

Corporate slave trader

In a nondescript office, this month, a burly South African boilermaker broke down and cried in front of a Perth civil servant. Thousands of kilometres from his wife, Richardine, and their three children, Ronald Oliveira had reached the end of his tether.

The 42-year-old is neither proud nor ashamed of his outburst. It just happened.

Freespirit, the company that lured him to Australia on promises of wealth and security, had disowned him and, in spite of a signed contract and four-year visa issued by the Immigration Department, is seeking to have him deported.

Oliveira had broken its cardinal rule. Despite being warned, in South Africa and at the offices of the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he joined a trade union. And, to make matters worse, he tried to inform the public of predicaments facing him and at least 28 compatriots.

The day after blowing the cover on a rort that saw immigrants paid less than a third of rates earned by Aussies working alongside them, he was called to the offices of suburban engineering shop, RCR Maintenance, and given his marching orders.

"The supervisor was a very nice guy", Oliveira says. "He tried to help me but he said the order came from the top."

The only other South African named in press coverage of their protest got the bullet the same day.

What they revealed was an eye-opener to many in Perth.

The tradesmen had read adverts in Johannesburg newspapers that advised "hundreds" of skilled positions, carrying lucrative salaries, were available in Australia.

On replying, they were called to meetings at the offices of a Pretoria-registered company, Australian Business Associates (ABA).

There, they were told of limitless opportunities across the Indian Ocean and informed their families could travel with them.

"It seemed like a great opportunity for my family", Oliveira said. "Jobs are tight in Johannesburg and crime levels are very high."

"We talked about it and decided to apply. We wanted to start new lives in Australia."

Each South African was charged \$5000 for visa applications, airfares and ABA's fee. They could pay upfront or take out loans from companies associated with ABA, Freespirit

and/or the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Just who is responsible for what, and the relationships between these entities is unclear, perhaps deliberately so, but more of that later.

South Africans know all about "immigration consultants" who pocket fees and vanish. Oliveira and his wife figured, on the sort of money they were being offered, they could meet repayments on a \$5000 loan and opted to cover themselves.

When the visas came through, however, the families had mysteriously fallen off, but the men were assured that, for another \$500, they could apply to have wives and children join them once they had started work.

Oliveira flew into a clear Perth day with eight compatriots – boilermakers, pipe fitters and welders – on October 12, 2003.

But, right from the off, things were not as they had been led to believe.

They went to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry to sign contracts and found themselves farmed out to enterprises across the state on predominantly short-term contracts.

Mysterious "labour brokers" entered the frame and once a job finished they were left to find alternative work themselves. When they did, Freespirit, apparently doubling as immigration consultant and labour hire operator, would take a cut.

After deductions, they realised, the \$20-\$26 gross amounts shown on their payslips were purely theoretical amounts.

Freespirit was eating away 12 percent of every dollar earned, plus extracting another 14 percent from their employers. It was also deducting super, rather than adding it, and removing another \$1 an hour for medical expenses.

Then there was Qantum, the finance house they had been directed to in South Africa. It was extracting repayments on their \$5000 loans, based on annual interest rates of 144 percent.

Oliveira found himself handing over \$145 a week to Qantum and not denting the principal.

In reality, his before tax income worked out to around \$13 an hour. An Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) lawyer put one of Ronald's colleague's at barely \$8.50.

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One step forward in Iraq

By adopting a comprehensive resolution on June 8, the United Nations Security Council has moved back to centre stage in Iraq.

Although the resolution is being touted in the Western media as a victory for Bush and Blair, the fact is that they were forced to make many substantial concessions and to eat their earlier declarations that the United Nations was irrelevant.

The resolution declares that "the occupation will end and the Coalition Provisional Authority will cease to exist and that Iraq will reassert its full sovereignty" on June

30. It also declares that the "sovereign Interim Government of Iraq, will assume full responsibility and authority by June 30, 2004."

The reality is somewhat different. The occupation will not end on June 30 as US and British troops will remain "at the request of the Interim Government" for the foreseeable future. The US, British and Australian forces are obliged to work in "close coordination and consultation" with the Interim Government. They are to "reach agreement on the full range of fundamental security and policy issues". The resolution speaks of

a "security partnership". This terminology is a long way from vesting sovereign control in the Iraqi Interim Government over the US, British, Australian and other occupying forces.

The resolution also gives power to the occupiers to take "all necessary measures" to provide security and reserves the right to detain Iraqis viewed as a security threat.

The mandate for the occupation forces is to be reviewed at the request of the Government of Iraq or "twelve months from the date of this resolution" (June 8, 2004).

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The Guardian

No 1187

June 16, 2004

Peter Garrett's colours

"Today, I have nailed my colours to the mast", declared Peter Garrett as he was being parachuted into ALP membership and to what is regarded as a safe parliamentary seat in a Sydney electorate.

While claiming that he wants to "make a difference" his colours became immediately apparent as he threw overboard his previous opposition to the US spy base at Pine Gap and indicated that he was prepared to compromise on the logging of old growth forests in Tasmania. "I will accept the decisions of the Labor Party on these issues", he said.

Peter Garrett had his ALP membership fast tracked by none other than the ALP National Executive. The same National Executive is expected to over-ride the opposition of local members in the electorate to ensure his nomination.

Garrett's colours can be summed up in one word: opportunism! He has joined a political party that is notorious for its unprincipled compromises on many issues. In this respect Garrett will be at home.

ALP policy decisions have led to massive privatisation, the winding down of Medicare (a process started under Labor Governments), tacit support for the Howard Government's racist policies towards refugees, the disbandment of ATSIC and much more. It was the Hawke and Keating Governments that scuttled the award system and introduced Enterprise Bargaining Agreements and individual work contracts.

Although there appears to be some difference over the stay of Australian troops in Iraq, the ALP supports the US alliance, the Pine Gap spy base and the militarisation of Australia which is directed against Australia's Asian neighbours.

Supporting the US alliance will inevitably lead to more wars of aggression, intervention and occupation and Australian governments will be called upon to support and participate in them.

Garrett's usefulness to the ALP (and there must have been long discussions in private before his move to the ALP was announced) lies in his anti-war and pro-environment credentials, and his popularity, particularly with the youth, as lead singer in Midnight Oil. Mark Latham hopes that by having Garrett on board the ALP will attract green and younger voters in the coming election.

The game is to win votes away from the Greens not to just gain their preferences. Both the Labor Party and the Liberals are desperate to restore the dominance of the two major parties. In recent years this has been challenged by the Australian Democrats, the Greens and by a number of independents, as more voters become disillusioned with the major parties.

Seen in this light, Latham's objective is thoroughly conservative and reactionary. This is the dirty game that Garrett's big-headedness and opportunism has led him to play a shoddy part in.

Undoubtedly, some Labor Party voters who have already been encouraged by the election of Latham to the leadership will be further encouraged by virtue of Garrett also joining the ranks. Hope springs eternal!

The reality is different. There are many in the past who have joined the Labor Party with the intention of "making a difference" and turning the Labor Party into a working people's party of which they could be proud. It has not worked in the past and Peter Garrett would not succeed either, even if that were his intention. The Labor Party machine will see to that.

The Labor Party machine is under the tight control of the rightwing and that faction has no intention of giving up its control even if it tolerates a few left and centre elements for the purpose of broadening its façade.

The basic ideology of the Labor Party has always been one of compromise and moderate reform of the capitalist system while retaining that system. That is the extent and limit of their outlook and prevents them from going any further than these small perspectives.

PRESS FUND

The Guardian doesn't usually single out individual contributions for special mention. However, when one contributor writes to us about another, we just had to publish the following letter from Bob and Joy Brown:

We saw the letter from B Appleton, of Woy Woy, in the current issue of The Guardian. We have also noted his regular contributions to the Press Fund. He is clearly a person who has maintained optimism about the future of mankind. In appreciation of that confidence and with thanks for the efforts of The Guardian, we enclose our contribution towards the fund.

With uplifted spirits we encourage our readers to contribute to the fund for the next issue. We acknowledge with sincere gratitude the generous contributions made this week by the following:

Edna & Bert Appleton In memory of Earl Marchant \$100.

Bob and Joy Brown \$500 J K and L K \$20, H North \$50, T Barlett \$100.

This week's total: \$770. Progressive total: \$5320.

Reality hits Big Brother

Australian reality television made a leap from the inane to the sublime last Sunday as *Big Brother* evictee Merlin Luck taped his mouth shut in silent protest and held up a sign demanding "FREE THE REFUGEES" in front of a packed stadium and 1.5 million television viewers.

Despite jeering from the audi-

ence and verballing from the show's host Gretel Killeen, Merlin continued his protest throughout five-minutes of live airtime and then was escorted off the show during a commercial break.

Killeen then continued her attack on Merlin, calling his silent protest "aggressive", and snidely suggested that he sell the car he had

won as a participant and give the money to charity. Her harassment continued on Monday night when Merlin reappeared on the show to explain his actions.

He said "When I did this stunt it wasn't to slap in the face the people that gave me this opportunity".

"I wasn't trying to destroy the show. If people want reality television then this is reality."

"The vast majority have risked their lives to fight for the basic human rights we take for granted".

"This issue needs to be put back on the political agenda."

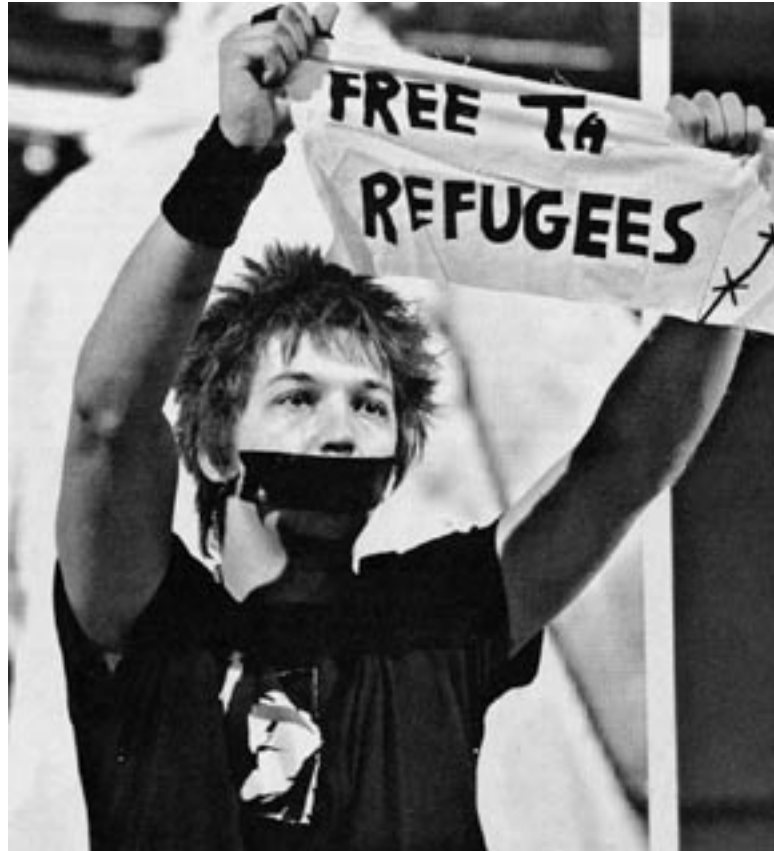
A Just Australia National Director, Howard Glenn, welcomed the latest high profile protestor to express his opinion on Australia's treatment of refugees.

"Australia has over 500 people who sought asylum in or before 2001 still detained in remote camps", Howard Glenn said.

"They are under constant surveillance, rarely able to contact the outside world, and kept away from the media.

"A bit like the *Big Brother* contestants, except that they're in detention for years, and no-one gets to see the video footage of what goes on", said Mr Glenn.

The Channel 10 "reality" show has plummeted to new depths this season: offering a transsexual "intruder" as titillating spectacle; repeatedly airing without censure a lengthy tirade by a loud-mouth racist; and punishing a drunken resident turned knife-wielding maniac with a verbal slap on the wrist. ☘



One step forward in Iraq

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In any case the mandate is to expire upon the completion of the political process and will be terminated earlier "if requested by the Government of Iraq".

This clause would seem to bring the occupation of Iraq by any foreign forces to an end, at least by the time an Iraqi Government is established but it is certain that the US will apply tremendous pressure on the incoming Government to grant the US permanent military bases on Iraqi soil. The US military is reported to be already building some permanent military bases.

The resolution reaffirms the right of the Iraqi people to exercise "full authority and control over their financial and natural resources" but whether they will be able to exercise this "right" remains to be seen.

The UN resolution says that the Development Fund for Iraq, set up by the occupiers, is to be monitored

by the International Advisory and Monitoring Board with "an additional" representative of the Iraqi Government. As with the occupying military forces this mandate will also be reviewed at the request of the Transitional Government of Iraq or in twelve months time.

A "national conference reflecting the diversity of Iraqi society is to be convened. This has been a consistent demand of the Iraqi Communist Party.

There is also to be an international meeting if decided by the Government of Iraq but this clause of the resolution is so vague as to be almost meaningless.

Direct democratic elections are to be held by December 31, 2004 "if possible" but in no case later than January 31, 2005. These will be to elect a Transitional National Assembly that is to form a Transitional Government, draft a permanent constitution for Iraq

leading to a constitutionally elected government by December 31, 2005.

While the struggle by the Iraqi people against the occupation and the international isolation of the United States has forced the US leaders to call in the otherwise despised United Nations and to make many concessions, the resolution is still a long way from any condemnation of the initial aggression and violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Nor does it explicitly require the removal of all foreign troops from Iraqi soil, nor does it grant complete and sovereign control of Iraq's natural resources to an Iraqi Government.

However, the resolution does represent a new stage that will give to the Iraqi people the opportunity to elect a government that could act to fully restore Iraq's independence and sovereignty and free Iraq from foreign occupation. ☘

Sydney

BOUGANVILLE: REVOLUTION – EVOLUTION

Art exhibition

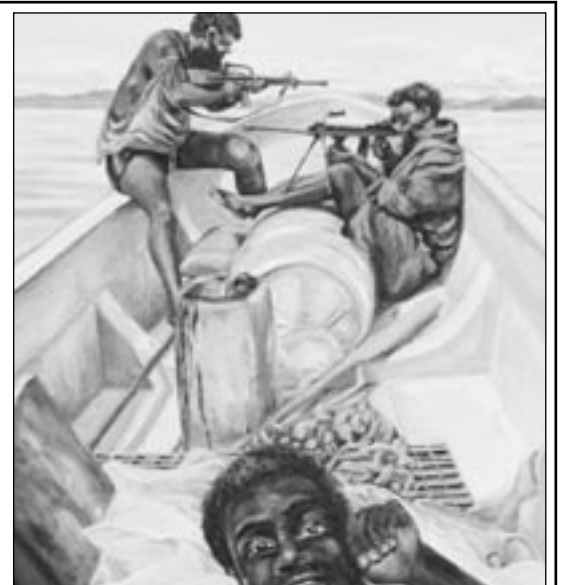
By Marilyn and Taloi Havini
(mother and daughter)

The people's aspirations evolve from the revolution and are mirrored in oils, photo media & ceramic sculptures

Until 2 July

SAM (Student Union building)
Macquarie Uni campus

Getting there by public transport: Catch an Epping bus from the city, or a City bus from Eastwood or Epping train stations. From the bus stop in the Uni, you walk down Eastern Rd towards building 11A and then veer left to the SAM entrance. Parking on campus available – metered.



Turning Tasmania's national parks into a commodity

Peter Mac

Tasmania has joined NSW and Queensland as states in which ALP governments are taking steps to transform national parks and other sites of prime heritage significance into a commodity.

The Lennon state government in Tasmania proposes to lease off a huge site at Cockle Creek, in the Southwest National Park, for a tourist development. The plan includes a major lodge, 60 cabins, a jetty and boatsheds, and other facilities. The project, which is adjacent to the pristine Planters Beach, would also require construction of a new access road to the development site.

It would involve the destruction of 18 sites of major significance to Aboriginal people. The Tasmanian Greens have also raised objections to the project because of its adverse impact on the appearance and natural values of Cockle Creek and the Park in general.

The government has for several years stalled on the release of information about this and other proposed developments within the state's national parks. The developer has also failed to submit a heritage assessment, despite this being a formal requirement of the approval process.

Moreover, there is clear evidence that the state's national parks are nearing the point at which an increase in the visitor numbers will cause unacceptable damage to the natural environment. On the state's most popular walking trail, the Overland Track, the number of visitors has had to be capped.

Nevertheless, the project has been given the go-ahead. The government appears not the least bit worried about criticism of the project, and is willing to back the developers to the hilt. For his part, the project's boss, David Marriner (described by one observer as Melbourne's "prince of property") is absolutely candid about the commercialisation of such national treasures. "Part of what we are selling is relationship to nature. So we don't want to destroy the reason people would go there", he declared

proudly. Note the operative word "selling"!

The controversy over the Cockle Creek project is timely, in view of recent developments such as the much heralded entry of entertainer, and former campaigner for the environment, Peter Garrett as an ALP candidate in the coming federal elections.

Tasmanian Greens Senator Bob Brown recently commented that Garrett's ALP candidature was highly disturbing, in view of the environmental policies of successive Tasmanian ALP Governments, which Brown described as "chain-saw driven".

And he's right, of course. The current Tasmanian ALP Government continues to permit massive clear-felling to produce woodchips, a process that has indiscriminately destroyed hundreds of thousands of ancient trees and ruthlessly eliminated the flora and fauna of vast areas of the state's forests.

In seeking to justify these practices the government never refers to the massive profits derived by the logging companies involved, nor to the outstanding natural qualities of the forests they harvest. Instead, they continually refer to the loss of jobs that will ensue when clear felling finally ceases. They appear to have never investigated the possibility of alternative sources of employment, and they ignore the fact that clear felling employs far fewer people, and is much more destructive of the environment, than traditional selective logging in carefully chosen areas.

Garrett would do well to reflect that the federal ALP leadership failed to halt the environmentally-damaging policies of the Tasmanian ALP Government despite considerable public opposition to some of them. In fact, it was actually a Liberal Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, who acted to block the worst act of proposed government vandalism, the damming of the Franklin River in the 1970s, even though the project was the brainchild of a Tasmanian Liberal Government.

This is not to suggest that the ALP has not taken a fine stand on



environmental issues at various times in the past. And the Australian conservatives are certainly not wedded to conservation issues. Far from it! Fraser was almost unique among the Liberals, who over the years have implemented some of the worst environmental initiatives in Australian history.

The Howard Government still refuses to sign the Kyoto protocol, despite growing evidence of the most terrible impacts on the world's atmosphere.

But it is the current Tasmanian ALP Government that arrogantly pursues the policy of clearfelling in the state's forests, and which now appears intent on pushing through the East Cockle Creek project.

Greens parliamentary leader, Peg Putt, received a typically snarly and dismissive rebuff from Tasmanian Premier Paul Lennon, when she tackled him recently over the project's destruction of sites of Aboriginal significance. She commented: "I was asked to bring the urgent concerns of the Aboriginal community of south-east Tasmania to the Parliament and to get the Lennon Government to state their position on the destruction of 18 primary sites, but he insultingly plays politics and calls it a stunt."

"The arrogance of Mr Lennon and his Labor colleagues in persistently targeting the messenger with gutter accusations to distract from their own appalling conduct is get-

ting worse by the day, and I regard it as unacceptable that he will not seriously address his unqualified support for the destruction of aboriginal heritage." ✪

David Hicks charged and pleads "not guilty"

After two-and-a-half years in detention at Guantánamo Bay Australian David Hicks has finally been officially charged by the US Defence Department with conspiracy to commit war crimes, attempted murder, and aiding the enemy.

Mr Hicks' military lawyer has indicated publicly that Mr Hicks will plead "not guilty" to the charges.

Commenting on the timeliness of the charges Margo Kingston wrote in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, "... now, as Howard puts his foot to the floor for an election on the American Alliance, David Hicks is suddenly charged".

"I bet the trial doesn't start before the federal election, and that the charges will be dropped after it."

Tim McCormack, the Australian Red Cross professor of international humanitarian law at the University of Melbourne and a special adviser on international law matters to the judges in The Hague, said that "small fish" overstates the criminal nature of allegations against David Hicks.

"Even 'tiny whitebait' might be too large a metaphorical image", said Mr McCormack.

"The most that his US accusers have come up with after two years to investigate and prepare his case is that he trained with al-Qaida and learnt certain lethal techniques in the course of his training.

"He is also alleged to have spoken personally to Osama bin Laden, offering to translate training material from Arabic into English. No wonder the Australian Government believes we have no law with which to try Hicks ourselves", concluded Mr McCormack.

President of the Law Council, Bob Gotterson QC, said the charging of Mr Hicks took "far too long".

"It is appalling that Mr Hicks has been confined in non-

reviewable detention for two and a half years and now faces trial in a system which has very serious shortcomings."

"Military commission trials leave detainees at the mercy of executive government, which has the power to keep them incarcerated even if they are acquitted or serve out their sentence.

"There are no independent judges and any appeal is subject to the US President only – and the rules of evidence do not apply.

"In our view the military commission process remains an unnecessary and inferior substitute to a normal court martial or a civilian court. However, it is clear that this is the manner in which US authorities intend to proceed", Mr Gotterson said.

The charges were made as the US military again denied claims that prisoners at the Guantánamo base had been subjected to abuse and torture.

Prisoners who have been recently released without charge from Guantánamo claim they were shackled in "stress" positions for hours, threatened with dogs, and subjected to strobe lights and freezing temperatures.

But Brigadier General Jay Hood insists that prison interrogations were conducted in a "safe, secure and humane" manner, in compliance with the Geneva Conventions.

An unnamed interrogation officer described the process as "a mental chess game". "About 99 percent of what we do down here is not even close to the general definition of interrogation."

He said that although prisoners were brought shackled into interrogation rooms the chains would then be removed as a gesture of trust.

He said prisoners' co-operation would often be rewarded with "McDonalds" and "thermos flasks of tea". ✪

Pete's Corner



Asbestos victims may be priced out Hardie inquiry

Bob Briton

Lawyers for asbestos disease victims and unions in NSW may be denied the opportunity to put their case before the James Hardie inquiry, following an announcement from the State Government that it would not grant them legal aid.

Last week a spokeswoman for NSW Premier Bob Carr denied claims from representatives of the victims' coalition that they had previously been given assurances from the government that they would receive assistance with legal costs. "As far as I am aware there has been no commitment to give aid", she said.

The Victorian Government has agreed to provide \$50,000 in legal aid to the Victorian asbestos victims' group.

The Carr Government decision ignores the question as to how the plaintiff law firms will be paid. Slater and Gordon and another firm, Turner Freeman, must now decide whether they can afford to continue to appear on behalf of unions and victims at the inquiry.

The firms have already racked up \$500,000 in unpaid bills. Meanwhile, James Hardie has revealed that they are paying \$1 million a month in legal fees as part of their efforts to keep their distance from compensation claims arising from asbestos-related illnesses.

The special commission of inquiry has already heard a lot of scandalous detail about the actions

of James Hardie in the lead-up to its establishment of the Medical Research and Compensation Foundation (MRCF) – the body left in charge of dealing with compensation claims. The funds for the foundation came from the stripping of the assets of Amaca and Amaba. These two companies were set up by James Hardie to take over its asbestos products interests in 2001. By that stage James Hardie had relocated its headquarters far away, in the Netherlands.

Last week, David Robb, a lawyer from Allan Allan and Hemsley, told the Commission of his concerns at the time of Hardie's decision to cut and run that directors of the building products giant may have been engaged in misleading conduct. On the eve of the establishment of the MRCF, Mr Robb and his superior rang Hardie's managing director Peter McDonald. They had discovered the estimates of liabilities calculated by the actuarial company engaged by the former asbestos manufacturer did not include the data from claims during the most recent eight months.

In that period, the number of claims had increased substantially. Mr Robb said that McDonald had given them assurances that all the asbestos liabilities would be fully funded. The report from Trowbridge Deloitte (engaged by Hardie) that resulted from that data said that start-up funding of \$300 million would be sufficient. More realistic

reports now estimate a shortfall of \$1.3 billion or even \$1.6 billion, according to KPMG Actuaries.

At one point, Inquiry head David Jackson QC asked Hardie chief Peter Macdonald to set aside the legal arguments for the moment and to consider "commercial morality" of the steps taken in setting up the MRCF. Macdonald "replied" by saying that the company's board believed that the funding would be adequate.

Paul Bastion, NSW Secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, gave vent to the anger building in the community with comments made in *Workers Online* last week:

"Evidence to the Jackson Inquiry has been nothing short of scandalous. A lot of very well paid, respected people have made money out of asbestos. Now they're going to a lot of trouble to avoid paying compensation to ordinary people whose lives have been destroyed." ❖



Going to work shouldn't be a grave mistake

Borders staff win historic fight

Melbourne: For the first time ever, the staff of the multinational bookstore chain Borders have won the fight to be covered by award conditions.

After weeks of intense campaigning by Unite, a group of activists dedicated to improving the rights of casual workers, and Borders staff, management today announced that they would not oppose the introduction of the Retail Award when the issue returns before the Industrial Relations Commission in Melbourne.

All workers not on individual contracts will go onto the award

and get penalty rates for the first time. The penalty rates range from time and a quarter, to triple time depending on the day and time. For example, workers on Sunday night will go from \$14.50 to \$42 an hour. Managers staying on individual contracts will, therefore, be earning their flat rate of \$16 on Sunday nights compared to staff on \$42.

The back-down by the multi-billion dollar company came after six rallies (four outside the Carlton store and two at Prahran) organised by Unite, mass petitioning, poster-ing as well as the brave stance

of Borders workers themselves. Borders feared that continued opposition to their workers' just demands might lead to a boycott campaign and industrial action from their staff.

This victory for collective action sets an important precedent for other workers in stores such as Starbucks.

Once the Award is implemented there will be an attempt by the Shop, Distributive and Allied Union to sign a collective agreement with Borders to get workers currently locked into the \$14.50 flat rate individual contracts, onto the award. ❖

LABOUR NOTES

Eight hundred Federal Hotel workers from the Wrest Point Casino in Tasmania stopped work this week when negotiations between their union, the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU) and their employer broke down. The Tasmanian Branch of the union said that this is the first time in history that large numbers of hotel workers had stopped work to consider actions in support of an enterprise agreement. David O'Byrne, Tasmanian Branch Secretary of the LHMU said that after 10 weeks of negotiations little progress had been made and workers were frustrated that an agreement had not been reached.

On June 12, World Day for Action Against Child Labour the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) called for more action to protect children and young people. Recent figures show that half the young people working in fast food outlets had suffered an injury or illness and that on average more than one child a fortnight in Australia dies from a farm accident. "While the exploitation of children is not as widespread here as overseas, more action is still needed to protect children and young people in Australian workplaces", ACTU President Sharan Burrows said. Child exploitation is also a problem internationally where there are almost a quarter of a billion child labourers world-wide and every year 22,000 children die in work-related accidents.

Hundreds of members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and other unions in Queensland protested outside the Australian Labor Party (ALP) State Conference in Brisbane last weekend in opposition to the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The protest comes after Premier Peter Beattie made comments to a Sydney Australian Chamber of Commerce luncheon in support of the agreement, and while Federal Labor is still considering its position on it. "Peter Beattie cannot avoid scrutiny of his position on the FTA, especially given its neglect of one of Queensland major industries – the multi-million dollar sugar industry", Australian Manufacturing Workers Union State Secretary Andrew Dettmer said.

Corporate slave trader

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And there were no guarantees. Oliveira, for example, worked for four different employers in eight months with payless weeks and fortnights in between.

AMWU Secretary, Jock Ferguson, labelled the arrangement "pyramid labour hire" and called on Freespirit to negotiate a "reasonable settlement".

That set in motion a round of duck-shoving in which Freespirit, ABA and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry appeared to audition for the role of some corporate Pontius Pilate.

Freespirit pulled down the shutters, directing all inquiries to law firm, Mallesons, or a public relations company. It has refused to negotiate but, conceded at an Australian Industrial Relations Commission conference it had breached the terms of its sponsorship arrangements with the Immigration Department.

It also admitted to WA Labor Council officials it had more than 1000 South Africans in Australia working on four-year Section 457 visas.

On May 17 its representative, Phillip Fitzgibbon, wrote to Oliveira informing him Freespirit had applied to DIMIA for the "cancellation" of his visa and suggesting

he might like to leave the country of his own volition.

He has half a mind to take that advice but AMWU supporters, and 28 men he has become a spokesman for, are urging him to stay and fight his corner. The union is scouring Perth for an employer prepared to pick up his sponsorship.

"You know", Oliveira says quietly, "I came here with the expectation of permanent residency, working hard, and building a new life. That's what they told us."

"Instead, my family is in trouble. I haven't worked for six weeks,

the interest is building up on my loan and I can't send anything back to my wife. She is worried sick and we don't know what to do.

"I am surviving on the generosity of my friend and the understanding of the people who own this house."

"I spoke to a consumer advice counsellor about our situations and he said it was slavery. I agree with him, the whole thing is a scam."

"I am discouraged, I am frustrated and I am stressed out. I don't know what to do."

Workers Online ❖

Brown Nose Day 2004 Inaugural Awards Gala

Comedy/Music/Foreign Policy/Nose Awards

Sunday 4th July 4-7pm

Gaelic Club, Devonshire St, Surry Hills

Presentation of Awards for:

Brown Nose of the Year

For outstanding achievement in going all the way with the USA in 2003/4

Brown Nose Hall of Shame

For lifetime achievement in sycophantic grovelling to a foreign power

Up Your Nose

For outstanding defiance or exposure of the USA & its local sycophants by a local activist

Vote for your choice at www.anti-bases.org

Organised by Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition
02 9688 2854 www.anti-bases.org aabcc@zipworld.com.au

Book Review

Lessons from NAFTA: The High Cost of Free Trade

Author: Tim Pelzer

Edited by Kareb Hansen-Kuhn and Steve Hellinger

Neo-conservatives nowadays are promoting free trade as a key component of economic development. To advance their case, they use the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (CUFTA) as supposed models of free trade.

However, according to *Lessons from NAFTA: The High Cost of Free Trade*, NAFTA and CUFTA have been economic disasters for North America. This well documented work persuasively argues that not only have they failed to meet the lofty goals of those who championed the agreements, but they have contributed to a falling standard of living.

Proponents of NAFTA argued that the agreement would lead to economic growth, more employment, greater productivity and higher wages for Mexicans, Americans and Canadians. According to Mexican researcher Alberto Picard, NAFTA has not led to a high growth economy nor development in Mexico.

The huge trade surplus with the US, the large number of new jobs

was used mainly to buy existing businesses and enlarge the maquiladora sector. It has also led to lower levels of job creation in comparison to pre-NAFTA days, since many national suppliers went out of business after NAFTA. Real wages fell.

Moreover, Picard states that NAFTA restricts the power of democratically elected governments to determine economic policy. For instance, under NAFTA governments cannot impose performance requirements in which manufactures must use domestically produced components or favour nationally owned firms when contracts are dispensed.

Rather than enhancing food security, Mexico now imports more food than it exports. Picard notes that Mexican farmers are unable to compete with more capital intensive, heavily subsidised US farmers.

As a result, two million jobs have been lost in agriculture leading to increased rural poverty, higher food costs and declining prices paid to producers.

Despite the fact that direct foreign investment and exports grew, the nation experienced a lower rate

In the US, according to David Ranney, NAFTA has led to massive job losses in the manufacturing sector and a shift of work towards the low paying service sector.

Canada has experienced the same insidious effects under NAFTA and CUFTA. According to Ranney, John Foster and John Dhillon, 17 percent of jobs have disappeared in the manufacturing sector under free trade and new job growth has produced many low-wage, part time jobs.

The new jobs generated were half of the number created before free trade. Wages have stagnated despite increases in productivity. Furthermore, social spending was cut because government and business leaders argued that Canadian conditions had to be harmonized to US levels.

Despite claims made by proponents, free trade has not led to greater access to US markets as Canada remains subject to arbitrary US actions such as punitive duties on lumber and wheat exports.

The authors are especially critical of NAFTA trade tribunals in charge of resolving disputes. Not only do they have more authority than national courts and government bodies, these tribunals operate secretly, do not have to provide information to the public and their decisions cannot be appealed. They permit companies to bypass local judicial and government bodies and sue governments for actions that reduce profits.

The Mexican, US and Canadian Governments have failed to revise these harmful investor state provisions. More disturbing, Mexico and the US have signed trade deals with other nations that have these same provisions.

Lessons From NAFTA is a compelling critique of free trade. The book's one defect is its failure to define some of the economic terms it uses, but despite this, the book is accessible to the average reader.

Lessons from NAFTA: The High Cost of Free Trade, 133 pp, 2003, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (75 Albert Street, Suite 410; Ottawa, ON, K1P 5E7, Canada), C\$14.95 plus C\$5 shipping (international). The book can be ordered from www.policyalternatives.ca *People's Weekly World* ☼



Under NAFTA job creation has fallen and wages have stagnated

The authors are especially critical of NAFTA trade tribunals in charge of resolving disputes. Not only do they have more authority than national courts and government bodies, these tribunals operate secretly, do not have to provide information to the public and their decisions cannot be appealed.

created and the economic diversification that has taken place cannot be attributed to NAFTA, as supporters of the trade deal allege. The trade surplus is largely due to increased petroleum, maquiladora exports and intra-firm trade among US companies. He also notes that Mexico has run trade surpluses in the past before NAFTA existed.

Furthermore, Mexico's large maquiladora manufacturing sector that existed before NAFTA is an island in the Mexican economy, not much linked to the national economy. Firms import most components and raw materials, assemble them and then ship them to the United States.

The large volume of new investments that poured into the country

of economic growth in comparison to pre-NAFTA periods.

Picard also discusses free trade in a larger context. As Picard correctly states, the "Asian Tigers" in South East Asia did not develop through free trade. In fact, they rejected neo-liberal free market development and opted for state measures to protect and nurture their firms until they were able to compete on the world stage, a point that Picard fails to explore.

This was also the case with the US, England, France and the other developed Capitalist countries. He also states that free trade has to be seen as yet another instrument by the developed capitalist countries to ensure that the Third World adheres to neo-liberal economics.

'Gong workers win emergency service

Wollongong workers have won their battle for 24/7 availability of emergency doctors, after threatening a region-wide strike. A new deal will make a Wollongong Hospital doctor available for medical and rescue work across the Illawarra.

The new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was thrashed out between union delegates, the Ambulance Service of NSW, the Medical Retrieval Unit (MRU), the Westpac Lifesaver Helicopter Service and Illawarra Health.

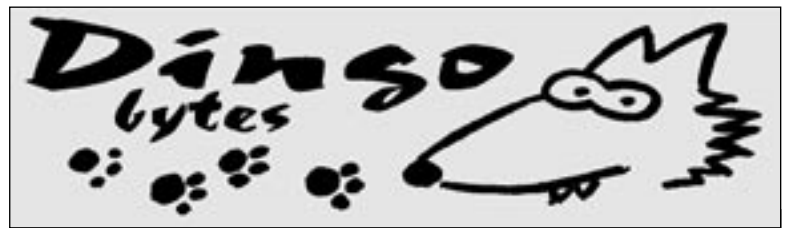
Combined Union delegates in the Illawarra, who unanimously endorsed the new MOU last week, had threatened a district stoppage if no progress was made on their claim for improved emergency services.

Workers campaigned for the service after concrete renderer

Ron Tabak died before he could be reached by a doctor dispatched from Sydney – two and a half hours after witnesses say he fell into a trench.

"This is good news, not just for workers in heavy and dangerous industry, but the broader community as well", said South Coast Labour Council Secretary, Arthur Rorris. "The unanimous vote of combined union delegates is a positive indication that this deal will increase confidence in medical retrieval services in the Illawarra."

"The delegates were particularly appreciative of the goodwill and professionalism of the Wollongong Emergency doctors who undertook their basic helicopter training at short notice this week given their heavy schedules at the hospital. ☼



An information package that whitewashes the Federal Government's treatment of refugees has been soundly and roundly rejected by schools, parents and teachers. The kit, which has been sent to 11,000 schools at a cost to taxpayers of \$100,000, doesn't deal with children in detention and describes refugees being "settled in" by Australians. The NSW Federation of Parents' and Citizens Associations pointed out that there is always a great deal of consultation on material that goes into curriculum at schools. "For the minister [Amanda Vanstone] to just send this off her own bat is unbelievable." The Independent Education Union has rejected it as propaganda and recommended that its members "treat the kit with the contempt it deserves". The Australian Education Union noted that it says nothing about the treatment of child asylum seekers.

The trust fund James Hardie set up for the victims of its decades of asbestos production has been found to be \$1.3 billion short for the payment of the necessary amount of compensation. The company criminally set up the fund then skipped out of the country and set up headquarters in the Netherlands.

The newest piece of anti-democratic legislation proposed by the NSW Carr Government is to change the Bail Act so that people charged with terrorist-related activities are automatically refused bail. If passed, the law will breach the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

According to the latest figures from the Australian Institute of Criminology, homicides from handguns are on the increase – up 42% in 1998/99; 47.5% in 1999/2000; 55% in 2002/03. But overall homicides with a firearm have declined. "These latest figures show that there is a dangerous anomaly in our existing gun laws in Australia i.e. the legal availability of handguns", says the chair of the National Coalition for Gun Control, Samantha Lee. Though the tightening of gun laws in 1996 has seen the reduction overall in such crimes, handgun crime continues to increase. This is because the 1996 agreement between state and federal governments did not include the outlawing of handguns.

CAPITALIST HOG(S) OF THE WEEK: are the two major parties. Suddenly, everyone's green! There must be an election coming. PM Howard has announced the extension of a renewable energy scheme to green his image up. It's all about preferences – on which the election most likely will be decided – and who the Greens will give them to. The ALP's recruitment of Peter Garrett, lawyer and collaborator with big business over environment questions, is the most obvious pitch for green votes, though it's blown up somewhat in their faces. When it was revealed that Garret was not even registered to vote, all in one day last week he not only registered, but joined the Labor Party and a union, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance. In politics such apparently small issues can sometimes have surprisingly far-reaching implications. People are not blind to such cynical opportunism.

Sydney

Stop Coke from killing trade unionists 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

Socialism or Barbarism

The inevitable crisis of imperialism

The brutal treatment of refugees, including children, and their illegal incarceration in isolated camps has shocked many Australians. So too has the failure of the Australian Government to defend the legal rights of two of its citizens who have been illegally held and tortured by the US at its Guantánamo base in Cuba. The Howard Government, with the support of the Australian Labor Party, has given ASIO police state powers and passed a number of laws wiping away long-standing democratic rights. These include provisions for the indefinite secret detention of Australians and the proscribing of organisations without even parliamentary scrutiny. Australia is not alone in the passing of such reactionary "anti-terror" laws. In the US, Britain, Canada and elsewhere governments have, as in Australia, used September 11 to introduce extreme repressive laws and excessively tight security measures. It is not surprising that in such a climate the possibility of fascism is being raised. In the following article David Lethbridge of the Bethune Institute of Anti-Fascist Studies expresses some views on this question. (In reading the article it should be born in mind that it was written in March, 2003.)

A dozen years ago, the capitalist ideologists were unanimous in their conclusion: socialism can not work. Given the immense power of the capitalist media, capitalist political parties, and the capitalist state, this false conclusion filtered down to broad sectors of the working class.

But times have changed. It is increasingly evident that it is capitalism itself which ultimately can not work. A dozen years of unipolar US capitalist power, and what are the results? Not exactly a paradise of peace and plenty.

The US economy is spiraling down into a classic over-production crisis. A decade of firings, lay-offs, corporate restructuring, union-bashing, and wage clawbacks, coupled with the increasing loss of industrial jobs to a poorly paying service industry, have resulted in a working class which can scarcely afford to purchase more than absolute necessities.

Workers in the major capitalist states who may once have believed that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and similar economic treaties would bring prosperity and a higher standard of living are beginning to realise that it was all lies and false promises. Working people already know what academic studies have begun to reveal: that they are working longer hours now, and for less pay, than they did a generation ago.

Across both the USA and Canada, budgets for health care

A dozen years of unipolar US capitalist power, and what are the results? Not exactly a paradise of peace and plenty.

and education have been slashed. In California, significant numbers of community colleges are closing. In Oregon the state has closed hospitals and schools and is refusing to continue subsidising medication for the mentally ill.

At the same time, global capital is facing a crisis of legitimacy. Seattle, Genoa, Quebec City, Kananaskis, all give evidence that corporate globalisation is being massively rejected. In Latin America, the people are already organising and rising against the Free Trade Area of the Americas [FTAA – negotiations are floundering – Ed.]

This crisis of imperialist legitimacy is reflected in the millions upon millions of people across the world who are opposed to the US war on Iraq. Not only do the world's people fail to accept any necessity for the US-led war, but many are beginning to recognise that the

attack on Iraq is only a small part of a far more extensive US plan for the total economic, military, and political domination of the world. That this scheme is in every sense Hitlerian, that this endeavour is in every sense truly fascist, has begun to dawn on large numbers of people.

There are those who will argue that the US state is not yet fascist on the grounds that political parties have not yet been suppressed. This argument flows from the classic analysis of fascism propounded

in the 1930s by the Communist International, and crystallized in the brilliant formulations of Georgi Dimitrov.

And yet what is forgotten in such an argument is that the political parties which were the focus of fascist suppression were the parties of the working class – the communist and socialist parties. In the 1930s, and especially in Europe, the working class parties were the political representatives of broad sectors of the working class. Membership and electoral strength could be measured in terms of tens of millions. Hence the necessity for the fascists to declare such parties illegal and to smash them.

No such necessity exists in the contemporary period, particularly in the US or Canada. Why bother to declare illegal, to smash, or to drive underground the CPUSA or the CPC or any other existing party holding to a socialist platform? While our numbers are indeed growing, our parties are not at all in the same position as the Communist Parties of Germany or of Italy in the 1930s.

And so, because the imperialist ruling class has every capability of carrying out a fascist or quasi-fascist global hegemony while at the same time being able to cover itself with the cloak of a false democracy, why risk ideological exposure? Why risk embroiling itself in a constitutional and legal quagmire by suppressing political parties which – at least for the moment – present no actual threat to their regimes?

The USA is not yet a fascist state. But class analysis easily demonstrates that the line between imperialism and fascism is a thin line indeed.

With a domestic economy in turmoil, with growing numbers of Americans being deprived of even

the basic necessities of health care and education, with an over-production crisis threatening to turn into yet another serious recession, the imperialists, in their drive for world domination, may yet find it expedient to cross that thin line that separates the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie" (Marx), from the "open dictatorship of the most reactionary, chauvinistic and imperialist elements of the financial oligarchy" (Dimitrov).

It would be not only politi-

That this scheme is in every sense Hitlerian, that this endeavour is in every sense truly fascist, has begun to dawn on large numbers of people.



Anti-racism and anti-fascism: a Marxist curriculum

David Lethbridge

Want to learn about racism and fascism? There are any number of books available on these topics by mainstream, liberalist, anarchist, and even conservative writers. What they all lack, however, is any form of class analysis, any discussion of how racism and fascism serve the ruling class and are part and parcel of class rule under capitalism. For such an analysis, Marxism provides the tools.

But these days, it is more and more difficult to find Marxist books at the local bookstore, no matter what the topic. And since racism and fascism are such central and important features of contemporary capitalism, the lack of easy availability to the necessary Marxist texts is all the more disturbing.

Still, the books exist. In these right-wing times, it just takes a bit

of digging to find them. But what to read? What's the required reading list? Here's the curriculum for Anti-Racism:

(1) Begin with *On Colonialism*, a collection by Marx and Engels. What is so significant about the essays in this collection is that they deal with the revolutions and liberation movements in countries such as India, Persia, and China without exhibiting the least breath of racism or paternalism.

These essays were written at a time when Western Europe, and especially Great Britain, were actively constructing non-white peoples as racially, intellectually, and morally inferior. Popular novels of the day – the Sherlock Holmes stories by Conan Doyle, for example – were filled with the most ugly racial and anti-Semitic caricatures. Scholarly and academic writing was just as nakedly racist. And, of

course, the imperialist policies of the Western "great powers" were nothing other than white racism in action.

But nothing of this poisonous ideology is to be found in Marx and Engels. On the contrary, their support for anti-imperialist revolution is an example of class analytic anti-racism in action.

(2) *Anti-Semitism and Zionism*, edited by Daniel Rubin. This very timely book includes numerous selections by Lenin advocating complete unity between Jewish and non-Jewish sectors of the proletariat in the fight against anti-Semitism, as well as a variety of contemporary Marxist analyses of Zionist national chauvinism, and the tendency of Zionism to support monopoly capitalism. This important book demonstrates the necessity for combatting anti-Semitism while at the same time exposing

the reactionary nature of Zionist ideology.

(3) *Fighting Racism*, by Gus Hall. Forty years of essays by the former leader of the Communist Party of the USA, demonstrate how the system of discrimination against African-Americans splits the working class and allows the ruling class to reap billions in super-profits. These easy to read essays explore every aspect of white supremacy – "the nation's most dangerous pollutant."

(4) *We Charge Genocide*, edited by William L Patterson. This volume consists primarily of the historic petition presented to the United Nations in 1951 charging the US state with genocide against African-Americans. Basing itself on the UN convention on genocide, the text includes literally thousands of documented examples of lynchings, beatings, frame-ups, false arrests,

and orchestrated murders of Black Americans. Patterson was the director of the Civil Rights Congress, and a Communist militant with decades of experience fighting the US state's policy of white supremacy.

(5) *Against Fascism and War*, by George Dimitrov. As General-Secretary of the Communist International, Dimitrov's 1935 report to the Seventh World Congress presents the classic Marxist-Leninist analysis of the origins of fascist state power and outlines the politics of the united front strategy for its defeat. As much as the capitalist ruling class has tried to deny it, Dimitrov's formulation that fascism represents "the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital" is as applicable today as it was during the prelude to World War Two.

Cuba: Call for an anti-fascist front

David Lethbridge

Cuba has a long and proud history in combating imperialism and supporting the anti-fascist struggle. Cuba was in the forefront of building international support for Angela Davis and in providing a safe haven for Assata Shakur and for members of the Black Panther Party who were fleeing assassination attempts by the US state. Cuban volunteers played a pivotal and decisive role in the armed struggle against the fascist government of South Africa in the apartheid era. Cuba, unique among all nations, has erected a monument to Julius and Ethel Rosenberg – Communists framed and murdered by the US Government.

Now, Cuba has called for the creation of an international anti-fascist front.

Proclaimed under the leadership of the National Council of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC), the statement calling for an anti-fascist front is based on the proposition that a “neo-fascist machine has been set in motion” by the US state, and that the “war of pillage and destruction against the people of Iraq” is an overt and obvious expression of this tendency.

According to Carlos Marti, president of UNEAC, US “neo-fascism has global aspirations and what is dangerous is that now it has neither armed opposition nor any containment wall, nor is there any force capable of stopping it”.

Further, “the United States violates all agreements on international law and seeks to do away with the sacred principles of national sovereignty and the right to self-determination”.

“Ominously”, Marti said, “the rule of law is being replaced by the law of those that rule”. Moreover, the machinery of global communications and media is so under the control of US propaganda that “every day repetitions of the message of the United States’ superiority ... is complemented with a view that converts the Third World, anything that is not the United States ... into a caricature”.

In short, “what we are denouncing is a sinister attempt to set up

or impose a world neo-fascist tyranny”.

Given the terrible force and power of US imperialism as it moves increasingly toward fascism, is there anything that can be done? In UNEAC’s view, there are countervailing tendencies which must be nourished and expanded.

Marti points, for example, to an anti-war, anti-imperialist consciousness which has led to massive demonstrations around the world. And Dr Graciella Poglotti, speaking at a UNEAC meeting, made the point that it is now necessary to “move forward in our attempt to deconstruct the ultra-right’s thinking, its neo-fascist doctrine.”

In this regard, Marti recalls the Havana Cultural Congress of 1968 when Roberto Fernandez Retamar reversed the notorious remark by Nazi leader Joseph Goebbels, “When I hear the word culture, I draw my revolver”. Retamar said in response, “When I hear the word fascism, I draw my culture”.

A major plank, then, in Cuba’s call for an international anti-fascist front, is the mobilisation of intellectuals and artists, the mobilisation of a cultural front, to combat the power of US state propaganda.

UNEAC notes that there are important historical precedents in the cultural opposition to fascism: the First Congress of Anti-fascist Intellectuals, held in Paris in 1935; the Second Congress of Anti-fascist Intellectuals, held in Valencia in 1937; and the “Manifesto of the 121” signed in France in support of the war of liberation in Algeria; and the very recent “Not In Our Name” manifesto signed by many US intellectuals.

Perhaps needless to say, UNEAC is under no illusion that the struggle against neo-fascism can be won by cultural workers alone. On the contrary, UNEAC’s declaration is explicit in suggesting that the cultural struggle must be joined with – and be a fully integrated part of – a mass and broad-based people’s struggle.

Nevertheless, it is UNEAC’s position that the cultural struggle is central to rolling back neo-fascist aggression. Imperialist and anti-democratic ideas that are ceaselessly promoted by US propaganda and

disinformation, and have unfortunately taken root in the minds of so many, must be countered by a concerted international campaign for democratic, anti-imperialist and anti-fascist ideology and values.

And, as UNEAC highlights, there are already signs that a united cultural-political resistance is building, especially in Brazil, Venezuela, and other South American countries where universities and cultural institutions have for so long been under attack. Members of UNEAC also point to the very warm reception given to a Cuban children’s dance troupe touring in California as the war against Iraq broke out.

Thousands of anti-war protesters went straight from the demonstrations to the theatre and a bond of solidarity was forged between them. “Culture and art”, UNEAC maintains, “are the best weapons to fight barbarism”.

Concrete steps have already been taken. UNEAC’s call has been translated into seven languages and distributed to universities, intellectual organisations, and Internet websites. A website specific to UNEAC’s call will be set up under the Cuban Ministry of Culture and constantly updated. New publications are being organised.

Today, this Cuban initiative is critical. Imperialist warmongers are stepping up the demand for armed aggression against many of the world’s nations, and are deepening the police state tactics already in evidence in the US and Canada. Alarming, Cuba itself is coming under increasing threat by the US neo-fascist leadership.

What organisations in Canada are capable of rising to Cuba’s call for an internationalist anti-fascist front? Certainly the trade union movement, broad progressive forces, and above all the Communist Party of Canada must play a leading role. Every effort must be made to enlist progressive writers, artists, film-makers, actors, and musicians to come to the defence of the Cuban Revolution and to raise the popular consciousness against the reality and the global danger of US neo-fascism.

Bethune Institute for Anti-Fascist Studies, (Canada) Sept 2003 ☪



cal folly, but a betrayal of the working class to pretend that the danger of fascism is not increasing, and increasing rapidly. For, as the famous writer Norman Mailer recently noted, the preconditions for fascism have already been constructed in the US.

The critical juncture at which point capitalism in its imperialist phase either descends into fascist barbarism or is overthrown by the working class and its allies is approaching; how quickly it is as yet too early to foresee. But recent history has begun to indicate that capitalism can no longer operate as it has in the past.

Endless war and deepening poverty may well be the oracular stars under which a groaning and blood-soaked capitalism must surely lay down on a hill of skulls, both to die and to give birth to an infant socialism, squalling, and red, and bursting with bountiful new life. ☪

“We know that the transition from capitalism to socialism is a very difficult task. But we are ready to endure thousands of difficulties and to make a thousand attempts, and after the thousandth attempt we will commence the one thousand and first.”

**Lenin
Collected Works
Vol 23 Page 56**

(6) **Lectures on Fascism**, by Palmiro Togliatti. As leader of the Communist Party of Italy, Togliatti’s Lectures complement Dimitrov’s analysis. The particular value in Togliatti’s work is its use of Marxist concepts to explore the ideological and organizational forces fascism employs to create a mass base of power.

(7) **Fascism and Social Revolution**, by R Palme Dutt. Firmly locating fascism in the context of imperialism, Dutt examines the rise of fascism in Italy, Germany, and Austria in fine detail. Of particular importance is his factual demonstration of the role played by social democracy in betraying the working class and making the rise of fascism possible.

(8) **Economics of Racism: Roots of Black Inequality**, and **Economics of Racism II**, by Victor Perlo. Perlo’s two books are an

effective exercise in Marxist political economy. Much as Marx had done in the nineteenth century, Perlo uses the rich data bases of the state to demonstrate the many ways in which white racism perpetuates and institutionalizes poverty in communities of colour, while at the same time not only generating enormous profits for the ruling class, but also ensuring lower wages and a stagnant or declining standard of living for white workers.

But the course isn’t over yet! When you have read the books, what’s next? The most important part: the practicum. In the classroom, at multicultural seminars, in the labour hall, or out on the streets, it’s time to take up the banner of Marxism and put anti-racism and anti-fascism into action.

Bethune Institute for Anti-Fascist Studies. Further info visit www.bethuneinstitute.org ☪



Major tasks for new Iraqi Govt

In an editorial last week (before the UN Security Council adopted its definitive resolution concerning the future of Iraq) *Tareeq Al-Shaab*, the newspaper of the Iraqi Communist Party, said that the discussion between the Iraqi Governing Council, the Coalition Provisional Authority and Mr Lakhdar Ibrahim, the Special Adviser of the UN Secretary-General had acquired special significance. It had taken place under exceedingly complex and sensitive circumstances and during a transition period towards building the requirements and conditions for democracy in Iraq.

The newspaper said that the institutions of the new government are expected to undertake the momentous task of regaining power on June 30 and leading the country over the next seven months.

The first task is to create a suitable political, administrative and security atmosphere in which to hold direct general elections in the country and prepare the necessary prerequisites, including a census,

electoral law, legislation for the press and political parties, etc.

Preparations also have to be made to draft the country's constitution and organise a referendum on it. This will be followed by the first elections for an Iraqi National Assembly and the formation of a government.

End occupation, regain sovereignty

The people of Iraq, after years of persistence, suffering and struggle, are looking forward to June 30 as an historic turning point in their lives and an important signal for ending the occupation and regaining national sovereignty.

The editorial said that June 30 will not be a "magical day" to end the legacy and effects of years of dictatorship and its wars, the strangulating sanctions, compounded by difficulties and hardship resulting from the occupation. However, it is crucial to reassure Iraqi citizens about the correctness of the path being pursued and the determination to address a wide range of social and economic problems and difficulties



A protest in Los Angeles earlier this month

the people face every day.

The first test for the newly formed government will be for it to represent, not a particular ethnicity, religious group, sect or political party, but all the Iraqis and their aspirations. It is essential that it re-examines the previous period which began on April 9, 2003 and seriously attend to weaknesses, deficiencies and improper practices.

Iraq is home to all Iraqis, who are equal in rights and duties before the law says the editorial. And all Iraqis have an equal opportunity to compete for positions in any state institution, each according to her/his

ability and level of competency.

It becomes important to gain the people's confidence and mobilise them to defend their own rights. This will help to develop people's initiatives so that they can play an active role in achieving patriotic tasks to end the occupation, regain full sovereignty, rebuild the country's economy and establish a democratic Iraq.

People's priorities are far too obvious: security and stability, tackling the problems of rampant unemployment by creating job opportunities, ensuring basic services, especially electricity now that

summer is approaching.

It is essential that every Iraqi citizen feels that real changes have occurred and correct steps have been taken, first and foremost to safeguard her/his interests and satisfy basic needs.

The new government, as it assumes its duties, has big commitments to fulfill in order to ensure safe and secure passage over the next seven months. All citizens look forward to palpable achievements and successes that will place them on the road to building a new free, democratic and prosperous Iraq. ☼

Justifying torture

The *Washington Post* has revealed the existence of reports written by US government experts in 2002 and 2003 justifying torture, but US Attorney General John Ashcroft has refused to turn them over to Congress.

According to the *Post*, the US Justice Department commented in an August, 2002 memorandum addressed to the White House that resorting to torture in the battle against terrorism could be justified by arguments of legitimate defence.

The *Post* affirmed that in August 2000, the memorandum was sent by the office of the Justice Department's legal counsel in response to a request by the CIA and was directed to the White House

counsel, Alberto González.

The memorandum, the *Post* adds, also argues that to inflict moderate or temporary harm does not necessarily constitute torture, which "should be equivalent in intensity to the pain that accompanies a serious physical injury, such as damage to an organ, impeding a bodily function or even death."

That 2002 memorandum served as the basis for a secret report in March 2003 that was prepared by Pentagon lawyers for Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, after commanders at the Guantánamo Naval Base (on illegally occupied Cuban territory) complained that they were not getting enough information out of prisoners. ☼

Torture highlights

A few examples to illustrate the history of Washington's use of torture:

In Iran, the CIA instructed SAVAK, the Iranian secret police, in torture techniques. The *New York Times* quoted Jesse J Leaf, a former head Iran analyst for the CIA, "I do remember seeing and being told of [CIA personnel] who were there seeing the rooms and being told of torture. And I know that the torture rooms were toured and it was all paid for by the USA."

The notorious Operation Phoenix, set up by the CIA to wipe out the infrastructure of the Vietnamese Liberation Front, subjected suspects to torture such as: electric shock to the genitals of both men and women, and insertion of a six-inch dowel into the ear, which was tapped through the brain until the victim died.

The "School of the Americas" is an infamous CIA training school where many South American military personnel are still taught torture techniques. Under public pressure, SOA officials released training manuals that offered instruction of various methods of torture.

In response to the torture rev-

elation in Iraq, George W Bush said "that's not the way we do things in America", but there is plenty of evidence to the contrary. In US-colonised Puerto Rico, Socialist and Vieques activist leader Angel Rodriguez Cristobal was arrested at a protest then taken to the federal detention facility in Tallahassee, Florida where he was discovered dead from hanging. An independent examination of Cristobal's body revealed that he was also tortured.

In New York City, Abner Louima is the best-known recent example of what can happen at the hands of US law enforcement, who has been granted greater powers to terrorise poor communities. In a country with a prison population of over two million, the highest incarceration rate in the world, torture is a well hidden but common event.

Torture is traditional in the way this country is ruled. Since the earliest days of US history, physical terror was used against Native peoples and African Americans to maintain their subjugation at a time when the rulers of the country were building their political power and accumulating wealth by thievery.

Courtesy – www.viequessupport.org ☼

Choices for Canada

Statement, Communist Party of Canada

After months of speculation, Prime Minister Paul Martin has finally set June 28 for his rendezvous with the history books. Not since 1988 – when four voters out of every seven were opposed to the Free Trade Agreement, only to get trumped by the minority – has a federal election been in such doubt.

As the campaign begins, Martin's Liberals are sinking into minority territory in the polls, dragged down by the Liberal premiers of the three largest provinces. Gordon Campbell and Jean Charest are detested by working people in BC and Quebec for their brutal attacks against social programs and labour rights. And now the Liberal "brand" has become further tainted in Ontario by Treasurer Dalton McGuinty's budget, ditching election promises still fresh in the minds of voters.

If the PM had an exit strategy from this election, maybe he would have used it. But at this point, postponing the campaign would have done the Liberals even more harm. Instead, Martin has decided to campaign boldly against the Americanisation of Canada. The irony is almost unbelievable.

Since 1993 – with Martin playing a leading role – the Liberals have done more to integrate Canada into the US empire than any previous federal government, despite increasing resistance from millions of Canadians.

Even as the Liberals claim to defend social programs, the Conservatives call themselves the party of "change." Both are liars, and both should be utterly rejected

by working class voters. Despite cosmetic changes to election finance rules, both old-line parties remain creatures of the big corporations – US and Canadian – which have dominated Canada for decades.

Fortunately, there are other alternatives – the Greens and the Bloc Québécois. Generally speaking, we urge all progressive-minded voters to support candidates who have a proven record of working with the labour and democratic movements to advance the interests of the working class. The possibilities of achieving a better Canada will be improved if more such candidates are elected to the next Parliament.

But we also urge working people to give careful consideration to the candidates of the Communist Party

of Canada. A higher vote for the CPC on June 28 will be an important step forward. During the 1940s and '50s, when Communists were elected to Parliament and to the Ontario and Manitoba legislatures, major social gains were achieved by the working class. When that happens again, politics in this country will undergo a dynamic transformation. Electing Communists as part of a progressive bloc in Parliament would give a voice to those with the most far-sighted vision of a new Canada, one in which working people, not big business, will control our destiny.

Your vote for a Communist candidate is not "wasted" – it's the strongest possible vote for your future! ☼

G8 leaders divided over Iraq debt

The G-8 leaders, meeting in Sea Island, in the US state of Georgia last week came to an impasse over many issues, including Iraq's debt.

The leaders at the meeting of the eight industrialised countries (G-8) were divided over the issue of Iraq's debt, with European states resisting US calls to quickly forgive almost all of it.

A French official told reporters that the G-8 had agreed to forgive a "substantial" part of Iraq's US\$120 billion debt but had not set a precise figure.

The United States has called for up to 90 percent of Iraq's debt to be cancelled while countries such as France, Russia and Canada are unwilling to go so far.

The official said no precise percentage was included in the

draft declaration expected to be adopted by the G-8 leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States.

A Russian official also said the United States was pressing the G-8 to cancel "a maximum of the debt by the end of 2004" to help the war-ravaged country get back on its feet, but not all countries agreed.

Moscow, which is owed US\$8.5 billion in Iraq's debt, prefers "a more-open formula" for dealing with the debt, the Russian official said.

He said that Russian President Vladimir Putin is ready to cancel 65 percent of the Iraqi debt and is also linking the move to the ability of his country's businesses to operate in Iraq.

Xinhua ☼

US: State pension crisis

John Case

In the wake of numerous pension scandals and swindles since the 2000 market crash, it should come as no surprise that many US state retirement plans are seriously under-funded. The breadth and depth of the refinancing efforts highlight speculative abuses and miscalculations by many pension fund managers in the 1990's boom years.

The Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation reported large under-funding issues for both private and public defined benefit plans. Public plans are not subject to the Employment, Retirement Income Security Act's funding, vesting, disclosure and fiduciary rules, insufficient as they are. Public employees in many states will now have to struggle to protect their retirement systems from the same kind of disaster that hit private funds.

California, Illinois, Kansas, New Jersey, Oregon, West Virginia and Wisconsin have authorised bonds, i.e. deficits, to address state or local unfunded liabilities.

New York authorised local governments to bond for any contributions in excess of seven percent of salaries for FY 2005.

Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska and Washington increased mandatory contribution rates by statute. Many states do not require legislation to increase contribution rates.

Colorado, Missouri, New York and New Jersey limited the mandatory contributions of state agency employers and local governments in order to phase in substantial increases in contributions. (The Colorado legislation was vetoed.)

Missouri and New Jersey prohibited benefit increases until pension systems' finances improve.

Oregon completely reorganised the Public Employee Retirement System to address an unfunded accrued liability of US\$15 billion as of October 2002.

Illinois cut contributions to five state pension plans by US\$3 billion through 2005 to avert a budget crisis. But this is expected to have a \$20 billion tab down the road.

Instead of counting on another boom in the stock market to rescue

them, the US\$8 billion Maine State Retirement System shifted the bulk of its US\$3 billion fixed-income allocation to Treasury inflation-protected securities (TIPS), which are adjusted to reflect inflation. This approach is tailored to more closely match the fund's liabilities, lessening the opportunity for high-flying returns, but also substantially lessening risk of an under-funded plan.

"Pay-to-Play"

Because public pension funds typically have assets in the billions of dollars, they are often a subject for unethical dealings and inappropriate behaviour by public pension officials. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) documented "pay-to-play" allegations in 17 states and drafted a stringent rule

Because public pension funds typically have assets in the billions of dollars, they are often a subject for unethical dealings

as a result. "Pay-to-Play" is the pervasive practice of requiring municipal securities participants to make political contributions to municipal officials in order to be considered as an underwriter or advisor the municipality's pension fund.

The proposed rule received so many "negative responses" from public fund officials and investment firms that the SEC backed off of the regulation.

The at-risk pension plans discussed here are all "defined benefit" pension plans. They put the burden of satisfying pension promises on the plan sponsor or employer. What's "defined" is the benefit, not the contribution.*

Most workers do not have resources to risk in the stock market. Employers, and thus public pension plans, are clearly feeling the pain of a real social liability. They are charged with making contributions sufficient to satisfy fund liabilities.

Despite the growth of the economy at the end of the 1990s, public plans' liabilities were increasing at a faster pace than the economy.

Since 2000, matters have worsened. In the short term, managers passed expenses on to future generations by issuing Pension Obligation Bonds (POBs) [a form of borrowing - Ed.]. These POBs allow the plans to engage in classic arbitrage, postponing a reckoning in the hope of being saved by another boom.

The Bush administration would like to relieve investors of the liability of actually paying pensions owed to workers. Forget "defined benefit" plans - they sound too much like an "entitlement".

Following Maine's example would give them a headache thinking of all those forgone "huge returns". Why not put everyone's future in the IRAs and Keogh plans (the stock market). In fact, why not put Social Security there too. Do

nothing about reforming ERISA to protect Enron workers, or steel workers, of course.

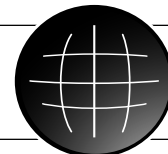
Bush to workers: Work till you're dead, or nearly so. Then die on the steps of a private "for profit" hospital begging for treatment. Well, it solves the impending pension crunch!

***In Australia superannuation funds (mostly public sector) offered defined benefits - a certain percentage of former salary which was indexed in line with CPI increases - for the rest of the retiree's life. Over the last 15 or so years employees have been encouraged to transfer to or offered no choice but to join accumulation funds, where the payment on retirement a lump sum depends on the performance of the fund. In the process the risk has shifted from the government and fund to the individual worker - Ed.**

People Before Profits: People's Weekly World Newspaper, Communist Party USA. ☪



Most workers do not have resources to risk on the stock market



Global briefs

GERMANY: The ashes of former East German leader Erich Honecker can be buried in a cemetery at his home town of Neunkirchen, a German official said. Markus Mueller, an official of Neunkirchen city, which is 50 km from the German border with France, told the local media that a burial site would be available if the Honecker family applied. Erich Honecker led the German Democratic Republic from 1971 to 1989 and died in exile in Chile in May 1994. He was tried in the united Germany for high treason but German authorities later dropped charges against him because he was sick with cancer. Honecker's widow Margot has kept the urn with his ashes in her apartment in Santiago since his death.

POLAND: The Polish military angrily denied that its troops have been involved in prisoner abuse in Iraq. Witness statements leaked by the US military suggest that troops from Poland and other countries could be involved in abusing prisoners in Iraq. "I don't know if this is an attempt on the part of the US media to water down responsibility for what happened in the Abu Ghraib prison", Polish army chief of staff spokesman told Polish television. Poland commands a 6200-strong multinational force in south-central Iraq.

AFGHANISTAN: Medics sans Frontiers (MSF) suspended all its operations in Afghanistan after five of its staff were killed by gunmen claiming to have acted on behalf of Taliban. MSF has been in Afghanistan since 1979 and worked throughout the Taliban period. "For the time being our activities will be suspended nationwide", its acting head of mission said at a press conference in Kabul. With elections delayed from June to September, there are fears that the Taliban will step up action to disrupt the polling. More than three million people have registered to vote in the postponed elections.

SERBIA: Three years after the NATO-led war in Serbia, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are still a big health concern, especially among refugees living in remote areas. Almost half those questioned by a team of US researchers and doctors from a university hospital in Belgrade had symptoms of depression and more than one in eight had symptoms of PTSD.

ISRAEL: Israel has developed its first surface-to-surface missile with a range of at least 300 kilometres, according to a report in *Jane's Defence Weekly*. The missile could reach into the territories of all of its neighbours. The missile is guided by a global positioning system and can hover over an area before confirming its target.

EL SALVADOR: Coca-Cola is buying sugar from a mill in El Salvador that is supplied by sugar plantations exploiting child labour. A Human Rights Watch report identified several plantations where children as young as eight work. The group focused on Coca-Cola Company, as it is one of the largest buyers of sugar in the country. The International Labour Organisation estimates that at least 5000 and as many as 30,000 children under the age of 18 work on Salvadorean sugar farms.

Chávez calls for defeat of recall referendum

Javier Rodriguez

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez said that in the forthcoming presidential referendum - which he described as "reaffirmative" - the Bolivarians would defeat the plan to hand over the country; a plan that is being directed by the opposition and their foreign masters.

The head of state was speaking to a huge contingent of hundreds of thousands of people who filled the spacious Avenida Bolívar - an eight-lane highway linking the centre of the capital with the east - to demonstrate their support for the leader.

Chávez specified that the Venezuelan oligarchy - a traitor to Simón Bolívar's dream - is attempting to take over control of Venezuela's oil in league with its masters in the US, but will never be able to do so because now, and in

the future, that resource will continue to be the heritage of the nation.

He announced that he intends to lead the campaign for victory in the August referendum, at the head of a group known as Maisanta, in

"We will not permit them to rob us of the future and the dream of our new homeland"

memory of General Pedro Pérez Delgado, a hero of the independence struggle.

He called for major organisational efforts at base level and, at

the same time, the formation of commands within neighbourhoods and blocks so as to ensure that no one is left out of this battle in which the people will once again demonstrate how history is written.

"The democracy of the elite is over in Venezuela, as is appeasement and anti-patriotism, and I call on everyone to strive with all their will and effort to attain a victory, as we will not permit them to rob us of the future and the dream of our new homeland", the President stated.

He praised the increase in popular organisation that is driving the movement underway - a movement aimed at achieving victory at the next people's referendum - arousing the enthusiasm of those present, a veritable human river of red berets and flags that marched several kilometres from three different points in the capital.

Granma ☪

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Purely utopian?

I would like to buy into the discussion sparked off by Pat Barile's article, "Capitalism & jobs – the fundamentals" (*Guardian* May 19).

Bob Saltis (*Guardian* June 2) is absolutely correct to be critical of the Ludditism that's redolent of Barile's article and his/her vagueness as regards being able to point to a practical, Marxist way forward for working class activists.

While I don't agree necessarily with some of Bob's suggestions as to "where to begin", I don't think Bruce Gillman (*Guardian*, June 9) gets us closer when he says that workers "are satisfied at present with the 'social policies' of the Greens and the Labor Party and this is a reflection of the political reality in Australia" which can only be changed by working more

conscientiously to implement current CPA policy.

In my view, current CPA policy as regards the election of a "people's government" is *purely utopian*. Workers who try to get seats in the bosses' parliament and neglect more important political work on *their own terrain*, the point of production, are wasting their time.

Even if they do manage to get into parliament, workers, by not being subjected to the daily rigors of subjectively living the class struggle, get accustomed to the comfortable parliamentary surroundings and high salary and begin to forget why they are there in the first place.

Those who don't forget may, on the other hand, develop a distorted sense of self-importance and discharge their powers in an elitist and non-consultative manner.

If workers get to parliament, it's essential that they be made responsible to, and kept on the straight and narrow by, politicised and organised workers at the workplaces.

That's why, in my view working class activists need to focus on rebuilding the trade union movement as a *priority*, winning it back from useless or blatantly, anti-worker leaderships, and reinvigorating it with democracy and workers' participation.

Working class activists should be

in the business of making trade unionists out of workers and socialists out of trade unionists. Only by agitating for workers' class interests – not their corporate interests, not sectarian party interests – within the trade unions will this be achieved.

Working towards creating an industrially militant and politically conscious working class that is democratically organised is, in my view, the first important step towards bringing in a socialism that truly constitutes, in the words of Marx, "the self-emancipation of the working class".

Peter Siegl
Marrickville, NSW

Australia's Armageddon Alliance and Peter Garrett

Peter Garret, the ALP's wunderkind, in a dramatic volte face supports the biggest CIA base in the world at Pine Gap because "the international situation has changed and that it's terrorism now; not nuclear disarmament" (*SMH*, June 11).

Like the ALP and the Coalition, his comment reveals profound ignorance about the transformation in US global military objectives. The US has declared a policy of Full

Spectrum Dominance based on pre-emptive nuclear strike even against non-nuclear nations and total control of space from which it will conduct 24/7 reconnaissance of the planet.

USAF Space Command will respond to use of space by nations deemed unfriendly to the US by the Five Ds: Destroy, Disrupt, Delay, Degrade and Deny.

In 1996 Space Command's General Joseph Ashy said: "It's politically sensitive, and it isn't in vogue, but, absolutely, we're going to fight in space. We're going to fight from space, and we're going to fight into space".

Thanks to turncoats like Peter Garrett this Armageddon vision is increasingly becoming vogue and Australia is at the heart of it.

Gareth Smith
Byron Bay, NSW
Nuclear Disarmament Party

Bob replies to Bruce

It seems that Bruce Gillman (*Guardian*, June 9) doesn't accept that my letter (*Guardian*, June 2) is a constructive contribution to the task of gaining the support of workers for the CPA. In an unnecessary paragraph he poses a hypothetical situation and suggests

that I would be "lambasting" the communist party. Come, come, comrade. That's not the way to welcome discussion.

Bruce claims that the CPA's policy proposals have not yet been taken up by the working class because "most are satisfied at present with the 'social policies' of the Greens and the Labor Party".

He dismisses my proposal of buying strategic parcels of shares in companies from the capitalists with their own money as a gimmick and insists that the "job is to work conscientiously to change the situation".

What exactly are you suggesting, Bruce? That I am not working conscientiously?

Trust me, Bruce. I am active amongst working class people. My fingers are on the pulse, so to speak. The point is, if most are satisfied, we should at least be able to gain the support of those who aren't. The question is: Why aren't we?

I suggest that they aren't happy with the road map (to use current popular jargon) that is being presented to them. They are being asked to work to create an alternative government and want to see something more specific coming from the CPA. That's where my \$80 billion a year gimmick fits in.

Bob Saltis
Adelaide, SA

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Talking of greed



Ostentatious. Self-indulgent. Bill Gates.

There is no Nobel Prize for greed, so *Forbes Magazine*, the mag rich people read, fills the gap with its annual list of the world's richest people. For the last nine years the man at the top of the list has been Bill Gates, who as founder of Microsoft, parlayed mostly other people's innovations into market domination for his company and a massive fortune (US\$46 billion or \$63 billion in our money) for himself.

If there were a Nobel Prize for greed it would surely go to Gates. While around a quarter of the US population live in trailer parks and run down tenements (those that have a home at all), Gates makes do with a garish mansion costing a mere US\$60 million.

His little shack has a *thirty-car* garage. Ostentatious? Self-indulgent? Gross? You bet!

However, as we have noted before, the US economy is in big trouble. The value of the US dollar has fallen substantially against its European rival, the Euro, and Bill Gates' fortune has accordingly lost ground against at least one rival "entrepreneur".

The fortune of Ingvar Kamprad, the Swedish founder of "assemble it yourself" furniture manufacturer IKEA, is now assessed as US\$53 billion (over \$72 billion Australian).

Kamprad set up IKEA in 1943, when the rest of the world was enmeshed in WW2. Sweden, like Franco Spain, was nominally neutral but strongly supported the Axis.

Trading with Germany but invaded by no one, a financial conduit for both sides, Swedish capitalism did quite well out of the War. After the War, Kamprad moved to another neutral country with very accommodating tax laws, Switzerland.

The May 30th 2004 *Sunday Telegraph*, reporting the *Fortune* rich list, gushed over Kamprad's "avuncular charm" and his penchant for using public transport and shopping around for a cheap haircut.

That someone with a personal fortune of \$72 billion baulks at paying more than \$13.50 for a haircut smacks not so much of the common touch as of miserliness, but we'll let that pass.

As anyone who has ever bought IKEA furniture will tell you, Kamprad's shops are not famous for their low prices!

Another whose shops are clearly not as low-priced as they could be is Karl Albrecht. With his brother Theo, Karl founded the Aldi supermarket chain.

Aldi's gimmick was, supposedly, cheap, no-frills shopping. We had one in Wyong for a while, and certainly the shop's decor was pretty basic.

I did not find their prices all that low, however. Certainly they were not so low as to prevent Albrecht accumulating a fortune of a cool US\$23 billion (\$31.4 billion) from "cheap, no frills" shopping.

Also in *Fortune's* top ten was the family of

the late Sam Walton, boss of retail giant Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart has been much in the news lately, mainly over its anti-worker employment practices.

A notorious payer of minimum wages (as little as US\$8 an hour), Wal-Mart has also been sued for "time shaving" – doctoring employees' time records so they appear to have worked less hours than they did and are consequently paid less than they should be.

This sharp practice is now rife in US chain stores where managers are given a payroll budget, but the budget allows workers insufficient time to complete the work. When the work goes over the time allotted, the payment for the extra time often comes out of the manager's salary.

It's a big incentive for managers to force workers to work harder and faster, or to "shave" the computer records of hours worked and pay the workers less according to the amended records.

Beth Terrell, a US lawyer representing workers suing Wal-Mart for doctoring time records, points out: "These employees can scarcely afford to have time deleted. They're barely paying their bills already."

Which is why the Walton family can enjoy life among the ten richest billionaires in the world.

They may not win the Nobel Prize for greed but they are certainly contenders.

World of magic

The new *Harry Potter* film opened last week amidst lots of media space given over to the witches and wizards that inhabit J K Rowling's very imaginative concept, in which the "world of magic" coexists (sometimes uneasily) with the normal, everyday, non-magic ("Muggle") world.

Her early novels in the series have a lot of humour in them; the later ones (written for older children) are much darker, with real danger, pain, death even torture.

One very prominent aspect of the novels that gets far too little attention from bourgeois critics, however, is the strong anti-racist theme that runs through all the books.

All her villains, the "dark wizards" and their obnoxious progeny like Harry's schoolboy enemy Draco Malfoy, are racists. They pursue a racial purity in "all wizard" families, untainted by "dirty blood" brought in by intermarriage with non-magical folk.

They seek to "purify" the wizarding world by actually exterminating those, like Harry's friend Hermione, who have non-magical parents.

These are powerful issues to explore in children's literature and Rowling does it well.

Those who think the series is just another middle-class boarding school collection – an impression the films to some extent support – should read the books. ☘



Sun June 20 ~
~ Sat 26 June

This week's "wonder" on *Seven Wonders Of The Industrial World* (ABC 7.30pm Sundays) is London's 19th century sewers, built to a plan by a man dubbed "the sewer king", Joseph Bazalgette.

By ending the killer epidemics of cholera that ravaged London, killing 30,000 in the mid-19th century, Bazalgette is credited with saving more lives than any other Victorian official.

Bazalgette "impossibly ambitious" scheme called for the use of 318 million bricks to link over 1000 miles of street sewers with 82 miles of main sewers. His vision required extraordinary and novel engineering solutions to set the bricks into watertight tunnels and create vast steam pumping engines, installed in gothic cathedrals of engineering.

The saga of the construction of the sewers is inter-cut with the scientific detective story to uncover the source of the cholera epidemics that bedevilled the city.

SBS did not provide me with a preview tape of the four-part drama series *Jean Moulin* (SBS 7.30pm Sundays) so I have not been able to see it, which is a pity because its worth to some

extent depends on just what line it takes towards its subject.

The series is based on the life of Jean Moulin, who died at the hands of his Nazi torturers in 1943. He had been the first Chairman of France's National Resistance Council.

Set up on May 27, 1943, on the initiative of the Communist Resistance group the FTP (*Francs-Tireurs et Partisans*), the Council united some 33 representatives of all the political parties and organisations participating in the Resistance Movement.

Even while WW2 was on, and certainly in the decades since, the bourgeoisie has been at pains to down-play the role of the Communists and to portray the Resistance as being inspired, guided and organised almost solely from London.

The reality was that in virtually all European countries, it was the Communists who united the various Resistance groups, led the Resistance and built up the partisan armies that fought the Nazis.

Moulin was, I think, a bourgeois democrat. It will be interesting to see how the series portrays his relationship with the Communists.

I am not a fan of Andrew Davies' television adaptations of classic English novels. His first big success in this field, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, showed that he did not understand Austen's world or what she was saying in her book. His adaptation presented Austen's 18th century work exactly as though it was a modern historical novel.

The success of that adaptation owed much to the cast, the sets and the music, and to the innate qualities of Austen's original which even a misguided and miscast adaptation (in the case of Elizabeth's mother, at least) could not wholly obscure.

Since then Davies has taken to



Adaptation of Anthony Trollope's 1869 novel (*He Knew He Was Right*)

adaptations of less popular works, so that this week we have the first part of his two-part version of Anthony Trollope's 1869 novel *He Knew He Was Right* (ABC 8.30pm Sundays).

Does anybody read Trollope these days other than university English students? I suspect not many.

He Knew He Was Right is the tale of a jealous husband's persecution of his innocent wife for a perceived infidelity. Trollope was a close friend of feminist writer George Eliot and his novel is a moving portrayal of a wife's helplessness at the time at the hands of a vindictive husband.

Another good-looking period adaptation is on view in Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (SBS 9.30pm Sunday). Its looks are in fact its only recommendation.

As *Time Out* so aptly said:

"Given the singular lack of drama, perspective or insight, the way the film looks becomes its only defence ... a triumph of technique over any human content."

Another SBS program I was unable to preview for this week is the new British comedy series *The Boosh* (SBS 8.30pm Mondays). Described by SBS as "weird" (seldom a good sign in my experience), the eight-part series brings to television the comedy of UK comedians Julian Barratt and Noel Fielding.

Barratt and Fielding, AKA *The Boosh*, won the Perrier Award for Best Newcomer at the Edinburgh Festival in 1998. In 2000 they performed at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and won the Barry Humphries Award.

In 2001 their BBC Radio show *The Boosh* was awarded the Douglas Adams Award for innovative comedy writing.

What can I say? Try it and see.

There are plusses and minuses about the ABC's new Australian-made crime drama, *Loot* (ABC 8.30pm Friday). On the plus side, everything about the show is very professional.

The photography is crisp and good looking, the acting is first rate (this is genre film-making not Chekhov or Shakespeare, so great depth is not required) and there is

definite chemistry between the two leads, Jason Donovan and Anita Hegh.

Technically, it can hold its own with cop shows from anywhere. As someone who finds too many Australian television dramas strained or even feeble, I was impressed and pleasantly surprised by the competence of *Loot*.

On the minus side however is the program's concept: white collar crime, especially the sort that requires accountants to investigate, does not make for very exciting television or very exciting exposition.

The credit for "original concept" as well as "associate producer" goes to Allen Blewitt. When he's not conceptualising TV dramas Mr Blewitt is the Chief Executive of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, so all is perhaps explained.

The plot involves the "ramping" of a share float, other dodgy share transactions and money laundering, all requiring much use of computers to investigate. It's a tribute to director Shawn Seet and writer John O'Brien that it's as interesting - visually and dramatically - as it is.

On the other hand, it is easy to get lost in the arcane world of finance and company rorts that is on display here. ☹

MELBOURNE
"Bush, Baghdad and Beyond"
Public Meeting

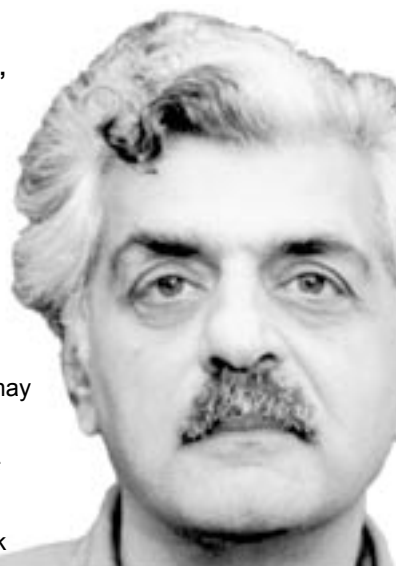
Melbourne Town Hall
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Tariq Ali

PERTH
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Tariq Ali is the author of
The Clash of Fundamentalisms
and *Bush in Babylon: The Recolonisation of Iraq*
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June 18

The "Awful Truth" about the
Australian-US alliance and future consequences
Richard Broinowski Adjunct Prof Sydney Uni,
former diplomat and General Manager Radio National, author
Fact or Fission - The Truth About Australia's Nuclear Ambition
Helen Caldicott, global peace activist, author *New Nuclear Danger*
Anna Broinowski's film *Helen's War - Portrait of a Dissident*
opens at Valhalla Cinema June 11

June 25

Australian Trade Union Leaders
What We Expect From A Labor Government
Doug Cameron, National Secretary AMWU
John Sutton, National Secretary CFMEU

July 2

Iraq After June 30?
Michael Humphreys, Head of School of Sociology, UNSW;
Andrew Vincent, Director of Centre for Middle Eastern and
North African Studies at Macquarie Uni

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

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Israel turns to chemical warfare as wall construction continues at speed

June 11: "What the army used here yesterday was not tear gas. We know what tear gas is, what it feels like. That was something totally different." We are being briefed by A, a middle-aged villager speaking Hebrew in a calm and unemotional way, while standing under the scorching sun in the fields of Zawiya Village, on Friday morning.

"When we were still a long way off from where the bulldozers were working, they started shooting things like this one", A says, holding up a dark green metal tube with the inscription "Hand and rifle grenade no.400" – in English.

"Black smoke came out. Anyone who breathed it lost consciousness immediately, more than a hundred people. They remained unconscious for nearly 24 hours. One is still unconscious, at Rapidiya Hospital in Nablus. They had high fever and their muscles became rigid. Some needed urgent blood transfusion.

"Now, is this a way of dispersing a demonstration, or is it chemical warfare?"

"But if they think this will stop us, they should think again!", burst in a younger man standing behind F, one of the organisers of today's march.

"Without our land, what are we? Seven thousand people with no livelihood. Five kilometres it is from

Close to noon, the march set out. At the head an enormous Palestinian national flag was carried, and the youths burst out with "Long live Palestine" and "National Unity – Fatah, Hamas, Popular Front!"

Israelis march with Palestinians

Whatever their party affiliation, they were invariably kind and welcoming to the Israelis marching at their side. Boys were going around, offering icicles and firmly refusing payment. An elderly woman in traditional clothes, a megaphone in one hand and gas mask in the other, was directing the chanting. Behind her walked two young Icelanders, who had come from Reykjavik to work as volunteers for the Palestinian Medical Relief Committees.

Many Palestinians had gas masks, as did the international TV crews accompanying the march. Those who did not have them made do with a kind of shallow carton cup with a string to keep them over mouth and nose, or with cloth tied over the face.

Tension rose as the march wound through the fields, passing the broken olive trees destroyed in earlier days, and up to the point where yesterday's confrontation took place. And then a feeling of



Barrier to peace – Sharon's wall

column was about to set out back. But many of the youngsters were not yet done. They ran ahead, to the recently-carved track by which soldiers and bulldozers have come, and started piling rocks along it.

Israelis and internationals joined them in shifting and rolling huge rocks, some needing the work of 12 people to move.

"I know this will not stop the bulldozers by itself, but we will sure make life difficult for them every way we can", said a youth.

Video footage of the protests of Thursday and Friday www.iwps-pal.org/ftpiwps/videos/azzawiya_6-10-11.wmv

PS:
Aside from Zawiya, a major confrontation is developing at A-Ram, the Palestinian suburb of Jerusalem where work on the Wall kicked off with the sudden destruction of a major artery, in complete disregard of the hundreds of thousands who use it every day. And the radio news announced that in the coming week work is to begin on the Wall section linking the settle-

ment of Ariel to those of Kdumim and Karney Shomron - which would have the effect of both seizing the land of a dozen hitherto unaffected villages and of driving a wedge deep into the West Bank as a whole, so as to preclude creation of a viable Palestinian state.

Under the pole, speakers took up the megaphone and made fiery addresses: "Listen, Sharon! Listen, Bush! Zawiya is steadfast! We hold on to our land, to our olive trees!" Then the Friday prayers, thousands of villagers kneeling in unison in the direction of distant Mecca.

The rally and prayer over, the members of other factions.

Some had come all the way in their private cars, dodging the army and police road-blocks. Others had used the settler bus line from Tel-Aviv and then the yellow Palestinian taxis nimbly plying the labyrinth of blocked West Bank roads.

The rally and prayer over, the

**Anyone who breathed it
lost consciousness immediately,
more than a hundred people.**

here to the Green Line, five kilometres all our fields and olive groves. The fence will come right up the village houses, it will leave us nothing. What will we eat? Better to die on our land, we will not give up!"

While we were talking, more and more villagers were arriving, from Zawiya itself and its neighbours Rafat and Dir Balut – the three of which are bound, once the Fence/Wall is complete, to become an almost completely enclosed enclave.

There were also more Israelis and internationals arriving, several dozen in all – the anarchists who had already been here on the previous days, and also members of Gush Shalom and Ta'ayush and the ISM and the IWPS women (the latter, who are based in nearby Hares, had made the rest of us aware of the situation).

Some had come all the way in their private cars, dodging the army and police road-blocks. Others had used the settler bus line from Tel-Aviv and then the yellow Palestinian taxis nimbly plying the labyrinth of blocked West Bank roads.

**"Better to die on our land,
we will not give up!"**

A HAWK IN DOVE'S FEATHERS

Perhaps the settlements in the Gaza Strip will be dismantled in a year. And perhaps not.

So cheap it is for Sharon to buy himself a dovish image.

But this week:

– He stepped up the building of the wall on Palestinian farm land,

– He uprooted many more olive trees,

– He destroyed the main road from Qalandia to A-Ram which serves hundreds of thousands,

– He let the settlers build new houses.

Don't listen to what Sharon promises – look at what he does!

Gush Shalom



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