

Kill Bill No. 2!

Latest anti-democratic laws

Under the guise of anti-terrorism, the Howard Government's latest batch of reactionary laws were introduced in Parliament on June 18. The Anti-Terrorism Bill (No. 2) makes a number of amendments, including the introduction of a new offence of associating with a person linked with a terrorist organisation. It also gives authorities the power to prevent people from leaving Australia even before a warrant has been issued against them, as well as giving ASIO the power to seize Australian and foreign passports from suspects.

The ALP has not made any public comment as to whether or not it will support the Bill. However, Greens Senator Kerry Nettle has said that she will push for the Bill to be referred to a Senate Inquiry.

The legislation adds to the growing arsenal of police state laws the government can use to crack down on democratic rights and civil liberties.

The Bill proposes to make the following amendments:

1 New offence: Associating with Terrorist Organisations

* A person commits an offence if she/he intentionally associates with a person who is a member of, or who promotes or directs the activities of a terrorist organisation, in order to provide support to help it expand or continue to exist, and the (second) person knows that the organisation is a terrorist organisation.

* "Association" means meeting or communication with the other person. Communication includes all modern forms of communication.

The Bill provides for the following defences to the offence, but the evidentiary burden is on the defendant – the onus of proof is reversed:

the association is with a close family member, and the communication relates only to a matter that could reasonably be regarded (taking into account the person's cultural background) as a matter of family or domestic concern;

the association is at a place used for public religious worship and takes place in the course of practising a religion;

the association is only for the



purpose of providing humanitarian aid;

the association is for providing legal advice or legal representation.

This means that a person could end up in jail for doing nothing more than phoning someone twice, yet later be found innocent.

2 ASIO Act

* It proposes to give ASIO the power to demand a person to surrender his or her Australian and foreign passport(s) if she/he is subject to a request for a questioning warrant. This means that even before the Minister has consented to issuing the warrant, ASIO can stop the person from leaving this country.

* It will be an offence to fail to comply with a demand for the surrender of the person's passports.

This adds to ASIO's already considerable and dangerous police state powers. Such powers are not required by an intelligence-gathering agency.

3 Passports Act

* At the moment, if a person has a cancelled Australian passport, he or she can still leave Australia on a foreign passport. The new laws will allow "enforcement officers" to get an order to seize foreign passports of suspects of serious offences or harmful conduct, even if the person did not use the foreign passport to enter Australia. This is to make sure they are prevented from leav-

ing Australia on a foreign travel passport.

4 Transfer of prisoners

The Bill proposes to give to the Attorney General the power to make an order to transfer (or return) a prisoner (convicted or remand) to another State if the Attorney General "reasonably believes" that it is necessary in the interests of security. He can also make an order for transfer (or return) of a prisoner to another State to appear in court proceedings. The Bill provides that the decisions of the Attorney General under the amendments are excluded from the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act, which means that they will not be subject to judicial review.

5 Forensic procedures

The Bill seeks to broaden the Crimes Act to facilitate effective disaster victim identification if a mass casualty incident occurred in Australia. It allows investigators access to the National Criminal Investigation DNA Database, the transfer of DNA information between federal government and the states, the matching of DNA profiles, and disclosure of the results of those matchings.

This Kill Bill No. 2, as with its forerunner, will do nothing to tackle terrorism or increase security. The Bill seeks to further rob the Australian people of fundamental

democratic rights and put in place a fascistic regime based on terror and suppression of all opposing views to the neo-conservatives that govern today.

Act now

A Senate Committee is inquiring into the Bill. It has given the public two weeks to respond!! Submissions are due in by July 8 – an impossible deadline to meet. This should not deter anyone making a late submission, no matter how short, to express strong opposition to the Bill and writing to your local MP and Senators.

If you have access to the internet, you can download a submission from the website:

www.civilrightsnetwork.org

Submissions should be sent to:

The Secretariat
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee

Room S1.61,
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Fax: 02 6277 5794

Email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Acknowledgements: Agnes Chong, Australian Muslim Civil Rights Advocacy Network for material used in this article. ✪

Locking Australia into more wars

Without any public discussion Defence Minister Robert Hill is expected to sign two new military agreements this week that will lock Australia into the US Star Wars program, increase even further the integration of US and Australian military forces and establish a new joint US-Australian military base in Darwin or in Queensland.

The agreements involve a massive financial commitment by Australia and its participation in the US's aggressive program for global domination.

The new base will not only be used for training purposes but to "pre-position" weapons and troops for rapid deployment and use in the region.

The establishment of this strategic base is a clear indication that US and Australian Governments are preparing for aggression against Asian countries. No country threatens the security of Australia but the Howard and Bush Governments threaten other countries.

Once again the Howard Government is blindly serving the interests of the ultra-conservatives of the Bush Government and locking future Australian governments into a course that will inevitably lead to involvement in more wars. ✪

The Guardian

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A new power in the land

As the US election draws closer presidential hopefuls Bush and Kerry are crisscrossing the United States spending tens of millions of dollars attempting to sell themselves as the best servant of the people, best economic manager and most able to ensure the security of the country. Yet it is another person – not a candidate – who is poised to have a decisive influence on the outcome of the presidential election.

He is Michael Moore. His latest film *Fahrenheit 9/11* is playing to packed houses and leaving audiences infuriated at the Bush administration and determined to do something about it. By that they mean “throw it out”.

The response to Michael Moore’s documentary shows that millions of Americans are craving truthful information, and when that truth is revealed it becomes a powerful catalyst spurring the people into taking follow-up action.

The first move was to prevent the film being shown. Disney had been contracted to distribute the film by the Disney-owned distribution agency Miramax. But when the film was completed they tried to prevent its public release.

“The basic belief system [of the right-wing] is built on censorship, repression, and keeping people ignorant. They want to limit or snuff out any debate or dissension. They also don’t like pets and are mean to small children”, commented Michael Moore.

But even by this stage the public’s demand for the truth was so strong that Disney backed down and “sold” the film to Miramax Executive Producers Bob and Harvey Weinstein.

Then a Republican PR firm formed a group called “Move America Forward”. It intimidated several companies into backing away from distributing the film and then threatened theatres with boycotts and demonstrations if they dared screen it.

It revealed what many people suspected – that the authorities depend on banning points of view not to their liking, and when threats of banning do not work they will resort to straight out lies. If all these methods do not work they will even resort to assassination to silence the truth – as the thousands of corpses of activists, trade unionists and government leaders across South America and elsewhere around the world will testify.

Yet all the difficulties were overcome – the film is now rolling and all America is talking about it. Many are writing letters which reveal Michael Moore’s recipe for success. “The film’s most effective tactic is the use of self-incriminating archival footage – such as clips of Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice declaring Iraq militarily impotent before September 2001”, wrote one correspondent. “Much of the film is what our White House leaders have said themselves”, said another. “At the end, the sold-out audience stood up and clapped”.

In response to the allegation that the film is antagonistic to American troops in Iraq one correspondent writes, “I left the movie theatre feeling more support, sympathy and respect for our troops in Iraq than I have since the beginning of this whole fiasco”. The correspondent continues: “[The] film makes it clear that these are real people whose lives are being ruined and lost; real mothers crying real tears when they bury their kids; real soldiers who come home with arms and legs missing only to find veterans’ benefits cut and Veterans Affairs hospitals overcrowded and understaffed”.

Tom Durkin of Columbia writes: “It is a powerful movie – powerfully patriotic, powerfully in support of our troops and powerfully critical of the reasons the troops were stuck in harm’s way”.

Another correspondent writes: “There is no real patriotism in blindly following or believing in our leaders. The world has too often seen the horrific results of power unchallenged. Lies, told repeatedly, are still lies, and protest, documented with ample evidence, is always patriotic”.

A writer from Virginia Beach says: “To my amazement, living in a military and religious community, there was thunderous applause at the conclusion of the movie...”.

Michael Moore has become a power in the US (and not only the US) because he tells it as it is, he presents the leaders speaking their lies, misleading and tricking the people into supporting their nefarious objectives. He shows the people as the real heroes, misled and confused perhaps, but magnificent in their courage and good sense.

PRESS FUND

The fortunes of the Press Fund wax and wane, just like those of the ruling cliques that currently govern us. If you’re looking forward to seeing the Howard Government booted out of office later this year, why not help *The Guardian* to play its part in the struggle to achieve this, by sending us a contribution to the Press Fund for the next issue. Our sincere thanks go to those who have contributed this week, as follows:

T Markou, in memory of E Glaros and K Katsibouris \$50.
Bert Appleton \$40, H Ewer \$45, Larry Gowland \$100, M H \$20,
R J \$25.50, Phyllis Johnson \$100, S L \$10, C W Reed \$20.50,
“Round Figure” \$8.50, S T \$60.50, R Taylor \$20,
Robert J Girvan \$10, Max Whisson \$50.

This week’s total: \$510. Progressive total \$6090

Silencing us

Alison Anderson
ATSIC NT Central Zone
Commissioner

ATSIC commissioners will be seeking the assistance of volunteers and workers from Community Development Employment Projects after the Federal Government stripped them of all personal staff and attempted to cripple our ability to do our jobs.

The Government has disgracefully slashed the ATSIC budget by almost two-thirds in a naked attempt to rob Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of their rights to democratically elected representation.

This Government has forced the ATSIC board to submit to a savagely reduced budget and it is directly responsible for 36 hardworking and decent staff losing their jobs.

True to form, when the Government announced its bid to destroy ATSIC two months ago, it said no jobs would be lost.

Its Minister has added further insult to injury by claiming that the Senate’s refusal to approve their bid to destroy ATSIC was a “stunt” which would cost taxpayers \$3.3 million – this from a member of a government which forces taxpayers to fund two residences for the Prime Minister and hundreds of millions of dollars in government propaganda.

The fact is this Government is not about trying to save money but is doing its best to silence the voice of Indigenous Australia and has nothing to offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This Government claims it has sent troops to Iraq in a bid to introduce democracy and at the same time it is fighting at home to take democracy away from Indigenous Australians.

What absolute hypocrisy. The Senate has blocked its bid to abolish ATSIC and remove Indigenous representation from a dozen Federal Acts and the Government is now trying to subvert the decision of the Parliament in a typically mean and sneaky way.

The fact is the Senate has rejected the Government’s attempt to dismiss democratically elected Indigenous leaders and has given Indigenous people the chance to have their say on the future of Indigenous governance and service delivery.

This Government hates Indigenous people having a say in their own future.

They have amply demonstrated this with the trashing of its \$1.4 million ATSIC Review, their isolation of the ATSIC chairman, and their current bid to shut down this organisation.

The Prime Minister said ATSIC

was a failure and it’s true that it has failed to collaborate with government in misleading the public and that it has failed to keep quiet about the appalling performances of mainstream agencies in addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

That is why the Government is lying to destroy us.

The Government knows full well that ATSIC has provided some of the best Indigenous programs in the country and that it is now handing over those programs to proven under-achievers and non-performers.

The Government also knows full well that its claim that its move against ATSIC is aimed at improving services to Indigenous Australians is at best hollow rhetoric and at worst an outright lie.

ATSIC commissioners, like mainstream politicians, have obligations to help their constituents but this Government is saying that Indigenous politicians have to do the job without any staff.

Meanwhile, non-Indigenous Government MPs are intitled to employ at least three full-time staff and Ministers such as Senator Vanstone get by with a dozen or more.

Staff or no staff, resources or none, we will continue to work for our people.

Koori Mail, June 30, 2004 ☛

Fire and New Building Appeal \$10,000

As *Guardian* readers will know we suffered a fire in our premises last December and as a consequence it was decided to sell our present building and buy another. This has been done. Our new premises are at 74 Buckingham Street, Surry Hills – not far from Central Railway station. We will occupy the new premises towards the end of August.

Our Appeal asks your help in meeting the expense of moving, legal fees, buying suitable furniture for the new building, setting up phone lines and re-establishing our computer network. These expenses will easily top the \$10,000 figure. This is a large figure to achieve so we ask you to consider a maximum amount. This Appeal will run for six weeks only, to mid-August.

FIRE AND NEW BUILDING APPEAL

I, _____

of (address) _____

_____ Postcode _____

contribute \$ _____ to the CPA Fire and New Building Appeal.

I agree/do not agree to have my name included in *The Guardian* acknowledgements.

I need/do not need a receipt posted to me.

Post your contribution to CPA 65 Campbell Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010.

Contributions can be made by credit card giving name (on the card), number and expiry date.

Adelaide

Invitation

Launch of Anti-Militarisation Campaign

Weapons in space? Australian Government spending \$55 million per day on military?

Speakers: Anne McMenamin (NOWAR and SA Greens); Don Jarrett (Australian Peace Committee)

Screening of the powerful documentary: **ARSENAL OF HYPOCRISY**

followed by a public discussion

Sunday 11 July 2pm

Semaphore Workers Club

93 The Esplanade, Semaphore

Arsenal of Hypocrisy is a recent documentary that features Bruce Gagnon, Coordinator of the US-based Global Network Against Nuclear Power and Weapons in Space, Noam Chomsky and Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell.

The one-hour production features archival footage, Pentagon documents, and clearly shows how consecutive US Governments protected and covered up for Nazi war criminals in exchange for their expertise in missile and weapons building. It outlines the US plan to control and dominate space and the Earth below.

Noam Chomsky reminds the viewer that the US has consistently refused to negotiate a global ban on weapons in space and points to the role played by the mass-media in suppressing this issue. Mitchell, the 6th man to walk on the moon, warns about the long-lasting consequences of any damage to the fragile environment in outer space.

Communist Party of Australia (SA)

Bob Briton Ph 04 1889 4366 bobbrit@planetmail.com



NSW electricity: Privatisation by attrition

Peter Mac

The Carr Government is at it again. Seven years ago they tried to privatise the NSW electricity system but were defeated by an angry union movement. They now want to achieve the same thing by "nibbling around the edges", i.e. by reducing their involvement in the trading of electricity and selling off most of the billing operations. After that they would only retain a small billing service and the actual generation of power as a government-owned operation.

And make no mistake; they're still intent on eventually privatising electricity generation as well!

The result of the latest plan could be the loss of up to 500 jobs at the state-owned Energy Australia and Integral Energy. It would almost certainly also mean price hikes for electricity consumers, despite all the hype about increased competition.

One industry consultant pointed out that if the NSW Government were to sell off its trading and billing operations to a firm that is already operating in this field (which is highly likely) there would actually be a fall in the level of competition.

Under the plan, a number of firms would bid for the right to trade electricity from the existing govern-

ment-owned generators, while four private firms would manage the accounts of some 70 percent of the state's electricity consumers.

Several years ago the NSW Government split up its power generation, trading and billing operations into three separate government owned organisations. This, it was argued, would increase competition and so benefit electricity consumers.

However, the fact that the government's primary objective is privatisation at any cost, rather than any benefit for the consumer, is demonstrated by the government's willingness to have the same firms tender for both the billing and the trading operations, regardless of any impact this might have on competition.

And what about the remaining power generating facilities that are to stay in the hands of the state? The Carr Government made it crystal clear seven years ago that they wished to turn these facilities over to the private sector as well. This is in accord with the wishes of the Howard Federal Government, which put pressure on NSW to break up and privatise the major power generating facilities.

Carr failed to do this because of strong opposition within the ALP and from trade unions.

Their new plan allows for the

private sector to submit bids for the construction of privately owned generating facilities, as well as for the billing and trading operations.

Private firms are reluctant to do this at the moment, claiming that there are not sufficient profits to be made in the National Electricity Market. However, the Howard Government came to the rescue late last month with new legislation intended to encourage the private sector to enter the power generation business.

If this assistance has the desired effect, the NSW Government will pursue the longer-term strategy of deliberately not replacing the existing state-owned generating facilities with new ones as they age and become redundant. This will eventually leave the privately-owned facilities as the sole generating capability in the state. You might call it privatisation by attrition.

A spokesman for the Australian Services Union, Paul Marzato commented: "It really looks to us as being another way of privatising. The issue is that jobs will go from NSW".

And of course it won't only be jobs that will go. Yet another crucial element of daily life will be relegated to the tender mercies of the private sector if the privatisers at state and federal levels are not replaced with pro-people forces. ☘



Carr wanted to privatise the state's electricity seven years ago

Smokers lose in health warnings backdown

Tobacco companies are the big winners and health and consumer rights the big losers in the Federal Government's decision to downsize and delay new cigarette packet health warnings.

The government announced that it will ignore the advice of health authorities and accept the tobacco industry's favoured position that the new graphic warnings should occupy only 30 percent of the front of packets – not 50 percent as proposed by health experts.

After six years of consultation, the warnings will be delayed a further 18 months until 2006

– rather than mid-2005 as originally announced.

Says Anne Jones, Chief Executive of ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) Australia: "This is a huge disappointment, after all the advice the government has received from its top health advisers, and the latest research showing the wide range of tobacco's diseases most of the public are not aware of.

"It's alarming to see the government going so far to accommodate the tobacco companies, who have been very noisy and aggressive in their opposition to new improved cigarette packet health warnings that

would help to better inform smokers about these dangers.

"Research from overseas has showed how effective these messages can be in changing smokers' attitudes.

"Every 12 months another 40,000 Australian children take up smoking – children who might have been deterred by larger and stronger warnings. So public health is the big loser – so is the truth. These companies have whinged to the government long and hard, not about the health harm, but about the economic harm they face from having to tell their consumers the whole truth." ☘

Pete's Corner



Palestine Peace Vigil in Adelaide

The Australian Friends of Palestine Association, AFOPA, held a peace vigil last Saturday morning in the Adelaide Central Market. The vigil was attended by more than 30 members of the association dressed with Kafeyas and scarves in the colours of the Palestinian flag. The participants handed out more than 1000 leaflets about the plight of the Palestinians and engaged with some Adelaidians who wanted to learn more about the situation in Palestine.

One leaflet in particular contained facts and figures about the Apartheid Wall being built by Israel in the occupied Palestinian land. The wall – which is 700 km long, 100 m wide and 8 m high – will eventually imprison 1.5 million Palestinians once it is completed. Security is the excuse that the Israeli Government uses to justify the construction of the biggest prison in the world. Being built at a cost of A\$5 billion, this wall will never be a temporary

measure to solve security problems but rather a permanent boundary imposed on the Palestinians with the backing of the US Government.

Only two months ago, President Bush declared that we have to take into account "realities on the ground". Sure enough, such a wall will become a reality on the ground and Palestinians will be asked to accept it, too. This shameful, blatant abuse of human rights – being carried out with the blessing of the US and Australian Governments – will only lead more Palestinians to frustration and despair which will lead, in turn, to more bloodshed and violence.

AFOPA was very encouraged with the response to the vigil and intends to run similar events in Adelaide in the near future.

To contact the Australian Friends of Palestine Association, write to Dr Bassam Dally, Secretary AFOPA, PO Box 52, Greenacres, SA 5086 ☘

Smoke-free workplaces

Victorian unions have called on the Bracks Government to take action and ban smoking in all public venues following a release of yet another damning research study into passive smoking.

"There is enough scientific evidence around that clearly shows the harm passive smoking is doing to employees in the service and hospitality industries", said Victorian Trades Hall Council Secretary, Leigh Hubbard.

"Today's British Medical Journal report that passive smokers have double the risk of heart disease adds weight to our demand that smoking should be banned in all workplaces, including gaming and entertainment venues."

"We have come so far in attempting to limit hazards in the workplace that not banning smoking, a major cause of illness and death, is simply shameful. What

excuse could there be, bar the profit of tobacco companies, to not protect the men and women who work in industries where smoking is permitted?", Mr Hubbard added.

He pointed out that the restaurant industry is booming despite the campaign run by the industry at the time of the smoking ban claiming there would be a loss of jobs and revenue. "In fact, a report commissioned by the NSW Cancer Council shows that the only industry to be significantly affected by a ban on smoking would be the tobacco industry itself.

"In time, more and more evidence will pile up about the effects of passive smoking. We should not waste another minute in hesitating making workplaces smoke-free for the sake of the tens of thousands of people whose health is at stake", Mr Hubbard concluded. ☘

Howard's last minute attack on workers

The Howard Government made a last desperate attempt to trample workers' rights in what may be the final sitting of the current Parliament. While it was unable to get some of the worst aspects of the post-Cole Commission legislation passed, several regressive amendments to the *Workplace Relations Act* did get through the Senate with Democrat co-operation.

These include giving new powers to a beefed-up Building Industry Taskforce, a police-style watchdog ostensibly set up for the whole building industry but no doubt with its sights set on the activities of the

The Task Force can also force people to hand over any documents requested. Refusal to co-operate may result in a fine of up to \$6600 or a six-month jail sentence.

Other amendments passed by the Senate with Democrat support include the tripling of penalties under the Workplace Relations Act from the current maximum of \$10,000 up to \$33,000 for unions and from \$2000 to \$6000 for individuals.

Existing legislation which bars people from holding union office for five years if they have been jailed for certain criminal offences has now been amended to also include

separate incident, had secretly taped witnesses.

Adding to its arsenal of anti-union weapons, the Howard Government – as a reward for their good work in the field of industrial relations – has appointed the head of the Office of Employment Advocate (OEA), Jonathan Hamberger, and Department of Workplace Relations deputy secretary John Lloyd, to the so-called independent umpire, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

The OEA is the chief agency responsible for promoting the Government's individual contracts, Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs), at the expense of collective bargaining. Prior to heading the OEA Hamberger was an adviser to former union-busting Industrial Relations Minister Peter Reith. Similarly, John Lloyd played a pivotal role in the Cole Royal Commission as well as previously helping dismantle Victoria's state industrial relations system as head of Jeff Kennett's employee relations department.

A scan of the current sitting members of the "independent umpire" reveals that only two out of 17 have a union background and only one is a woman. ☹

The legislation removes the right of construction workers and union officials to refuse to answer questions.

Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU).

The most draconian aspect of the legislation is that it removes the right of construction workers and union officials to refuse to answer questions.

"No other workers are subjected to this kind of law", said Phil Davey, media spokesperson for the CFMEU's NSW Construction Division.

"The Democrats sell themselves as a party for civil liberties, yet they have passed this legislation specifically targeting building workers and which denies them the right to not to answer questions which may be used to incriminate them."

suspended sentences. This new rule may be used retrospectively to unseat current union officials.

A new "whistleblower" law protects bosses' stooges within workplaces and union staff who might leak information such as membership lists or bank records to the Task Force.

The Taskforce has been given these new powers despite the recent allegations that they have misused the ones they already have.

Only two weeks ago, during the Senate Committee hearings examining the Cole legislation, allegations surfaced that the Taskforce officers had offered an apprentice a bribe in exchange for information and, in a



Mass meeting on WA Government "in-sourcing"

Richard Titelius*

On June 23, over 150 members of the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association (CPSU/CSA) attended a mass meeting at the Sheraton Hotel in Perth, Western Australia. They were protesting moves by the Gallop Government to have the human resources and purchasing functions of all government agencies become part of a shared service to be accommodated in an office building in an outer suburb of Perth.

The move to "rationalise" corporate services is set to strip real jobs from at least 1100 workers and place them on redeployment. It will also significantly increase the workloads of many of the remaining workers.

CBA workers national day of action

Commonwealth Bank employees participated in a national day of industrial action on Friday, July 2. Staff were forced to take this action following the bank's rejection of their claim for improved workplace conditions. The implementation of the workers' demands would help increase both staff and customer satisfaction.

"This action is about getting the Bank to listen to its staff – which it keeps saying it wants to do, but then totally ignores them", said Sharron Caddie, National Assistant Secretary, Finance Sector Union (FSU).

"Staff have used negotiations for a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) to identify workplaces issues, and propose solutions to fix them."

Despite saying it wants a "fair

The government was concerned enough by the CPSU/CSA's calling of the meeting for some agencies to advise workers that attendance at it was not sanctioned. The threat was made despite the fact that the meeting was being held during lunchtime.

CPSU/CSA Branch Secretary, Toni Walkington addressed workers at the gathering, telling them that, "While government had agreed on overarching principles, it was not yet going to put pen to paper to anything more than a quarantine of the positions to be affected by the rationalisation of services".

Ms Walkington accused the government of "... only telling the workers what they want to hear, and not engaging with the workers

on all the issues coming from the shop floor".

A workplace delegate from the Department of Community Development, Mike Gullan, added that, "Workers in various government agencies have yet to be advised whether the people or positions would be abolished... The government's silence on how redeployment will affect the workers in the proposed rationalisation is deafening".

The spin accompanying the Government's announced "reforms" has broken new ground in economic rationalist doublespeak. It is using terms like "benefit realisation" and "harvesting benefits" to describe the proposed loss of jobs in the corporate services functions of its agencies.

By 2008 the Gallop Government anticipates that it will have a system in place whereby government agencies will be able to purchase corporate services from a single common government service provider.

However, after 2008 it will also be conceivable that government agencies will be able to purchase their corporate services from a private provider. This is the more insidious agenda that the government is not making public.

A series of resolutions was passed at the meeting, which included emailing the Minister responsible for the negotiations into the corporate services reforms, John Kobelke.

Premier Geoff Gallop was urged to support the union's claim for a written agreement to protect the rights of workers affected by the changes, to negotiate with the CPSU/CSA for fair and equitable principles and to provide details of the process of the establishment of the proposed shared services centre.

* Delegate for CPSU/CSA at the Department of Justice ☹

LABOUR NOTES

The Australian Workers Union (AWU) has launched a national campaign to save hundreds of jobs at Electrolux plants in Orange, NSW and Adelaide. In launching the campaign, AWU Secretary Bill Shorten attacked the Swedish multinational's disregard for the social impact of its business decisions, which have cost over 24,000 jobs over the last five years. The AWU campaign includes an online protest service. Supporters can send a message to Electrolux by going to www.awu.net.au/national/campaigns/electrolux

In a report handed down last week, the NSW Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) found that thousands of WorkCover competency certificates had been corruptly used by private assessors. The ICAC report comes after the Cole Royal Commission and the Building Industry Taskforce failed to address union allegations that "corrupt practices" were killing workers in the construction industry. It recommended that criminal charges be brought against six assessors, a trainer, and the boss of an Illawarra crane company after they were found to have given false and misleading information to ICAC when it was investigating a worker's death. "We can put this down to downsizing and cost cutting," Brian Parker from the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union said. "WorkCover should take the assessor role back. We feel these issues should be controlled by the government."

Thousands of Australians are registering their protest against the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States. Almost 4000 emails have been sent (through the Global Trade Watch website) to Federal Opposition Leader Mark Latham's Office calling on the Australian Labor Party to reject the Federal Government's FTA legislation. Unions including the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union have also mounted email campaigns against the free trade deal. These can be found at tradewatch.org and free2baustralian.org.au.

Aged care: a bleak picture

Volunteers for the Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) national phone-in last Saturday have struggled to deal with the number of calls from aged care staff, residents and their families. The phone-in was conducted to find out how well aged care services were performing in meeting the needs of the aged. The overwhelming message was that there is a lack of federal funding.

This translates into lack of staff to meet the needs of aged care residents, with 93 per cent of callers in South Australia nominating staffing levels as one of the issues that prompted them to call.

The phone-in painted a bleak picture of the aged care system and its inability to provide the proper level of care to the frail and chronically ill.

Callers praised the dedicated work of aged care nurses, personal carers and other staff but stressed they were run ragged trying to achieve the impossible. In one example in Victoria, a caller rang saying that two nurses were forced to look after 90 residents, more than 45 of whom were high care

with chronic and complex health conditions, including heart disease, dementia and diabetes.

Nurses and other care staff reported immense frustration at their inability to meet the needs of residents. They reported being unable to spare the necessary time with residents to keep them engaged socially, to ensure they had sufficient opportunities to take exercise and to supervise eating and drinking needs.

Families reported difficulties gaining access to aged care services with long waiting lists for both community care and for residential services.

Callers were also concerned about what they perceived as the Howard Government's lax aged care regulations, including the fact that the Aged Care Standards Agency gave facilities up to three months notice before carrying out a "spot check".

And when callers were asked if they believed the Federal Government was properly funding aged care, many said they did not know how to answer because providers are not accountable for

how they spend taxpayers' dollars. Both staff and family members said there ought to be greater control and accountability of how aged care facilities spend money.

Many family members complained about the quality and amount of food provided for residents. Staff members called for an expansion of quality spot checks saying that the accreditation system was inadequate and open to abuse.

"It is depressing that nothing has changed since we conducted this phone-in three years ago", said ANF Victorian Assistant Branch Secretary, Jan Brownrigg. "More than 100 callers reported the same serious concerns about the aged care system's inability to provide residents with the proper level of care due to chronic under-staffing and inadequate staff mix, funding levels, funding accountability and regulations."

Lee Thomas, Secretary of the South Australian Branch of the ANF, said 98 percent of callers spoke of poor staffing levels and skills mix as reasons for nurses and other care staff leaving or not seeking to work in aged care. ✪



There is a lack of staff to meet the needs of aged care residents

Crikey - Irwin feeds his staff AWAs

Steve Irwin has been sprung dangling AWAs (Australian Workplace Agreements) in front of young workers at his Queensland zoo. The Zoo, an official AWA ambassador, has signed up its 450 staff to the non-union agreements, which have abolished penalty rates for weekend and public holiday work. They pay all staff equally without recognition of specific skills, levels of responsibility, etc.

Irwin caused a media storm last

year by dangling his month-old son in front of a hungry crocodile and, more recently, drew criticism for his behaviour in Antarctic wilderness areas.

"AWAs are excellent in terms of keeping it simple. As a base document to build our policy on, I couldn't ask for anything better", Irwin's personnel manager, Sandy Whitehead, said.

The announcement that Irwin had been co-opted to the AWA campaign was the last official

engagement of controversial Employment Advocate, Jonathan Hamberger.

The Federal Government has used AWAs to undermine collective agreements and attempt to write trade unions out of the employment relationship.

Hamberger has promoted their use, even when they cut workers' earnings by thousands of dollars. Despite the support of Hamberger, and advocates like Irwin, less than three percent of Australian workers are covered by AWAs.

As employment advocate, Hamberger conducted a long-running campaign against the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) and his 11-page report into the construction industry was the excuse for the Howard Government establishing the Cole Royal Commission.

In a court case against the CFMEU his office was castigated by Justice Marshall for putting up witnesses who had "artificially manufactured a confrontation" and told "untruths".

Hamberger, an ex-staffer of Industrial Relations Minister Peter Reith, is taking up an appointment as a senior deputy president of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC).

The Howard Government was accused of "stacking" the bench of the AIRC in the lead-up to the last federal election.

So far, it has made 17 appointments to the body, the vast majority from employer backgrounds. ✪

Draining Ballarat Bigpond?

Staff at the Telstra's Bigpond operation in Ballarat have called on management to confirm or deny rumours that their positions are to be re-located.

It is understood that up to 170 of the centre's 300 positions could be affected.

The Communications Division of the CPSU, the union which represents Telstra workers, is writing to the telco to demand that staff be told what is happening to their jobs and livelihood.

Concern began after all staff received an e-mail announcing that major changes were being planned and that "... the BigPond team will be brought together".

Staff presume that this may mean relocation to either Melbourne, Bathurst or Adelaide where existing BigPond centres are located.

The e-mail also said that the impacts on Ballarat "are currently being scoped" and that "... the move ... will be met with some sadness".

According to CPSU spokesperson John Jamieson, staff are in shock and are demanding to be told what the real story is.

"This has come out of the blue for most people. People are frustrated that they can't get a straight answer and they are looking to Telstra do the right thing and maintain its support for regional employment in Ballarat.

"These guys have done a great job for Telstra. They have worked their guts out for the company. They feel like they deserve better than this", he said.

The Telstra Bigpond operation opened in its current location almost two years ago. ✪

Needed urgently!

Solidarity with the revolution in Venezuela

Contact the **Bolivarian Circle**
and help support the progressive achievements
of the government and people of Venezuela.

Contact Manuel on 0412 228 401



Last week in an opinion piece in *The Age* newspaper, human rights advocate Tony Fitzgerald gave a timely reminder of the treatment of asylum seekers who have been locked up by the Howard Government. It includes the "dehumanising" practice of giving them, men, women and children, each a number which they must wear at all times and by which they are known and called. Also, parents are not allowed to take any photos of their children, so that babies born in detention have no photos recording their development. Said Fitzgerald: "That a society which calls itself civilised continues to countenance the prolonged and indeterminate detention of children, in conditions closely resembling those of a high security prison, shocks me profoundly. That this society is Australia saddens and angers me more than I can say."

The movie *Super-size Me* exposed the dangerous and deadly effect of McDonald's food on people's health: high cholesterol, obesity, increased blood pressure, depression. But the purveyor of fat and sugar sure has some high profile backers; PM Howard has been promoting McDonald's since the movie came out. And last week News Ltd paper *The Australian* weighed in. "Jenny Craig and GutBusters, watch your backs. The new road to slimness and well being runs directly through the golden arches." So began an advertisement - dressed up as journalism - by Imre Salusinszy, who says he went on a McDonald's-only diet, like the bloke in *Super-size Me*. Yet, shock and surprise, Salusinszy's foray into Ronald's chew-and-spew resulted in him becoming healthier! The ad/article lists the McDonald's menu, says how cheap it is, compares it to diet programs and finishes with a promo for - are you ready for this? - Ronald McDonald Weight Management Clinics. Not surprisingly, this big Mac ad was conveniently placed beside an article headed "PM acts to stem growth in fat kids".

And it turns out that AFL players are being used to promote McDonald's in Victoria's secondary schools. McDonald's is the sponsor of the "Do It, Don't Dream It" motivational program. The players go to the schools and talk about their lives and goals, during which they just happen to mention that the McDonald's salad menu is part of their "eating choices".

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is Bill Gates. The world's richest man (\$67 billion) didn't get that way being charitable, but that was the stated reason he was here last week. The real reason was twofold: to give the Howard Government a leg up into the coming election and to strengthen Microsoft's software monopoly. Gates, with Howard at his side, announced the launch of the Australian branch of Microsoft's charity facade, Unlimited Potential. Under it, organisations like the Smith Family will receive money, computers and software. Of course, by donating Microsoft software Gates is simply expanding his market. Gates also took the opportunity to condemn the free Open Source software programs, which is really the way to go for charities and NGOs, instead of becoming hooked on Microsoft.

What to do with the “undeserving poor”

Bob Briton

The chorus of moralising and tut tutting that accompanied the Federal Government’s payment of the first of the baby bonuses last week and a lump sum boost of the Family Tax Benefit (Part A) the week before has not yet fully subsided. An unedifying debate has sprung up about the alleged social consequences of the payments, with “both” sides claiming to have the interests of the disadvantaged at heart.

On one side we have the Howard Government. It has resisted just about every wage claim, even the most modest increase in the wages of the lowest paid, done its level best to put as much of the cost for deteriorating social services like health and education into the “user pays basket”. It has rewarded the rich in the community and attacked any union that looked like resisting the theft of the wealth produced by workers. Any suggestion of a deviation from this strategy has been met with warnings that the allegedly robust Australian economy simply could not afford it.

However, with a Federal Election due in the next few months, Family and Community Services Minister Kay Patterson was able to announce that the government’s

though not excused. The payments are a blatant election sweetener flowing from what was dubbed the “Breeders’ Budget” of last May. The payments have been carefully planned to draw people’s attention away from the government’s failure to legislate for substantial “family friendly” policies like maternity leave or regular working hours and secure jobs.

What is surprising in this debate is the frenzy of foreboding from the “other” side. It is needless to point out that the Parliamentary Labor Party is not the outfit it was in the ’70s when it introduced long overdue reforms like the Family Law Court and the Single Parent Benefit. However, the debate over the baby bonus and the FTB lump sum payments has revealed just how far Labor will go to project a conservative image in keeping with its essentially conservative politics.

Holier than thou

“Opposition” family and community services spokesman Wayne Swan has chastised Howard for his lack of rigour in collecting overpayments: “If Mr Howard is serious he will rescind the directive of Senator Patterson and give explicit instructions to Centrelink to take the money when it is returned from people who have been innocently

plasma TVs since the fateful payments were handed over.

However, some doubt creeps over this “evidence” when a quick check of the stores is conducted. The cheapest plasma TV in The Good Guys’ shops is \$4,999 and the dearest is around \$10,000. That is the equivalent of between eight and 16 kids-worth of FTB lump sum payment in the old maths! Probably more typical – though less sensational – would be the example of Leanne Steicke who bought a fridge for her family’s use.

The increase in spending resulting from the lump sums is said to be behind an unexpected rise in retail sales for the month of June. An increase of between five and six per cent was expected but it turned out to be between seven and eight per cent. Over half of the increase was attributed to food sales.

A very small item in the same paper noted that Anglicare’s four charity outlets were nearly deserted last week. Normally, between 30 and 40 people would queue for food every day. Last week there were only two or three. Anglicare spokesman Peter Bleby made the following observation about the lump sum payment: “Even though it is short term and it will all be spent, that money was able to help the poorest people to get by for a while. It gave them some short-term welcome relief.”

While the thought of what the poor might do with the \$600 lump sum has caused some heartburn for “right thinking” people in the community, the \$3000 “baby bonus” has almost sent them into cardiac arrest.

Barry Maley and Peter Saunders of the reactionary Centre for Independent Studies wrote a piece for *The Australian* last week that complains that the Howard Government is betraying its conservative roots. The “baby bonus” would further the decay of society caused (in their opinion) by generosity of the welfare state to young, often single mothers.

Minders of morality

They quote American “libertarian” Charles Murray who says, “... government payments unintentionally encourage various forms of irresponsibility or self-destructive behaviour”. Maley and Saunders fear that the \$3000 bonus might cause “young girls of relatively low education with poor career prospects” to decide to get pregnant as a short-term fix, as a way out of unemployment or the poverty associated with McJobs.



Anyone who has ever had to repay some overpaid unemployment or other Centrelink benefit would also be surprised at the Government’s new “have a nice day” policy.

good management of the economy has enabled it to return some bigger than usual dividends. From July 1, mothers of newborns will receive a \$3000 “baby bonus”. Parents of dependent children who qualify for the means-tested Family Tax Benefit (A) (FTB) would receive a lump sum payment of \$600 for each child.

What is more, Centrelink has been instructed to ignore overpayments of the FTB. Even under considerable political pressure, Howard has only gone as far as to say that recipients of overpayments should be “encouraged” to hand the money back. He has promised to maintain this easygoing approach even after the elections.

All heart

The contrast with the Government’s usual stance on these matters could not be more marked. Amanda Vanstone, the previous minister for Family and Community Services, once said that families receiving the FTB must get used to receiving a boost one year and paying it back the next. Parents whose patently inadequate incomes strayed slightly above the FTB (A) threshold – often because of the vagaries of casual working hours – have received hefty bills in recent years for overpaid benefits and not much understanding from Centrelink.

Anyone who has ever had to repay some overpaid unemployment or other Centrelink benefit would also be surprised at the Government’s new “have a nice day” policy.

The cynicism of the Howard Government is to be expected,

overpaid”.

Mark Latham denies Government claims that only 2200 families will be overpaid and insists that the number is closer to 20,000. The government’s generosity casts doubt on its claim to economic “responsibility”, according to Mr Latham. Presumably, a future Latham Government would hound people to return the \$600 overpayments regardless of whether they had gone to pay off some of the family’s debt, bought children’s clothes or simply tipped down the slot of a poker machine.

Labor has fallen into line with wowsers of all descriptions in its comments about the lump sum payments. According to this mode of thinking, the poor do not know how to manage their money. That is why they are poor. If you give them a lot of money they will waste it on luxury items above their station. If you give them just a little extra, it is more likely that they will spend it on cheaper things like food and clothes for the children. In line with this thinking, Labour advocates giving the benefit in negligibly small, joyless instalments.

Saving the poor from themselves

The media has got behind this campaign. In Adelaide No Pokies MLC Nick Xenophon was quoted in *The Advertiser* last Saturday, pointing out that an extra \$1.616 million has been splurged on poker machines since the payments were made. Electrical retailers The Good Guys note a spike in the sale of

pregnancies. So does Natasha Stott Despoja of the Democrats. They want the government to chop this payment into undetectable instalments, too. The force of these conservative arguments has seen Ms Patterson to introduce Centrelink guidelines that will compel mothers under 16 years to attend an interview to assess the appropriateness of paying the bonus in one lump sum. Other “vulnerable” people could be quizzed by social workers

a bag of hot chips when, for the same money, they could buy a box of wholesome vegetables.

They could not understand before permanently poor people will consider the long-term consequences of their health or the long-term of anything else, they need to have a place in society. From that place they need to have the realistic prospect of obtaining for themselves what is taken for granted by large sections of the community: secure

Generation Y is not stupid. They do not believe the fudged unemployment figures and are aware of the gloomy truth of the job market.

Maley and Saunders do not question why the girls should be poorly educated or have no prospects or no jobs at all. They decry the payment of the “baby bonus” and even the single parent benefit itself. Although it would be bad form to put it in print, they obviously blame the Government for not allowing the young mothers to starve.

Latham agrees that the lump sum will cause a surge in teen

to determine if they, too, need to be protected from such a large amount of money.

George Orwell observed in *Road to Wigan Pier* that middle class “socialists” travelling to the grimy industrial towns of the north of England in the 1930s to “convert” the poor were usually unable to get onto the same wavelength as the people they so clearly pitied. They could not understand why the parents of a poor family would buy

housing, decent health and education, clothing, reasonable levels of consumption, travel, entertainment, etc.

However, the baby makers in our society – the so-called generation Y of 18 to 24-year-olds – know they have been gypped. Only 12 per cent of them have no debt by the age of 22. Many owe huge HECS debts. A survey by accounting body Certified Practising Accountants says that 73 per cent of young peo-

oor"?



US steps up aggression towards Cuba

Statement by the National Assembly Republic of Cuba

The empire plans to crush the Cuban nation and proclaims its intentions with insulting arrogance.

It is intensifying the economic war, the internal subversion, the anti-Cuba propaganda and the pressures on the rest of the world designed to pave the way for a direct military intervention that would destroy the Revolution, end our independence and sovereignty and realise the old annexionist fantasy of seizing control of Cuba.

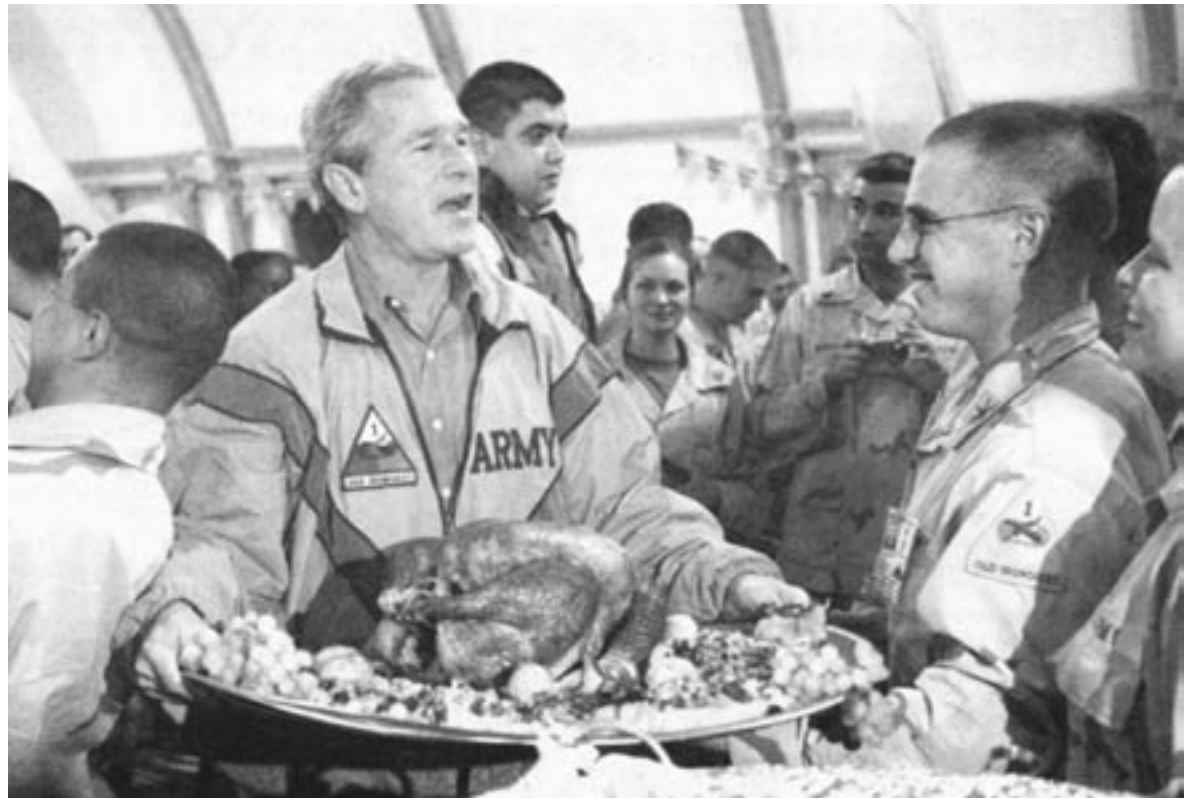
Yesterday, Washington enforced new, harsh measures against the Cuban people and against Cubans living in the United States. Their promoters refer to these steps as part of a plan to bring about "a rapid end" to the revolutionary government.

The new measures involve toughening the already unfair and discriminatory restrictions imposed on those Cubans, the only national group to which the US government dictates the kind of relations its members can have with their families and country of origin, in flagrant violation of that country's Constitution. They no longer even have the right to visit Cuba once a year. Now they cannot do so more than once every three years and must apply for a specific authorisation for the purpose, which will be for a maximum stay of 14 days.

The limit on how much they can spend here has been severely reduced, the same as the amounts they can send to their relatives. Such visits and remittances are now strictly restricted to what the Bush administration calls "immediate family", arbitrarily excluding aunts and uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces, among other relatives.

What legal precedent can the American authorities cite for such an intrusion into people's private lives? Where are the "family values" which the current president and his friends tout so much? Is Mr Bush still describing himself as a "compassionate conservative"?

The people who elaborated these measures and those tasked with enforcing them have warned that there will be no exceptions, that they will be applied retroactively and rigorously and that heavy fines



Is Mr Bush still describing himself as a "compassionate conservative"?

the US Congress. What are Mr Bush and the ultra-reactionary mafia that dictated this irrational policy afraid of?

There is one aspect of the US plan that is especially cynical. On the one hand, it places drastic restrictions on remittances from Cuban residents in the United States to their relatives in Cuba while, on the other, it allows and instigates anyone to provide money and material support to the traitorous grouplets operating here under Washington's orders. While depriving US citizens of their right to visit Cuba, the administration spends large amounts of federal funds on arranging journeys from third-party countries by people whose declared intent is to supply these mercenaries.

The budget for funding and directing other actions to undermine Cuban society over the next two years is US\$59 million. This sum includes US\$18 million for radio and television broadcasts from a C-130 military airplane, an irre-

goes into minute detail on the measures Washington would impose if it succeeded in getting possession of Cuba. The Cuban society would be entirely subjugated to the United States, which would dominate all its activities without exception. A complete account of this recipe for unbridled interventionism would be endless, but some aspects of the plan offer an idea of the degree of servitude and exploitation planned for Cubans:

- One of the first tasks of the so-called "transitional government" would be to restore their properties to the former exploiters, including houses and lands sought by the annexionist mafia that supported Batista in the past. The process would be quick and directed by Washington, which would set up a special mechanism to that end. This infamous document also specifically decrees the eviction of those living in reclaimed dwellings or unable to pay high rents, a return to the practice of arbitrarily evicting small farmers, as well as the dismantling

This would be a return to capitalism in its most brutal form, under the yoke of a foreign power.

The consequences for the Cuban people would be so terrible that even the report itself warns that "it would not be easy" to bring about "the transition", which would meet considerable rejection on the part of Cuban society. For this reason it identifies as an "immediate priority" the assembling of repressive forces that would be organised, trained, equipped and advised by Washington.

As proof of their true intentions to intervene and subject Cuba to an annexionist regime, the US president would immediately appoint an official tasked with coordinating all the various aggressive measures aimed at overthrowing the Revolution. This person would subsequently lead the "government of intervention", like Valeriano Weyler and Leonard Wood rolled into one: a truly genocidal strategy.

They will certainly not be able to bring such evil plans to fruition.

They would first have to invade Cuba, occupy the country militarily and then crush our people's resistance: that will never happen. We are ready and willing to fight to the last man and woman to prevent it. If they attack us here, they will find a united, educated people, with a glorious history of heroism, struggle and sacrifice for freedom, that will never give up its independence or its ideals of justice and solidarity, that will never renounce the fine, noble and profoundly humane society it has succeeded in building despite the empire's acts of aggression. If they attack us, they will sustain here their greatest and most humiliating defeat.

We shall confront these measures and any others our enemies may devise. We shall stand our ground and fight. Firmly united behind Fidel, Raúl and our Party and under its wise and consistent leadership, we shall advance ever onwards to victory.

National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba.
Havana, July 1, 2004
"Year of the 45th Anniversary of the Triumph of the Revolution" ☺

What are Mr Bush and the ultra-reactionary mafia that dictated this irrational policy afraid of?

and severe prison sentences await those who breach the blockade. A kind of apartheid has been created for Cubans living in the United States.

Yesterday also saw cancellation of almost every licence that, although subject to onerous restrictions, permitted some Americans to visit Cuba. They have even eliminated the issuing of licences in cases where the visitor would be spending no money here at all. The latter shows that the policy goes beyond tightening the blockade and damaging Cuba's economy. It also aims at preventing millions of Americans from having direct contact with Cuban reality, a right recognised for three consecutive years by a substantial majority in

responsible and illegal provocation that not only breaks the law but also infringes the international rules on aviation and telecommunications.

There is also the threat of increasingly arbitrary application of those sections of the Helms-Burton law specifically designed to penalise businessmen from third-party nations. In the celebrated "understanding" it signed with the European Union, Washington undertook to consider eliminating the relevant aspects of the Law, but never took any action. Adding insult to injury, Bush is now making these provisions even tougher.

Disingenuously camouflaged as "aid to a free Cuba", the infamous volume of 450-plus pages full of hatred, lies and tiresome rhetoric,

of the farming cooperatives and restoration of the former latifundia. What was already foreseen in the Helms Burton act is now expressed in a more blatant form.

- All sectors of the economy would be privatised, while a permanent US government Committee for Economic Reconstruction, to be set up right away, would control the economy.

- The subsidies and price controls affecting goods and services supplied to the public would be abolished.

- The social security and welfare system would be dismantled and commitments to pay benefits and pensions would be repudiated.

- Healthcare and education services would be privatised.

ple believe that it will be extremely hard to save for a comfortable retirement. Most have given up on the idea of owning a house. They know that one in three people in NSW live with housing stress where more than 30 percent of household income goes on housing. The situation is worse for renters with worse still to come.

Generation Y is not stupid. They do not believe the fudged unemployment figures and are aware of the gloomy truth of the job market. Every now and again some light is thrown on the real situation. For example, last week it was revealed that the number of those experiencing long-term unemployment of more than five years(!) has increased by two thirds since 1999 - up from 75,000 to 127,000 this year.

To the Mark Lathams, Wayne Swans and Natash Stott Despojas of this world: if the idea of the "undeserving poor" buying electrical goods or alcohol as well as some extra food and clothing with their lump sums offends you, if you wish they would put the money towards some more worthwhile purpose, then get cracking! Get to work on a radical makeover of society that will provide the jobs, the security and the sort of income that will stop the behaviour you find so disturbing. ☺

Court voids President's power grab

Tim Wheeler

Defenders of the Bill of Rights greeted two decisions by the US Supreme Court on June 28 sharply rebuffing George W Bush's claim of sweeping powers to detain US citizens and foreigners indefinitely, without criminal charges, in his so-called "war on terror".

"A state of war is not a blank check for the President when it comes to the rights of the nation's citizens", said Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. She was joined by seven of her colleagues in upholding the habeas corpus right of citizens branded by Bush, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Attorney General John Ashcroft as "enemy combatants". The detainees have been held in secret without criminal charges for as long as two years at military stockades in the US.

Bush had argued that as "unlawful combatants" these detainees have no legal rights under either the Geneva Conventions or US law. Hundreds, if not thousands, of non-citizen detainees have been held at secret US military bases around the world and the high court upheld their habeas corpus rights, as well, i.e., their rights to judicial review of the legality of their detentions.

With only Justice Clarence Thomas dissenting, the court ruled

neutral decision-maker", O'Connor ruled.

Neither she nor any of the other justices referred to the horrific photos of US military police torturing naked Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib and other Iraqi prisons that started leaking out April 28, two days after the court agreed to hear the appeals of the detainees. But those atrocities clearly weighed heavily in their decisions.

In a second 6-3 ruling, the court held that the 660 detainees at the Guantanamo Detention Centre, where many of these torture methods were refined, are also entitled to a judicial hearing in US courts. The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), which filed the lawsuit on behalf of 14 of the Guantanamo Bay detainees, hailed the victory and announced they will seek hearings to win freedom for their clients or even a class action lawsuit to free all the Guantanamo detainees.

CCR recently filed a Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) lawsuit against two private contractors, Titan and CACI International, for their role in the torture of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib.

Senator Patrick Leahy, ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee said, "The Bush administration's assertion that the



Guantanamo - "No president is above the law"

"Even the President cannot use the state of war and the threat of terrorism to strip away a defendant's right to be heard in court".

that the administration improperly denied Yaser Esam Hamdi, a US citizen, due process in holding him for two years without criminal charges or right of legal counsel. He is entitled to a "notice of the factual basis for his classification" and a "fair opportunity to rebut the government's assertions before a

President can hold suspects incommunicado indefinitely and without charge is as arrogant as its legal arguments that the President can authorise torture. No president is above the law or the Constitution".

Leahy praised the high court for rejecting administration pleas to "just trust us" adding, "While the

court regrettably sidestepped the urgent issues raised by the Padilla case, the Hamdi and Rasul decisions do reaffirm the judiciary's role as a check and a balance ... on power grabs" by the White House.

He was referring to Jose Padilla, a US citizen held without criminal charges. The US District Court for New York found his detention unconstitutional. But the Supreme Court used a technicality to avoid a ruling on his detention.

Leahy was sharply critical of the Republican-dominated Senate and House for behaving as a "wholly-owned subsidiary" of the Bush White House in refusing oversight of the Bush-Cheney abuses of power.

Democrat Rep. John Conyers, senior Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, said, "No longer can the Bush White House conduct its war on the Constitution in

secret. ... Even the President cannot use the state of war and the threat of terrorism to strip away a defendant's right to be heard in court".

C. William Michaels, author of *No Greater Threat*, a critique of the USA Patriot Act, told the *People's Weekly World* the decisions could be a harbinger of more civil liberties victories even though they are not directly related to the repressive Patriot Act. "These decisions made no mention of the Abu Ghraib prison abuses, but we may be looking at a refreshing trend of increased judicial scrutiny of the Bush administration", he said.

The Bush administration, he added, delivered hardline arguments that the courts have no authority "to even accept a petition for review of the Guantanamo detainees. That case could very well have been decided in the administration's favour. For the Supreme Court to

come to the opposite conclusion is an essential declaration of the role of the federal courts in checking and reviewing executive branch power".

Former Democrat Rep. Mary Rose O'Carroll, now the president of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, said the rulings are "a great victory in protecting our core values as Americans ... in upholding due process rights".

Elliott Minberg, legal director of People for the American Way, said, "The administration's breathtaking assertion of power over constitutional rights has finally been stopped. Recent revelations about this administration's detention practices underscore the importance of subjecting their policies to the effective scrutiny of the courts".

People's Weekly World, Communist Party USA
www.pww.org ☼

Appeal for solidarity for printing workers in Pakistan

The All Pakistan Trade Union Federation (APTUF) has issued an urgent appeal for international support in the case of the workers sacked from their jobs at Colorling Printing Press in Manawala in the District of Lahore. The 25 workers were dismissed for trying to form a union at their workplace in spite of the protection of the country's labour laws. Their experience demonstrates how employers are above the law in Pakistan and how little interest the state has in safeguarding workers' rights.

Workers in Pakistan face horrendous conditions. They suffer long hours, poor conditions and no freedom of association. On April 10 this year, the workers at Colorling decided to take advantage of their legal rights and form the Colorling Printing Press Workers Union. They applied to register the association with the Registrar of Trade Unions for the Lahore District on the same day. The workers were sacked immediately.

The union applied for – and got – a stay order regarding the dismissals but the employer simply refused to obey it. The 25 workers, including their officials, remained locked out of their workplace.

On June 1, the APTUF held a demonstration about the issue

outside the offices of the Labour Department in Lahore. Eventually, representatives of the peak council were given an interview with the Assistant Director who undertook to have a departmental representative visit the workplace. The official was denied entry!

Colorling denied that the sacked workers were their employees. Their attendance records were not accepted as proof. In common with 95 per cent of employers in Pakistan, Colorling does not issue any identifying documents to their workers. This helps them to take fullest advantage of the informal contract system that most workers in Pakistan are employed under.

Meanwhile, on June 9, Colorling was able to enlist the help of the police who arrested two office bearers of the union on the basis of a concocted "First Investigation Report". On June 16, the two were released without charge after the intervention of the APTUF.

Leaders of the APTUF and the sacked workers have been targeted by employers and religious fundamentalists groups and subjected to criminal threats. The police have no interest in protecting the rights of workers or their unions in this case, which typifies the industrial relations scene in Pakistan ☼.

The APTUF is calling on all those who value human rights to support their demands, which are:

- A halt to the violation of International Labour Organisation Conventions 98 and 87 [regarding the Right to Organise and Bargain Collectively and Freedom of Association, respectively]
- The immediate reinstatement of the sacked Colorling workers
- The registration of the Colorling Printing Press Union under the law
- An end to the Contract Labour System

Send messages of support to:

Nasir Chaudhary
Press & Publication Secretary
All Pakistan Trade Union Federation
14-N, Gulberg Industrial Area, Gulberg II, Lahore, Pakistan
Email: aptuf@brain.net.pk

And protests to:

Honourable Kahlid Maqbool
Governor of Punjab
Governor House Lahore, Pakistan
Email: governor.sectt@punjab.gov.pk

Honourable Ch. Pervaiz Elahi
Chief Minister of Punjab
Chief Minister House, Lahore, Pakistan

Mr. Zarar Haider
Director
Labour Welfare Punjab
62 - D, New Muslim Town, Lahore, Pakistan

Mr. Shanawaz Badar
Labour Secretary
Labor & Human Resource Department
Government of the Punjab
Civil Secretariat, Lahore Pakistan
Email: labour@punjab.gov.pk

NATO prepares to engage in Middle East

NATO leaders, meeting in Istanbul last week, decided to strengthen military relations with Israel, Jordan, Egypt and several other countries in the Middle East. It plans to conduct its military relations with each of these countries separately and use these "partnerships" for engagement in military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia.

NATO's priorities include support for Israel, control over developments in Iraq and protecting Western interests in Afghanistan.

As a result of this decision Israel's navy will be invited to take part in NATO's Mediterranean Sea. NATO claims these operations are to check suspicious seacraft to stop illegal activities, and prevent the smuggling of weapons and materials used in the production of weapons of mass destruction.

Anti-terror equipment, as well as gear used to cope with natural disasters and the results of terror attacks, will be made available to countries involved in this Mediterranean Dialogue partnership framework. ☼

Where did the \$20 billion go?

Susan Webb

The US occupation and its corporate cronies have ripped off Iraq's oil wealth and ravaged the country's infrastructure, several new reports show. Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) boss L Paul Bremer slinked out of Iraq on June 28 after turning nominal power over to an Iraqi interim government. But Iraq has been left to pick up the pieces after a year of inept and often corrupt US rule, driven by the Bush administration's aim of turning Iraq's wealth over to US corporate control. The new reports show the US occupation has left Iraq worse off than before the war in many basic areas of life, and has tried to hamstring Iraqi efforts for real economic and political sovereignty.

The Open Society Institute's Iraq Revenue Watch program charged that the CPA "launched a last-minute spending spree using Iraq's oil money ... committing billions of dollars to hastily conceived projects" just before the authority was due to close up shop.

"Transactions worth billions of dollars in Iraqi funds have not been independently reviewed or the results reported."

On May 15, the CPA's spending arm, the Program Review Board, approved nearly US\$2 billion in expenditures for "a host of poorly planned projects" without consulting the relevant Iraqi ministries, the Iraq Revenue Watch report said. The report, titled *Iraqi Fire Sale*, criticises the CPA's "rush to commit Iraqi oil funds to projects already funded by the US Government, instead of waiting for the interim Iraqi Government to make these bud-

getary decisions when it assumes power."

Meanwhile, the British humanitarian group Christian Aid assailed "the US-controlled coalition in Baghdad" for "handing over power ... without having properly accounted for what it has done with some US\$20 billion of Iraq's own money."

In May 2003 the United Nations Security Council established the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) to collect Iraq's oil revenues, repatriated funds previously held by Saddam Hussein, and transfers from the UN Oil-for-Food program, which ended in November 2003. This money was to be spent in the interests of the Iraqi people, and be independently audited.

Since its inception, the DFI has received US\$19.3 billion. As of June 9, US\$10.1 billion was left. The US has spent half of the DFI money and used up almost all of approximately US\$2.7 billion in assets the US confiscated from the Saddam Hussein regime, according to a June report by the General Accounting Office.

In fact, the US occupation spent

far more of Iraq's money than its own, the Accounting Office report shows. As of the end of April, the CPA signed contract commitments for only US\$8 billion – about one-third – of the US\$24 billion allocated by the US Congress for Iraq's reconstruction and humanitarian needs. But it signed contracts committing about US\$15.5 billion – more than two-thirds – of the US\$21 billion in available Iraqi funds.

Furthermore, the Accounting Office said, "Transactions worth billions of dollars in Iraqi funds have not been independently reviewed or the results reported."

Christian Aid noted, "It took until April 2004 to appoint an auditor – leaving only a matter of weeks to go through the books. Early reports of the audit indicate strong criticisms of the CPA's handling of Iraq's money. But the CPA is not going to be around to be held accountable."

"Astonishing"

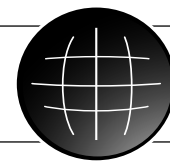
In October 2003 Christian Aid revealed that an "astonishing" US\$4 billion of Iraq's oil revenues and other funds were unaccounted for.

Today, the group charges, "We still do not know exactly how Iraq's money has been earned, which companies have won the contracts that it has been spent on, or whether this spending was in the interests of the Iraqi people".

Iraqi Communist Party spokesperson Salam Ali said an independent auditing commission should be set up to go through all the accounts and contracts set up by the CPA, with authority to revoke or modify these as needed to serve the interests of the Iraqi people.

But more important, "real economic control must be transferred to the Iraqi government", Ali told the *People's Weekly World*. While achieving security is the top issue for the Iraqi people, he said, it is closely intertwined with the country's economic situation. Noting the waste, inefficiency and corruption of the US occupation, Ali said, "If a strong Iraqi government can utilise fully the oil revenues, we can do far better than what US companies and the CPA have done so far."

"Political initiative must be taken back from the Americans", Ali said. "It's about time." *People's Weekly World* ☪



Global briefs

SYRIA: More than 130 members of Syria's 250-seat legislature have prepared an America Accountability Act that would impose "strict sanctions" on US interests in Syria. Parliamentary officials called the draft law a response to "Washington's policy in the region". The US imposed sanctions on Syria in May

SLOVAKIA: Parliament rejected an amendment to a bill that would have forced university students to begin paying between five and 30 percent of their education costs. The amendment would also have changed the system of student loans and scholarships by which students finance their studies. Though universities are free, students must find money to pay for housing and books.

BRITAIN: The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) attacked government plans to "risk public safety" by turning firefighters into "ambulance assistants". The so-called "co-responding" scheme, which sends firefighters out on category A medical emergencies is dangerous, according to the union. "Firefighters, especially in retained fire stations, are being bullied into taking part by bosses, threatening them with station closures", one delegate told an FBU conference. The conference heard that firefighters had been sent out to try to cope with an ectopic pregnancy and a five-month-old baby with breathing difficulties. In urging the firefighters to reject the scheme, delegates stressed that they should be supporting "the workers' struggle for a fully funded ambulance service".

SOUTH KOREA: South Korea has started to remove propaganda loudspeakers directed at the north in the demilitarised zone. The dismantling of "the wall of sound" is expected to be finished in several weeks time.

VIETNAM: The living standards of the Vietnamese population during 2001-2002 continued to improve. At current prices, the average income has risen by 20.6 per cent compared to 1999. The poverty figures fell from 37.4 per cent during 1997-1998 to 28.9 per cent during 2001-2002. The General Statistics Office conducted the household living standard survey in 2002.

USA: Hundreds of frustrated air passengers were not allowed to board charter planes to Cuba from Miami International Airport last Tuesday. The Department of Treasury had cleared the flights, but the Department of State had not approved them. The crowds had been trying to beat new travel restrictions, banning the flights starting on the Wednesday. The planes took off empty for Cuba, since they still had to pick up other passengers waiting on the island.

IRAQ: Brigadier-General Janis Karpinski who was in charge of the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad told the BBC that she has evidence that the Israelis were involved in interrogating Iraqi detainees at another facility. She met one such interrogator who she said told her: "Well, I do some of the interrogation here and of course I speak Arabic, but I'm not an Arab. I'm from Israel". Since the horrendous torture revelations, Karpinski has been suspended from her command but has not been charged with any wrongdoing.

Opposition to NATO Summit in Turkey

ISTANBUL: On Sunday June 27, the Communist Party of Turkey together with other left and progressive groups organised a large demonstration against the presence of the NATO Summit in Istanbul.

More than 50,000 people took part in the demonstration. Also present were representatives of the Greek, Belgian, Dutch, Danish, Portuguese, Norwegian, Czech and Australian communist parties. There were also contingents from Greece and Syria who marched in the demonstration.

The organisers expected a much larger crowd. But many thousands of people couldn't attend as the police blocked off roads leading into the area.

Another factor that kept people away was the fear of violence. This was due to the actions of fringe groups in the week leading up to the demonstration. These included bombings in Istanbul and Ankara in which at least five people were killed.

On the day preceding the actions in Istanbul, a demonstration in Ankara ended in violence when a group broke away from the main body and attacked the police. The police retaliated in kind and the demonstration was called off.

What the demonstration in Istanbul lacked in numbers it made up for in militancy.



Many thousands could not attend because of police road blocks

By far the largest contingent was from the Communist Party of Turkey. Chanting "Yankee go home" and "Istanbul is closing its doors to NATO" thousands of young workers and students let their feelings about NATO and the summit be known.

The Communist Party of Turkey also organised a march to the venue of the summit on the following day.

Thousands of young members of the Party took part but were prevented from reaching the venue for the summit by armed police in riot gear. They did manage to attach a banner to the French Consulate with the message "NATO and Bush

you are not welcome. Get out of Turkey".

Opposition to the plan for NATO to act as regional police force is gaining momentum around Europe.

The size and strength of the demonstrations in Istanbul reflect the success of the left and progressive forces in Turkey making opposition to NATO an issue in the country.

They also reflect the growth in influence of the Communist Party of Turkey which is able to mobilise thousands of militant young workers and students in mass demonstrations. ☪

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Larry Anthony's police minders

Rosie Lee recounts an intimidatory brush with police at the A&I Hall, Bangalow, when she and a friend handed out leaflets in front of Larry Anthony (*Echo*, June 29). What could be more meritorious and appropriate than representing the 162 imprisoned refugee children, who cannot speak for themselves, before the Minister for Youth & Children's Services on World Refugee Day?

The pair were interrogated by Larry's four burly police minders, prompting Rosie to ask whether all electoral candidates will receive the same degree of protection. Unlike other candidates, Larry needs police protection, Rosie, because he is afraid of being arrested by a citizen outraged by his complicity in crimes against humanity.

He told our anti-Iraq war delegation that he fully supported the war and that there were no differences between himself and the Howard Government on this issue.

Forty-three Australian legal experts judged the invasion of Iraq illegal. There was no discernable threat to the US, Britain or Australia; UN inspectors scoured Iraq for any shred of evidence of WMD-nothing was found then and nothing has been found during the following 448 days of searching.

In violation of Article 39 of the Geneva Convention Australian troops were enthusiastically dispatched with a send off based on lies and deception. International law was smashed when the first of 3000 US missiles belted into Baghdad, a city of 5.6 million, of which 50 per cent are children.

The US has mostly ignored its legal obligations to avoid targeting civilians (even the British military complained about the US policy of "shoot first question later") and not causing untold environmental harm, by using cluster bombs and depleted uranium ordnance.

Australia, as a member of the Coalition of the Willing, is therefore complicit in crimes against humanity.

Additionally, our troops hand over Iraqi prisoners to the US military when the US has refused to ratify the Convention Against Torture and so we violate the same treaty which we have ratified (six weeks ago I wrote to Attorney-General Ruddock and US Ambassador Schieffer about this but have had no replies). The huge level of support I received after unsuccessfully trying to arrest Prime Minister Howard, prompted me to start GROVIL - Grassroots Resistance Opposing Violations of International Law - whose purpose is to facilitate the citizen's arrest of MPs complicit in crimes against humanity.

To this end, promised donations (one person offered \$1000!) have enabled GROVIL to offer 10 awards of \$500 each for citizens who arrest MPs; after the event they just have to send the evidence of the arrest and contact details to grovil@resist.ca, to claim their reward (police officers are encouraged to apply!).

Once an arrest has occurred the arrestee must hand over their charge as soon as possible to a magistrate or to the police. GROVIL is gratified that Larry now has police minders. This will make it easier to consign him to police custody once arrested.

As Larry and other Coalition MPs gear up for an election, let them beware of the hand they shake: it could be the one that arrests them!

**Gareth Smith
Nuclear Disarmament Party
candidate for Richmond
Byron Bay, NSW**

Dams in NSW

As a member of the ALP for over 30 years as well as President of the Mascot Greek Orthodox community I was asked by the Botany Municipality to represent it at the Water Board for a few years in the 1990s. During this time I had the opportunity to visit and study the dams and sewage systems of NSW and Sydney in particular.

I was surprised to find that there were only seven dams.

The first of them was constructed in 1889 and the last, which also happens to be the largest, was constructed in 1950 (see Table below).

From 1960 until the present, it is my understanding that there have been no more dams constructed despite the fact that Sydney's population has grown significantly since then.

Minister, I will refrain from making any further comments regarding the importance to any community of having a sustainable supply of potable water, because I am sure you are quite well aware of it. Suffice to say something needs to be done urgently to remedy what

appears to be a patent undercapacity, one that has been adequately illustrated in recent times.

Name & Address supplied

Dams & Reservoirs

	Completed	Capacity(ML)
Prospect Reservoir	1907	8.870
Cataract Dam	1907	94.300
Cordeaux Dam	1926	93.635
Avon Dam	1927	214.360
Nepean Dam	1935	81.365
Woronora Dam	1941	71.790
Warragamba Dam	1960	2,057,000

Departure no loss

Enclosed is some money to help keep our paper going. (Much appreciated - Ed.)

I write happy in hearing of the political demise of Harradine, although I haven't heard him during the Iraq debate; we all had a gut full of him during the Vietnam issue.

He rolled in the gutter with the worst of them and interfered with our Tasmanian Union voices against our involvement against the Vietnamese people, particularly our then AEU.

He and his henchmen rolled our District Committee of which I was a member in Branch No. 2 Hobart.

(Hooroo to another Pope product!)

**Larry Gowland
Tasmania**

Big Brother

Because of your article on Merlin Luck's *Big Brother* protest I have written to him, and also to Gretel Killeen (not a fan letter!).

How often have we wanted to

confront the people, nine out of 10 people who avoid eye contact, when you are looking for public support for a petition, in the street. But it is not something can do. But he did it; confronted the people who watch *Big Brother* with a reality most of them would turn away from. Brilliant.

To quote, and sanitise one slightly, the brilliant song by *The Herd*: "Wake up! This country needs a f***** shake-up".

Vanstone! Release the refugees, now!

**Stephen Langford
And nine others
Paddington, NSW**

Fund schools to teach, not preach

Flagpoles, school mottos, saluting and marching in step... Education Minister Brendan Nelson is preaching the gospel of nationalism as a substitute for school funding.

Australia's public schools are already doing an excellent job of promoting values. They don't need to be told how to suck eggs by the Minister. What they **do** need is money to buy books, repair buildings and employ staff.

Nelson wants to distract us from the central issue - public school funding - so he beats the drum of national pride, proving once again, in the words of Samuel Johnson, that patriotism is the last resort of scoundrels.

Adequate funding for state schools? Run **that** up the flagpole and I'd salute.

**Linda Gale
Secretary,
Progressive Labour Party
Kensington Vic**

Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

Of ships, seamen & counter-revolution

A few days ago I was looking through one of my books, with the unpromising title *Ships in Australian Waters*. Compiled by Peter J Williams and Roderick Serle for Angus & Robertson, it is subtitled *A Pictorial History from the Days of the Early Explorers to the Present Time* and was published in 1968.

Printed throughout on heavy art paper, it is essentially a collection of photographs divided by type of vessel: "Coastal Windjammers", "Early Steamboats", "Coastal Liners", even "Royal Yachts".

One of the more interesting sections, "Inland Navigation", deals with the Murray-Darling river-boat trade, taking goods up river and bringing the wool bales out. Henry Lawson wrote about the river-boats of the Darling, making their way cautiously across vast but shallow "lakes" when the river was in flood.

Right now, a group of commercially-minded enthusiasts are getting ready to unveil a carefully-restored old river-boat on the Murray in South Australia. The restored vessel is presumably intended for the increasingly popular river tourist trade, a spokesperson noting that around a score of hand-made quilts had been specially produced for the restored passengers' bunks.

As with all books about old ships, *Ships in Australian Waters* contains a staggering litany of disaster and loss of life: "wrecked near Cape Willoughby 15th June 1890", "capsized and sank in Apollo Bay 1932", "wrecked near Bundaberg 1898", "wrecked on Strahan Bar 1898", "run down by SS *Dilker* off Point Nepean and sunk during a rain squall on 8th April 1924", and so on and so on, page after page.

This gives added poignancy to the fact that there are so few photographs available for a book like this of the men who actually worked these ships. Ship-owners would proudly commission photos and paintings of their ships, and newspapers and enthusiasts alike would photograph ships, great and small, at every opportunity.

But photos of rough seamen, like photos of most other workers, were not deemed to be nearly as interesting as the thing they were working on. Consequently, the section on seamen in *Ships in Australian Waters* takes up only three pages.

It is headed "Iron Men" and does include a splendid photo of seamen who have posed while manning the capstan on the foredeck of a sailing ship (believed to be the composite clipper ship *Sobraon*) in 1881.

The composite clippers had iron frames planked with hardwood. They carried passengers and goods outwards from the UK to Australia and wool, passengers and tallow on the return trip.

The *Sobraon*, the largest composite ship ever built at 317 feet (almost 10 metres) long with a 40-foot (12-metre) beam, was solid teak with iron beams and frames.

As the text accompanying the photo of the *Sobraon* seamen says: "Sailors in the wind ships had to

be tough to survive. Apart from the dangers of being swept overboard and drowned, or the perils of shipwreck, they had much to contend with.

"The authorities laid down an allowance of food referred to generally as the 'pound and pint scale'. This was to be a minimum, but too many owners made it the maximum.

"So semi-starvation was often the sailor's lot." [Shipowners' attitudes haven't changed much, by the sound of things.]

Ships don't just carry passengers and cargo, however, and there are four sections in *Ships in Australian Waters* dealing with "Sea Power", "Colonial Navies", "Visiting Warships" and "Ships At War".

The section on "Visiting Warships" reminds us that quite early the Yanks had an interest in asserting their military relationship with Australia. The arrival of the American Fleet (known as "the Great White Fleet") in 1908, comprising pre-Dreadnought types of battleships, provided "the greatest example of sea power that Australia had seen".

This must have rankled with the Royal Navy, but presumably Britain felt confident of its colony's loyalty, for they did not try to match the US effort. In fact, the spectacle of 1908 was not surpassed until 1924, when it was once again a seemingly never ending line of grey US warships that came steaming out of the morning haze.

The American Pacific Fleet, all modern battleships, light cruisers and destroyers, had come for a visit, half going to Port Jackson and half to Port Phillip.

One of the more interesting accounts of an Australian vessel engaged in military action abroad occurs, incongruously, in the section "The Coastal Liners". It concerns



"Iron Men" on the SS *Sobraon* (1881)

the SS *Nairana*, built in 1915 for the run across Bass Strait.

She was taken over by the Navy in 1917 and used in support of the British occupation of the Russian port of Archangel in August 1918. The British claimed that they had landed there to prevent "war supplies from falling into the hands of the Germans".

Their real aim was to strangle the Revolution and back the counter-revolution, while securing some imperial booty for themselves (they also seized the Baku oilfields at the same time).

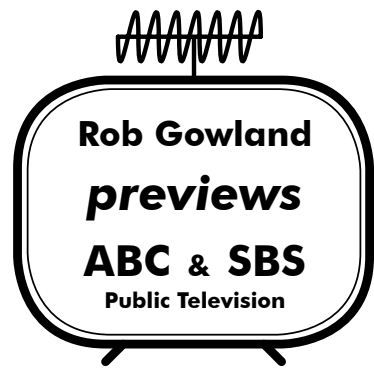
An extract from the *Nairana's* war record reads as follows: "Flying the flag of Rear Admiral T W Kemp, CIE [Companion of the Indian Empire], the *Nairana*

was instrumental in the capture of Archangel in August 1918, engaging the six-inch batteries at the mouth of the river with her guns and seaplanes, and anchoring off the city after destroying the Bolshevik forts.

"By means of bombs and gunfire from a seaplane sent up from her decks, she destroyed an armed vessel in which the Bolshevik Chancellor of the Exchequer was escaping with the Bolshevik Treasury on board.

"Until October 1918 she patrolled the northern coast of Russia, engaging the enemy with guns."

So that pesky Red Revolution even intrudes into a book about *Ships in Australian Waters*! ☺



Sun 11 July ~
~ Sat 17 July

As far as *Worth Watching* is concerned, the week begins and ends with detectives reviewing an old case. First up is another in the *Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot* series, *Five Little Pigs* (ABC 8.30pm Sunday), in which Miss Christie's literary sleuth is asked in 1939 to look into the case of Caroline Crale who was hanged in 1925 for the murder of her husband.

The murdered man is described as a "Bohemian artist", but not the starve-in-a-garret type. This "Bohemian" has a housekeeper and a very large house with room for lots of house-guests for the weekend.

This society milieu allows plenty of scope for Miss Christie's devious plotting, and for Poirot to exercise his little grey cells. Although part of the solution sticks out a mile, Miss Christie as usual adds extra twists.

This is a superior series of movie-length adaptations, marked by excellent period décor and atmospheric photography. David Suchet, who has been playing Poirot for 15 years now, has grown into the role, although he does not bring out the necessary iron beneath the detective's fussy, mannered exterior.

Television is a very powerful medium. It reaches millions of people and conveys information with a stunning appearance of reality and veracity.

It is capable of being an unparalleled educational tool, or an infamous source of misinformation. It therefore behoves television broadcasters to use this medium carefully and wisely.

The Bradshaw rock paintings, or Gwion Gwion as they are known to the Aboriginal traditional owners, are to be found in the remote and beautiful Kimberley region of Western Australia. The paintings, sophisticated and graceful drawings depicting highly decorated figures adorned with tassels, delicate jewellery and elaborate headdresses, are very old.

One would expect a responsible program about the possible origins of these paintings to utilise the services of archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, dating experts and other scientists to examine the latest evidence and reach reasoned, scientific conclusions.

But eccentric or controversial characters, even if they don't know what they are talking about, make for more "colourful" television. So people like Thor Hyerdahl can always get their outlandish theories aired on television.

The Riddle Of The Bradshaws on *Lost Worlds* (SBS 8.30pm Sunday), although it does use some scientists, prefers to concentrate on "self-taught researcher" Grahame Walsh. Walsh has angered Aborigines by claiming that the paintings are the work of some earlier race that presumably had died out by the time Aborigines came to Australia.

The absence of any evidence whatsoever for such a race doesn't seem to faze him. Instead he continues his "research" into what he claims is a hidden language in the paintings.

So instead of an interesting and informative program about the Bradshaws, we have an annoying program about a misguided amateur enthusiast who proves once again that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing.

The subject of *Compass* this week is *Fighting Ageism* (ABC 10.05pm Sunday). Ageism, the systematic stereotyping against older people, often goes unnoticed and unchallenged, says the program.

"Even though it's as wrong as racism and sexism, work-place ageism is now accepted as a major problem and can begin at just 35. It determines retrenchment practices,



A superior series of movie-length adaptations (*Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot*)

access to training and treatment by employment agencies."

But is *Compass* concerned with the problems of, say, bricklayers trying to find work after 40? No, as you would expect, *Compass's* concern is for a group of "highly qualified middle managers in their 40s and 50s who were on six figure salaries before being retrenched".

Poor sods. When imperialism plans to undertake some nasty piece of aggression or "regime change", it dishes up as much disinformation as it can about the target regime or country.

The US, and its running dogs Britain and Australia, is hell bent on bringing about the overthrow of Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Communist government. The DPRK (North Korea) is part of the "Axis of Evil" and the US (and Australia) take part in military exercises practising to invade the tiny Socialist country.

So it is not surprising that a piece of blatant disinformation, *Access to Evil*, a BBC This World report, turns up this week in the *Cutting Edge* timeslot (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday).

Not content with repeating as fact the highly fanciful US claims about North Korea's nuclear weapons program, BBC journalist Olenka Frenkiel trots out evidence of an even "more chilling evil": that North Korea is testing new chemical weapons on women and children.

The claims made are so reminiscent of the anti-Soviet propaganda of the Cold War: "hundreds of thousands of people are imprisoned without charge in North Korea's Gulag with its network of secret concentration camps", and so on.

As reports it, South Korea "knows all about the secret camps and the ghastly experiments carried out behind their electrified fences". Unfortunately, "all the government is interested in is economic stability".

Actually, South Korea is less than enthused about US efforts to start a new war on the Korean peninsula. With gob-smacking unconcern for the mountain of evidence to the contrary, Frenkiel also claims that the United States is not interested in pursuing any regime change in North Korea!

The US, Frenkiel claims, is "focused on homeland security". So "the only group pushing for a regime change in North Korea are that country's defectors". I'm sorry, say what?

If this nonsense irresistibly recalls other recent disinforma-

tion - about Saddam Hussein and Iraq's WMDs, say - that's probably because it comes from the same stable.

This week on *New Tricks* (ABC 9.30pm Fridays) the Unsolved Crime and Open Case Squad is taken to Buckingham Palace when one of the paintings in the "national collection" is discovered to be a fake. Their job is to discretely discover who made the fake and when was it substituted?

By the time they have finished, what began as a case of politically sensitive art fraud has become a case of arson, theft, murder, extortion and sundry other crimes which they happily leave their boss to take up with the DPP.

The team are joined for this episode by a young woman seconded from art fraud, the appropriately named Totty Vogel-Downing (Hattie Morahan). Tottie is undeterred by the initial frostiness towards her of the team's governor, Detective Superintendent Sandra Pullman (Amanda Redman) and takes to their unconventional approach with gusto.

"I've learned a lot from you", she tells them after the case is solved, and confides to a startled Sandra, "You're one of my heroes."

A Wall To Wall production for the BBC, this series is proving deservedly popular and a second series goes into production in August. ✪

Commencing July 16

The 2004 Russian Film Festival

EIGHT NEW RUSSIAN FILMS
plus SEVEN SOVIET CLASSICS

The Soviet films include *The Cranes Are Flying* (1957), *Lady With A Dog* (1959), *Uncle Vanya* (1971). The new Russian films include the box-office success *72 Metres*, about the crew of a sunken submarine; *The Star*, about Red Army scouts in WW2, winner of the Grand Prix at the 10th Festival of Russian Cinema in Honfleur (France); *The Lover*, winner of the Russian Film Critics' award for Best Actor (Oleg Yankovsky) and a prize-winner at San Sebastian Film Festival; *The Stroll*, winner of the Best Film Prize at the Cleveland Film Festival and the Best Actress award of the Russian National Academy of Cinematography.

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Sydney

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Every Friday night 6pm - 7.45pm

Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills

(across from the Chalmers St exit and Devonshire St tunnel at Central Station)
Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

July 9

What's happening to the Liberal Party?
Where are the small "L" Liberals?

John Valder, a former President of the Liberal Party
Prof Peter Baume, Chancellor of the University of Canberra and
former Liberal cabinet minister

July 16

The Josephite Sisters, Inspirational Fighters for Social Justice:
East Timor, Refugees And Other Issues
Sr Susan Connolly, Sr Josephine Mitchell

July 23

Latham's snakes and (aspirational) ladder.
What does it really mean for
the disadvantaged and the common good?

Michael Raper, President of the National Welfare Rights Network
Julian Disney, Director Social Justice Project UNSW

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
www.politicsinthepub.org

My First Wild Week with *Fahrenheit 9/11*

Michael Moore
Sunday, July 4th, 2004

Where do I begin? This past week has knocked me for a loop. "Fahrenheit 9/11," the #1 movie in the country, the largest grossing documentary ever. My head is spinning. Didn't we just lose our distributor eight weeks ago? Did Karl Rove really fail to stop this? Is Bush packing?

Each day this week I was given a new piece of information from the press that covers Hollywood, and I barely had time to recover from the last tidbit before the next one smacked me upside the head:

- More people saw "Fahrenheit 9/11" in one weekend than all the people who saw "Bowling for Columbine" in 9 months.
- "Fahrenheit 9/11" broke "Rocky III's" record for the biggest box office opening weekend ever for any film that opened in less than a thousand theatres.
- "Fahrenheit 9/11" beat the opening weekend of *Return of the Jedi*.
- "Fahrenheit 9/11" instantly went to #2 on the all-time list for largest per-theatre average ever for a film that opened in wide-release.

How can I ever thank all of you who went to see it? These records are mind-blowing. They have sent shock waves through Hollywood – and, more importantly, through the White House.

But it didn't just stop there. The response to the movie then went into the Twilight Zone. Surfing through the dial I landed on the Fox broadcasting network which was airing the NASCAR race live last Sunday to an audience of millions of Americans – and suddenly the announcers were talking about how NASCAR champ Dale Earnhardt, Jr took his crew to see *Fahrenheit 9/11* the night before.

FOX sportscaster Chris Myers delivered Earnhardt's review straight out of his mouth and into the heartland of America: "He said hey, it'll be a good bonding experience no matter what your political belief. It's a good thing as an American to go see." Whoa! NASCAR fans – you can't go deeper into George Bush territory than that! White House moving vans – START YOUR ENGINES!

From The Late Show with David Letterman

Top Ten George W Bush Complaints About *Fahrenheit*

10. That actor who played the President was totally unconvincing
9. It oversimplified the way I stole the election
8. Too many of them fancy college-boy words
7. If Michael Moore had waited a few months, he could have included the part where I get him deported
6. Didn't have one of them hilarious monkeys who smoke cigarettes and gives people the finger
5. Of all Michael Moore's accusations, only 97% are true
4. Not sure – I passed out after a piece of popcorn lodged in my windpipe
3. Where the hell was Spider-man?
2. Couldn't hear most of the movie over Cheney's foul mouth
1. I thought this was supposed to be about dodgeball

Then there was Roger Friedman from the Fox News Channel giving our film an absolutely glowing review, calling it "a really brilliant piece of work, and a film that members of all political parties should see without fail".

Richard Goldstein of the *Village Voice* surmised that Bush is already considered a goner so Rupert Murdoch might be starting to curry favour with the new administration. I don't know about that, but I've never heard a decent word toward me from Fox. So, after I was revived, I wondered if a love note to me from Sean Hannity was next.

How about Letterman's Top Ten List? [See below]

Stunned, weeping, questioning

But it was the reactions and reports we received from theatres around the country that really sent me over the edge. One theatre manager after another phoned in to say that the movie was getting standing ovations as the credits rolled – in places like Greensboro, North Carolina and Oklahoma City – and that they were having a hard time clearing the theatre afterwards because people were either too stunned or they wanted to sit and talk to their neighbours about what they had just seen.

In Trumbull, Connecticut, one

woman got up on her seat after the movie and shouted "Let's go have a meeting!" A man in San Francisco took his shoe off and threw it at the screen when Bush appeared at the end. Ladies' church groups in Tulsa were going to see it, and weeping afterwards.

Newspaper after newspaper wrote stories in tones of breathless disbelief about people who called themselves "Independents" and "Republicans" walking out of the

movie theatre shaken and in tears, proclaiming that they could not, in good conscience, vote for George W Bush.

The New York Times wrote of a conservative Republican woman in her 20s in Pensacola, Florida who cried through the film, and told the reporter: "It really makes me question what I feel about the president... it makes me question his motives..."

Newsday reported on a self-described "ardent Bush/Cheney supporter" who went to see the film on Long Island, and his quiet reaction afterwards. He said, "It's really given me pause to think about what's really going on. There was just too much – too much to discount." The man then bought three more tickets for another showing of the film.

The *Los Angeles Times* found a mother who had "supported [Bush] fiercely" at a theatre in Des Peres, Missouri: "Emerging from Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, her eyes wet, Leslie Hanser said she at last understood.... 'My emotions are just....' She trailed off, waving her hands to show confusion. 'I feel like we haven't seen the whole truth before'".

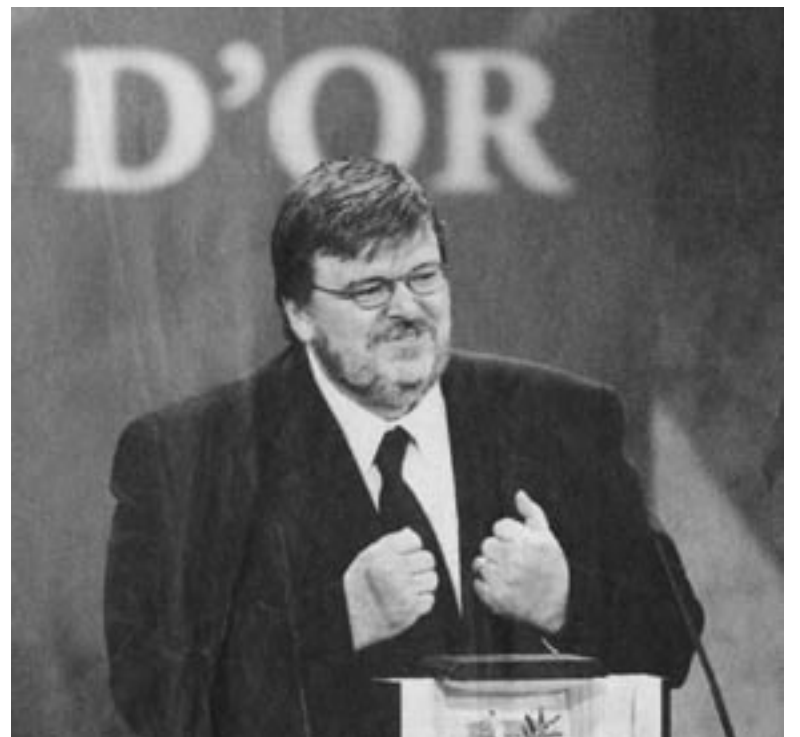
All of this had to be the absolute worst news for the White House to wake up to on Monday morning. I guess they were in such a stupor, they "gave" Iraq back to, um, Iraq two days early!

White House spinning

News editors told us that they were being "bombed" with e-mails and calls from the White House (read: Karl Rove), trying to spin their way out of this mess by attacking it and attacking me. Bush spokesman Dan Bartlett had told the White House press corps that the movie was "outrageously false" – even though he said he hadn't seen the movie.

He later told CNN that "This is a film that doesn't require us to actually view it to know that it's filled with factual inaccuracies". At least they're consistent. They never needed to see a single weapon of mass destruction before sending our kids off to die.

Many news shows were more than eager to buy the White House spin. After all, that is a big part of what *Fahrenheit* is about – how the lazy, compliant media bought all the lies from the Bush administration about the need to invade Iraq. They took the Kool-Aid offered by the White House and rarely, if ever, did our media ask the hard questions that needed to be asked before the war started.



Michael Moore – Outing the media for their complicity

Because the movie "outs" the mainstream media for their failures and their complicity with the Bush administration – who can ever forget their incessant, embarrassing cheerleading as the troops went off to war, as though it was all just a game – the media was not about to

Do not let anyone say this or that isn't true. If they say that, they are lying. Let them know that the OPINIONS in the film are mine, and anyone certainly has a right to disagree with them. And the questions I pose in the movie, based on these irrefutable facts, are also mine.

One woman got up on her seat after the movie and shouted "Let's go have a meeting!" A man in San Francisco took his shoe off and threw it at the screen when Bush appeared at the end. Ladies' church groups in Tulsa were going to see it, and weeping afterwards.

let me get away with anything now resembling a cultural phenomenon.

On show after show, they went after me with the kind of viciousness you would have hoped they had had for those who were lying about the necessity for invading a sovereign nation that was no threat to us. I don't blame our well-paid celebrity journalists – they look like a bunch of ass-kissing dopes in my movie, and I guess I'd be pretty mad at me, too. After all, once the NASCAR fans see *Fahrenheit 9/11*, will they ever believe a single thing they see on ABC/NBC/CBS news again?

Absolute, irrefutable truth

Every single fact I state in *Fahrenheit 9/11* is the absolute and irrefutable truth. This movie is perhaps the most thoroughly researched and vetted documentary of our time. No fewer than a dozen people, including three teams of lawyers and the venerable one-time fact-checkers from *The New Yorker* went through this movie with a fine-tooth comb so that we can make this guarantee to you.

And I have a right to ask them. And I will continue to ask them until they are answered.

In closing, let me say that the most heartening response to the film has come from our soldiers and their families. Theatres in military towns across the country reported packed houses. Our troops know the truth. They have seen it first-hand. And many of them could not believe that here was a movie that was TRULY on their side – the side of bringing them home alive and never sending them into harm's way again unless it's the absolute last resort.

Thank you again, all of you, for your support. Together we did something for the history books. My apologies to *Return of the Jedi*. We'll make it up by producing "Return of the Texan to Crawford" in November.

May the farce be with you, but not for long.

For more heart-rending stories of the response to the film, visit Michael Moore's site at www.michaelmoore.com and click onto latest news, July 2, 2004. ☺



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