts for Cuban young people and men and women of African origin", as if the US were free of racism, as if the Cuban revolution had not dedicated itself to hope for children and equal rights for Cuba's Afro-Cuban majority.

The Bush administration plans to spend US\$59 million over the next two years to weaken Cuba's government. The verbiage is of building "civil society", or "supporting pro-democracy efforts", or planning for "transition". Are we incapable of connecting the dots showing that most of the money will go to pay for individual Cubans to subvert their own government? Last year US leaders denounced as preposterous the charge that 75 jailed so-called dissidents were for-

eign agents, despite videos played at their trials showing money and equipment changing hands.

We wonder what happened with the US\$24 million set aside every year under the Helms Burton law to support an internal political opposition? Where might that have gone?

Then there's a plan to fly an airplane over international waters around the island to block Cuba's interference with US radio and television propaganda. This epitomises US bullying worldwide. The annual cost will be US\$18 million.

The US leaders' tactical finesse must be slipping. New regulations on family visiting and financial support are likely to alienate some of their Cuban-American friends.

Aunts and cousins no longer make the grade as close enough family to visit relatives in Cuba. Visits are reduced from one a year to one every third year, for which special permission is required. And the amount of money visitors can spend in Cuba is cut.

Many Cuban Americans already have reservations about US Cuban policy, and regulations seen as anti-family may aggravate their disenchantment. A recent poll showed that 70 percent of Cuban Americans feel that politicians mislead them about their positions on Cuba to gain votes.

In this same poll, 55 percent said they would support candidates who favour an overhaul of US Cuban policy.

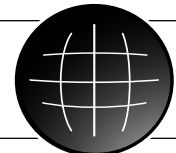
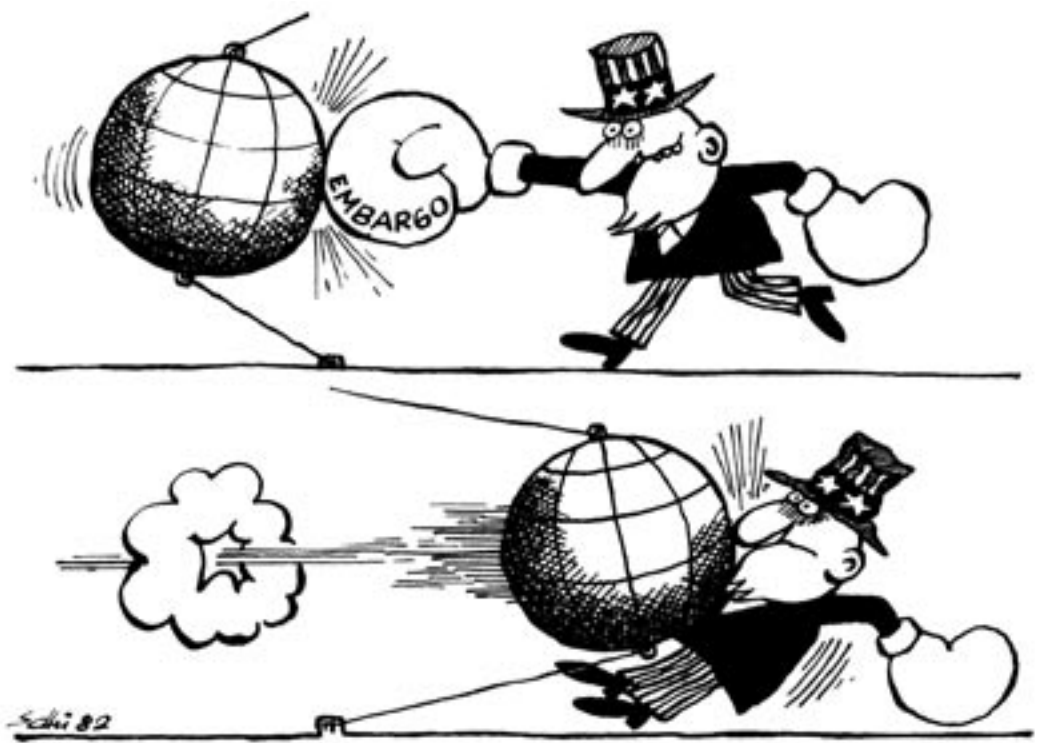
The report reads as if the Cubans' devotion to national independence were a fiction. But even prominent dissidents reject US meddling. Oswaldo Paya, the Varela Project leader, stated, "It is not appropriate or acceptable for any forces outside Cuba to try to design the Cuban transition process".

The Cuban people have long

memories. They are making comparisons between the suffering expected to flow from the Bush policies and the death and disorder caused by Spain's General Weyler in 1896 when he forced Cuban peasants off the land into camps and cities to wear support away from independence forces.

Granma, the Cuban Communist Party newspaper, notes: "Our people can draw their own conclusions. ... This is the plan for Cuba's annexation and the return to the fake republic of the Platt Amendment [which essentially annexed Cuba to the US]... Cuba will never return to the horrible, merciless and inhumane condition of a US colony."

People's Weekly World, *W T Whitney Jr is a paediatrician in rural Maine. ☛



Global briefs

VATICAN: A mother who refused cancer treatment and died so that her fourth child could be born has been elevated to sainthood in a move seen as a statement from the Vatican against the legalisation of abortion.

JAPAN: Japanese police arrested 740 US soldiers stationed in Japan on criminal charges between 1995 and 2003. The number of arrests in Okinawa during the eight years was 354. This was followed by 123 arrests in Nagasaki Prefecture where the US Sasebo Naval Base is located. Japanese Communist Party member Akamine Seiken told a House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee meeting in April that the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement must be revised in order to help prevent crimes by US military personnel.

SAUDI ARABIA: A company run by Osama bin Laden's family, the Saudi Binladin Group, has been short listed to construct the world's tallest building in Dubai.

SOUTH KOREA: Opposition to a government decision to send troops grows stronger as evidence of the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US army continues to surface. According to latest polls 64 per cent of respondents believe the government should call off the troops dispatch, up from 52 percent a month earlier. The percentage of those who believe the government should abide by its commitment to sending the troops fell to 30 percent from 39 percent.

VENEZUELA: United States President George Bush should kneel before Pope John Paul and ask for forgiveness for abuses committed by US soldiers in Iraq, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said last week. President Chavez urged Bush to use his planned visit to the Vatican on June 4 to announce the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. "Even though he is not a Catholic ... he should ask God's forgiveness at the Vatican ... go down on his knees in front of the Pope and ask for the forgiveness of the world, not just the Iraqi people", Chavez told a news conference in Caracas. Over the last few months, Chavez has repeatedly condemned Bush for waging war in Iraq. He called the US President a "jerk" earlier this year and accused his administration of seeking to topple him.

HAITI: US Marines invaded the home of renowned entertainer and community leader Annette Auguste after midnight May 9, arresting and detaining everyone present including four great-grandchildren, TransAfrica Media said, citing reports from Haiti. Ms Auguste, known as So Ann, was interrogated throughout the night without counsel or anyone else present. The others were released. TransAfrica believes Ms Auguste was arrested because "she is a prominent leader of Haitians who understand and object that the right-wing elite has returned to Haiti behind the guns of convicted criminals and death squad thugs, with the blessing of their right-wing allies here in the United States."

Rumsfeld "a political corpse"

Michel Porcheron

Less than two weeks after the CBS television network's transmission in the United States of the first photos and videos showing acts of torture practiced by US soldiers in Iraq, the "Lynndie England" case has turned into the "Rumsfeld case". Lynndie England is the name of the 21-year-old female soldier who appears in many of the photos.

A veteran investigative reporter, Seymour Hersh, 67 – the man who revealed the My Lai massacre in Vietnam in 1969 – unleashed the scandal by directly accusing the Secretary of Defense. According to his May 17 *New Yorker* article, "The roots of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal lie not in the criminal inclinations of a few Army reservists but in a decision approved last year by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, to expand a highly secret operation, which had been focussed on the hunt for al-Qaida, to the interrogation of prisoners in Iraq".

Hersh, who specialises in researching the intelligence services, specifies that the Pentagon has created special interrogation techniques that "... encouraged physical coercion and sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners in an effort to generate more intelligence about the growing insurgency in Iraq".

Rumsfeld gave the green light to a "highly secret" program that basically had "... given blanket advance

approval to kill or capture and, if possible, interrogate "high-value" targets in the Bush Administration's war on terror." Hersh maintains that every soldier who knew the code name of one of these special programs (SAP, Special-Access Program) could act freely in the field.

According to a former high-ranking intelligence service official quoted by Hersh, some 200 people in total were in on the secret, including George W Bush himself. For its part, the May 16 edition of *Newsweek* published a memorandum dated January 25, 2002, signed by Alberto González, legal advisor to the White House, explaining that the war on terrorism is a new form of war, and that this new paradigm renders obsolete the Geneva Convention's strict limitations on interrogating enemy prisoners.

The confusion reached its peak the weekend of May 15-16, when it became known that abuses being perpetrated on the prisoners at the Guantánamo Naval Base were being videotaped, according to statements by a former British prisoner there. Nobody was surprised when spokespersons for the US authorities scrambled to deny everything.

General Miller reappears

According to what has come to light, in August 2003 General Geoffrey D Miller, 55, who then

commanded the Guantánamo detention centre, made a 10-day visit to the Abu Ghraib prison. His mission was "enigmatic": to inform the chief of the prison's military intelligence on a series of recommendations "from the base" on how to undertake interrogations, punish prisoners and organise arrests.

His disciples learned their lesson, beyond expectations. Abu Ghraib was thus "Guantanamoised". Today, General Miller is once again in Iraq, this time as ... the man in charge of US prisons, replacing General Janis Karpinski, seven of whose troops have been castigated in the torture scandal. Six of them must remain under surveillance in Camp Victory near Baghdad, possibly awaiting court martial.

As for Lynndie England, the notorious female soldier who is currently pregnant, she has been temporarily stationed in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, until her fate is decided. General Karpinski was discreetly "dismissed" in January after the first revelations – at that time internal – of the torture and brutality being practiced there.

And, will Rumsfeld be the spark that sends Bush's electoral hopes up in flames, a possibility to which analysts are increasingly referring? In the May 11 edition of *El País*, Allan Lichtman is categorical: "Rumsfeld's days are numbered. He is now a political corpse."

Granma - abridged ☛

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Some questions to the PM

Dear Mr Howard
Unlike the British army who have complained about American military tactics, we have heard no words of criticism from Australia. Why is this? Do we not take the Geneva Convention and international law seriously?

The US military stands accused of using heavy machine guns, helicopter gunships and "daisy cutters" against civilians in Iraq. Their tactics are indiscriminate, i.e. shoot first and ask questions later, if at all.

The Sydney Morning Herald's Paul McGeough in Baghdad recently reported being threatened by the US military with being "blown away" and his driver was injured, even though he flourished his press pass.

Revelations have now become public of the barbarous treatment being meted out to Iraqi and other nationals jailed in Iraq and Guantanamo. Once again the same lame excuse is trotted out as was used to cover up the Indonesian military's orchestration of militia violence in East Timor viz rogue elements are responsible.

However, the tortures perpetrated by the US military are consistent with the violations of international humanitarian law which characterise US military operations on a daily basis as mentioned above.

Not only that, they are consistent with the CIA's Manual of Torture which was taught to Latin American militaries in the then School of the Americas at Fort

Benning. A copy of this manual is held in the library of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which is where I read it.

Our military support of the US military occupation of Iraq makes us complicit in crimes against humanity. Your government's uncritical knee-jerk reflex to send troops to Iraq has put all Australians at increased risk of terrorist attack and brought shame on our nation.

Will you now:

- Support calls for an international commission of enquiry into Iraq war crimes?
- Bring our troops home urgently?
- Demand immediate legal process in a civilian court for Australians held in Guantanamo?

Finally, Senator Bob Brown alleges that your government has known for many months the allegations of torture by US military personnel. Is this true?

Gareth Smith
Byron Bay, NSW

Indebted to the Soviet people

The world will never, and must never erase a debt of gratitude owed to the Soviet people when Hitler invaded Russia in 1941.

Hitler's army, bred on the brutal rule of the swastika had brought France to its knees, occupied Belgium, Holland, Greece, invaded Czechoslovakia and Poland and seemed invincible.

This army left behind it the death camps, gallows and torture.

Hitler found the people of the Soviet Union tougher than the almighty dollar and the use of nuclear power.

The Nazi hordes were kept out-

side Leningrad, defeated at Moscow and degouted at Stalingrad.

Twenty two million Soviet people were killed in the invasion of a "Motherland Built by the People's Mighty Hand".

Hitler shot himself in an underground bunker in Berlin, the Italian people hung Il Duce Mussolini upside down with a bottle of castor oil and the Emperor Hirohito signed the peace treaty in 1945, despised and hated in defeat.

While it is necessary for Communists to examine the causes of the present pro capitalist Duma in Russia, we remember the world was saved from the rule of the fascist dictatorships with the great Allied victories made possible by the heroism of the Soviet people.

Phyllis Johnson
Padstow, NSW

Cuban crisis in the offing

While our eyes are affixed to the situation that is now taking place in the Middle East, there is an impending humanitarian crisis that is about to take shape some 90 miles from the shores of Jamaica with our neighbours from the island of Cuba. Everyone, including CARICOM, seems to be distracted, oblivious of the new restrictions put in place by the USA to further cut hard currency inflows to Cuba, with the hope of crippling the Castro regime and inflict more hardship on the people of Cuba.

CARICOM and other international bodies need to be proactive in this situation and not be caught off guard as in the Haitian situation, which has caused an influx

of Haitians into many Caribbean islands. It is the people of Cuba who must determine their destiny not President George W Bush.

A dangerous precedent has already taken root whereby the USA now sees it fit to shape the agendas of sovereign nations. One is then forced to agree with the notion that it is he who is the most dangerous weapon of mass distraction and destruction (WMD).

Cuba has been a model society in terms of its education and health systems. While being ten times the size of Jamaica and operating on meagre resources, Cuba has managed to achieve 100 percent literacy and has a life expectancy that is even higher than that of the USA. Their areas of science and biotechnology can compete with that of any developed nation.

As a Caribbean Community, we simply must not allow our neighbour to be destroyed any further because of George Bush's myopia and arrogance. CARICOM must become more than a talk shop and draw from the experience of the Cuban people's will and determination to progress despite the odds. Jamaicans must never feel that the situation that now obtains in Iraq, Haiti and Cuba can never reach our shores.

We must act with the urgency that this matter deserves and send a clear message, that starving a nation, cutting off their medical supplies and making life more onerous for the masses as a means of destabilising their government is cruel, vindictive and backward. But then one only has to take comfort in the fact that the mighty can also fall.

Mark A McKenzie
Kingston, Jamaica

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Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Torture by the book

So the White House is "shocked" by the evidence of torture and other abuses during the interrogation of prisoners in Iraq. I don't know why: after all, prisoners in the United States are regularly, routinely and frequently ill-treated, abused and, yes, tortured.

Don't take my word for it; heaven knows, I could be prejudiced. Take Amnesty International's.

That organisation's report on the US prison system last year also got up the nose of the US administration by alleging that the methods used in these ghastly places to "control" inmates amounted to the routine use of torture.

But what else could they call the use of sadistic devices like electric stun belts that allow a guard to give a prisoner a searing jolt of pain that makes the prisoner lose control of his bowels?

Not to mention confining prisoners in small underground cells (known as being "in the hole" or "the pit"), placing them in solitary confinement for long periods, using physical punishment with specially developed steel clubs, keeping prisoners shackled for long periods, and many other practices designed to break the prisoner's spirit.

However, even if we ignore the US domestic prison scene, it still takes the cake that White House spokesmen can refer to what hap-

pened in Bagdad's Abu Ghraib prison as "un-American".

If anything, it epitomises American military and intelligence practices all over the globe for the last half-century or so. The US military helped the pro-Nazi post-war Greek monarchy's government in the brutal suppression of "the Communists" in the Greek Civil War.

The US began developing its "counter-insurgency" interrogation techniques there and in the Philippines, where the US was engaged in rooting out more Communists, this time the Huks, the armed wing of the Philippine national liberation struggle.

Then came Korea, and US forces quickly made a name for themselves by their vicious savagery against civilians, their racist contempt for "the gooks", and their atrocities, most of which are still blanked out of accounts of the conflict.

By the time of the Vietnam War, most of the US paraphernalia of "insurgency suppression" was in place: the Special Forces (including the Green Berets and Delta Force), the CIA's paramilitary units, assassination squads and teams of interrogators.

These last-named were trained in physical and psychological torture. Their job was to get the information by whatever means it took, and that is just what they did.

Who can forget the boastful accounts of taking prisoners up in a helicopter to interrogate them. As well as the prisoner actually being questioned, another prisoner would be taken up, one who had already told them all he knew.

This second prisoner, when the chopper was up high enough, would be "questioned" as though they thought he still had information. At each question, which of course he could not answer, he would



be rushed to the open door of the hovering helicopter, and pulled back at the last moment.

On the third or fourth such rush he would not be pulled back but would be sent screaming out the chopper door to fall to the jungle way below. Then the interrogators would turn to the other prisoner, the one they really wanted to question.

According to US officials, this monstrous use of murder to terrify other prisoners into talking worked very well. Many of their techniques of persuasion worked very well, so in the mid 1960s the Pentagon created "Project X", an initiative to create training guides no less, drawn from US counter-insurgency experience in Vietnam.

Also in the '60s, the CIA weighed in with its own training manual: KUBARK Counter-intelligence Interrogation - July 1963. This manual includes a detailed section on "The Coercive Counterintelligence Interrogation of Resistant Sources".

Notice how the material is deliberately depersonalised. These are not instructions on how to torture people, but merely how to obtain

information from "sources" that are "resistant".

The KUBARK manual contains concrete assessments on the relative merits of employing "Threats and Fear", "Pain" and "Debility". This is an official US manual, remember.

In the early 1980s, a new manual was produced, the innocuously-titled *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual-1983*, which incorporated material from the previous ones as well as the fruit of plenty of "experience in the field" over the previous 20 years.

These manuals were meant for use against "insurgents" everywhere. The Spanish-language versions of the manuals were popularised at the US Army's School of the Americas, originally located in the US-administered Panama Canal Zone.

Known to anti-imperialists as "the School of Assassins", the School of the Americas trained the military officer corps as well as the police and security forces of every reactionary regime in Latin America.

The US experts taught them how to suppress or neutralise trade unions and indigenous movements,

how to capture and kill "rebel leaders" (ie leaders of revolutionary or democratic movements), and of course how to interrogate prisoners.

In Argentina, in Pinochet's Chile, in El Salvador and in numerous other countries of Central and South America, US interrogators and those they had trained waged a fiendish war of terror and horror against the people and their democratic rights.

The 1983 manual recommended that prisoner interrogation include the threat of violence and deprivation and noted that no threat should be made unless the questioner "has approval to carry out the threat".

The interrogator was advised to "manipulate the subject's environment to create an unpleasant or intolerable situation, to disrupt patterns of time, space, and sensory perception".

Protests about US involvement in torture in Latin America prompted cosmetic adjustments to the language of the manuals in the late '80s. But, as the recent experience in Iraq shows, they were purely cosmetic: the substance has not changed at all. ☺



Sun May 30 ~
~ Sat June 5

The 19th century was the age of iron and steam. In Britain, in particular, triumphant capitalism was still in its progressive phase. It spurred the best minds of the time to take full advantage of the economic advantages of the industrial revolution to initiate a breathtaking series of outstanding engineering achievements.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel was acknowledged as one of the most brilliant of all the British engineers. His father had built the first tunnel under the Thames, but the younger Brunel's "supreme surviving achievement is the former Great Western Railway, with its many tunnels and viaducts, constructed between 1835 and 1841" (*The History Today Companion to British History*).

As well as designing many famous bridges, Brunel designed the *Great Western*, the first ship designed as a trans-Atlantic liner. In 1845 he designed the *Great Britain*, the first ocean-going screw steamer (as opposed to the previous paddle steamers).

And in 1857 he designed the *Great Eastern*, a ship so huge (18,914 tons and accommodation for 4000 passengers) that it would be unequalled for nearly half a century.

Its vast size was to enable it to carry enough coal to sail from London to India via the Cape of Good Hope without needing to refuel. In *The Great Ship* (ABC 7.30pm Sunday) Brunel's purpose is changed to designing a ship that can "circumnavigate the globe with-

out refuelling", an aim with little or no economic merit.

The Great Ship is the first episode in a new BBC series *Seven Wonders Of The Industrial World*. This first episode, at least, is in the "docudrama" genre, or that odd contradiction, an acted documentary.

It is very well done, of its type (Ron Cook is excellent as Brunel), even if it does have the feel at times of a Jane Austen novel set incongruously in a Dickensian ship-yard.

However, it is a little unfair to Brunel to make a program about his engineering genius and focus it on his one great ruinous folly, for the *Great Eastern* was an economic disaster.

The ship was way ahead of its time, not in its design which was innovative but definitely of its time, but in the economic basis for its concept. It never carried its intended 4000 passengers, for there was no market for such a capability.

Forty years later, after the expansion of the US westwards and the growth of railways there, a wave of migration to North America took place that would have filled the *Great Eastern's* passenger complement trip after trip. But by then the great ship had been broken up to reclaim the iron in it for scrap.

Mystery Of The Missing Ace (ABC 9.30pm Wednesday) is a very curious little piece of historical TV journalism. In tracing the story of the final mission of WW2 aerial reconnaissance ace Wing Commander Adrian Warburton, the program raises more questions than it answers.

Warburton became a living legend on the besieged Mediterranean island of Malta, where he flew daredevil reconnaissance missions and fell in love with a beautiful English singer who came to entertain the troops and stayed to plot aircraft movements during the siege.

In 1944, he was posted to a desk job in Britain while he recovered from injuries received in a jeep smash in North Africa. He was made liaison officer to a US airforce unit commanded by Roosevelt's son.

Although he was technically still on sick leave, and unfit to



After the second front (D-Day: *The Shortest Day*)

fly, he was chosen by the young Roosevelt to be one of two pilots to go on a mission over Germany to photograph a heavily protected factory.

Warburton had never flown missions over Germany, with its intense flack, where reconnaissance pilots had to fly at 30,000 feet and make it quick. His exploits had all been over the Mediterranean, where he flew extremely low and often went back for a second or even a third pass over the target!

Despite protests from his own officers, Roosevelt insisted that Warburton, who was a British not a US officer, fly the mission in a US plane. He did not return, and astonishingly, the US authorities did

not notify the British of this fact for three weeks.

One of the most glamorous and highly decorated pilots of World War II just faded from memory, until an amateur historian in Britain and another in Germany tracked down the likely site of his crashed aircraft.

The account of Warburton's career in Malta and the long-delayed search for his remains makes for interesting viewing. But why he was even in the air that day, in the wrong air force and the wrong theatre of war, is left unanswered.

If you're going to make an inconsequential costume piece for television, then the antics of a notorious 18th century bedroom jockey are probably as good a subject as any (think of all that lace, and those wigs!).

The four-part Franco-Italian serial *The Young Casanova* (SBS 8.30pm Fridays) stars Stefano Accorsi as Casanova, aided by

French actors Thierry Lhermitte and François Berleand.

At the Luchon television festival in 2002, *The Young Casanova* won the FIPA Silver Award for Drama and a special prize for the soundtrack.

June 6 is the anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, so the day before SBS is running *D-Day: The Shortest Day*, (SBS 7.30pm Saturday). It recounts what US and British spokespersons (and SBS) are wont to call "an historic event which changed the face of the world".

Just remember, Britain and the US delayed opening a second front in Europe for as long as they possibly could, making the USSR carry the maximum burden of the war. Only when it became clear that unless they got off their backsides they would be waving hello to the Red Army across the English Channel did they set about actually invading France. ★



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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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Black day for higher life: Monsanto's Supreme court win

The Canadian Supreme Court has affirmed Monsanto's right to prosecute farmers who are found to have GM crops growing on their land – whether they wanted them or not. Civil society and farmers' organisations worldwide reacted with outrage at the 5-4 decision, handed down on Friday, May 21. The decision is of particular interest to Australians, as it illustrates the potential power of the new patent laws in the Free Trade Agreement with the USA.

Gene giant Monsanto had accused Canadian farmers Percy and Louise Schmeiser of violating the company's patent on genetically modified canola (rapeseed).

Percy and Louise did not want the Monsanto's GM canola seeds that invaded their property, and they did not try to benefit from the herbicide-tolerant trait in the GM seed (that is, they didn't spray Monsanto's Roundup weedkiller), but still Monsanto prosecuted them for patent infringement and demanded a portion of their income.

The Schmeisers waged a courageous, seven-year battle against Monsanto that went all the way to the Supreme Court.

According to Monsanto: "[We] originally pursued this case in the Federal Court of Canada because Mr. Schmeiser knowingly infringed Monsanto's patents on Roundup Ready technology by planting 1030 acres of Roundup Ready canola without paying the required license fee for using the technology".

The Supreme Court found that certain aspects of Monsanto's patent had been infringed, and dismissed the Schmeisers' appeal against a Federal Court finding in favour of Monsanto.

However, the good news is that the Schmeisers don't have to pay a cent to Monsanto.

The Court also concluded that the Schmeisers had not attempted to benefit from the GM seed that blew onto their property, and agreed that the corporation is not entitled to damages.

The Court also ruled that each side should pay its own costs.

This was a great relief to the embattled family and also a sharp setback for Monsanto.

Global precedent

Canada's Supreme Court decision has set a global precedent that will be studied closely by jurists, and still has grave implications for farmers and society everywhere the Gene Giants – Monsanto, AstraZeneca, DuPont, Novartis and Aventis – do business.

"The decision not only undermines the rights of farmers worldwide, but also global food security and biological diversity", lamented Pat Mooney, Executive Director of ETC Group (The Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration), one of the interveners in the case.

"Ironically, the United Nations has declared tomorrow [May 22] to

be International Biodiversity Day. We should all be wearing black."

Now that the Court has ruled in Monsanto's favour the right of farmers to save seed – a right that has been upheld for 12,000 years – will be imperilled and the 1.4 billion people on this planet who depend on farm-saved seed for their food security will be still more food-insecure.

The decision places the burden of coping with GM contamination on the farmer rather than the corporate polluter.

GM pollution – a corporate strategy

In 2002 the Canadian Supreme Court ruled that higher life forms, including plants, are not patentable subject matter.

This Supreme Court ruling in

This ruling will unite farmers and others opposed to corporate control of food and life, and galvanise civil society to take the issue out of the courts and back to politicians.

favour of Monsanto effectively nullifies that decision.

"The Canadian Court goes even further than notoriously monopoly-friendly US patent law because it finds that a gene patent extends to any higher organism that contains the patented gene.

"Monsanto has won an inflatable patent today. They can now say that their rights extend to anything its genes get into, whether plant, animal or human", said Pat Mooney.

"Under this ruling spreading GM pollution appears to be recognised as a viable corporate ownership strategy", said Mooney.

World-wide implications

The Court's ruling means that if a farmer is in possession of seeds or plants containing a patented gene, the burden is on the farmer to prove that s/he is not infringing the company's monopoly patent.

"In Monsanto's world, we're all criminals unless a court rules otherwise", observes Silvia Ribeiro of ETC Group's Mexico office.

"This will come as shocking news to indigenous farmers in Mexico, whose maize fields have been contaminated with DNA from genetically modified plants, and to farmers everywhere who are fighting to prevent genetically modified organisms from trespassing in their fields", said Ribeiro.

Monsanto's newspaper ads in Chiapas, Mexico, are already warning peasants that if they are found using transgenic seed illegally, they risk fines and even prison.

"No doubt Monsanto will say this is a victory for their stockholders, but its victory will be short lived. As always, Monsanto's hot air is the wind beneath our wings", said Pat Mooney.

"This ruling will unite farmers and others opposed to corporate control of food and life, and galvanise civil society to take the issue out of the courts and back to politicians", said Mooney.

Indeed Monsanto did cheer the verdict, declaring it was a victory for farmers!

"We are gratified the Supreme Court of Canada found that Monsanto's patent pertaining



dubious status of a major weed – a common sight in fields, boulevards and cemeteries – and even backyard gardens.

"Canola can winter over for 8 years", says ETC Group's Pat Mooney in the NGO's Winnipeg headquarters, "meaning GM pollen has probably travelled a minimum of 200 km since Monsanto first commercialised its patented seed in 1996".

Which is why, Mooney reasons, just about everyone in Canada's farming provinces has a direct, personal interest in the May 21

Monsanto's permission must notify the company in order not to infringe Monsanto's patent.

Anyone who suspects they may have Canola growing on their farm or in their backyard or even window box – as happened to the Schmeisers – can now notify Monsanto that the company's uninvited genes may be trespassing.

ETC Group and partner organisations around the world are asking concerned people to send Monsanto CEO, Hugh Grant, a letter advising him that Monsanto's seeds may be squatting on their property. They have produced a form letter for use.

"That puts the ball back in Monsanto's court", Hope Shand of ETC Group's North Carolina office adds. "It's up to Monsanto to contact the letter-writer and make amends."

"But the form letter doesn't invite Monsanto to do what they did to the Schmeisers", Mooney stresses. "Monsanto's seeds are trespassing and the company may have to accept a 'Trespass Abuser Agreement' making Monsanto responsible for any damages."

You can print out the letter and send it yourself or click on "submit" to send the letter by email to Monsanto. ETC Group will send all the letters to Monsanto by registered mail.

<http://www.etcgroup.org/action4.asp>

ETC - the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration, formerly RAFI, is an international civil society organisation headquartered in Canada. The ETC group is dedicated to the advancement of cultural and ecological diversity and human rights. www.etcgroup.org

The decision not only undermines the rights of farmers worldwide, but also global food security and biological diversity.

maintains Canada as an attractive investment opportunity.

"Patent protection encourages innovations that will lead to the next generation of value-added products for Canadian farmers."

Insidious weed

Bees, beetles and blowing winds can carry Monsanto's genetically-modified canola a good 26 kilometres – and a whole lot farther if the transgenic seed or pollen hitchhikes a ride on passing trucks, trains or tractors.

After eight summers in Canada's West, GM canola has earned the

Supreme Court decision.

"It's not just farmers", insists Mooney. "There are about 5 million Percy Schmeisers out here [roughly the population of Canada's three prairie provinces]. For all any of us know, we could have Monsanto's canola in our window boxes."

What about your backyard?

Have Monsanto's GM seeds blown onto your property?

Monsanto claims that anyone who thinks they might have the company's GM canola without

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The Guardian

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