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The price of winning an election with Beazley

Mark Latham has trumped one of Howard's campaign elements by appointing Kim Beazley to the ALP front bench and anointing him shadow Defence Minister. Howard has been attacking the ALP over its critical relationship with the United States and George Bush. Latham immediately received his reward from the US with friendly remarks from the US Ambassador to Australia, Tom Schieffer.

However, what Mark Latham has done by appointing Beazley is to undercut the perception that a Latham-led Labor Party Government would distance itself from the bellicose policies being pursued by the Bush administration.

Beazley is as much "at one" with the US as is Howard and Downer. He is a 110 percent US boy and this has been demonstrated over the many years he was a leading figure in the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments. Furthermore, during his two stints as Defence Minister in these governments he earned the nick-name of "Bomber Beazley" for his strident militarist attitudes. He is a fervent advocate of the US alliance and is just as ready to go "all the way with the USA" as is Howard or any of the previous Liberal Prime Ministers.

As far back as 1994 Beazley remarked that "You cannot see in history a power of global dominance which has acted as largely unselfishly as the United States".

Beazley has been prepared to show the US administration how it can better achieve its objectives and, for that, has earned many brownie points in the top echelons of the most reactionary circles of the US leadership.

By appointing Beazley to the position of shadow Defence Minister and, presumably, to that position should the ALP win the coming election, Latham will find that he has overshadowed his own leadership on a most important element of Australia's foreign policy.

It will be perceived in Asian countries as confirmation that Latham's assertion that the ALP wants to get closer to Asia is a sham, that an ALP government would remain just as solidly committed to pursue the wishes of the United States as is the Howard Government.

It also shows that Mark Latham is prepared to do anything to win the coming election. To those in the Labor Party who hoped that Latham's election as leader of the ALP against Kim Beazley would be something of a turning point will be disappointed.

Kim Beazley is a monumental loser having lost the election to Howard at the time of the "children overboard" crisis when he failed dismally to exploit the lying propaganda of the Howard leadership. The simple reason was that Beazley agreed with the Howard Government's attitude to refugees. He also lost the leadership to Simon Crean after that election and then to Mark Latham more recently.

In accepting his appointment to the front bench, Beazley said: "The reason why I have wanted to come back onto the front bench at this point in time is simply this: we are in a hard fight with fundamentalist terrorism, it demands the best efforts from absolutely all of us".

By this statement Beazley has committed himself (and the ALP) to the central issue of the Bush administration – the phoney "war on terrorism". This "war" is the cover under which the US is pursuing its long-held determination to achieve world domination. It is a cause that has to be continually ratcheted up with the arrest of alleged terrorists, allegations that this or that target is to be bombed and, generally, by creating continual fear in the community.

Mark Latham has also identified himself as a supporter of the US "war on terrorism" saying that a Latham Labor Government pledges itself to deploy Australian troops against any "identifiable source" of a terrorist attack on the US. He overlooks the reality that it is the US leadership that is the main terrorist in today's world.

This course will not lead to Australian security and good relations with other countries but to increasing isolation and the perception that Australia remains the US deputy sheriff in the region and in the world.

PRESS FUND

Tiny changes can have profound effects. Hans Blix commented that after Tony Blair read intelligence reports about evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, he simply changed the question marks into exclamation marks – and used the results to justify dragging Britain into a terrible and totally unjust war. At *The Guardian* we are more precise when it comes to using question marks and full stops! Speaking of which, we need precisely \$364 per week for the rest of this year in order to reach our annual target of \$14,000. So please, give generously for the next issue. We've got a lot of catching up to do! This week our sincere thanks go to the following, for their contributions to the Press Fund:

B Appleton \$20, T Bartlett \$100, R Girvan \$5, J M Innes \$25, Sam Moutsos \$10, Don Mudie \$10.

This week's total: \$150. Progressive total \$6355.

Another "murderous" employer

The death of a 16-year-old at a meatworks involved in Tasmania's longest industrial dispute has led to revelations that industrial manslaughter laws already exist in the state. Matthew Hudson, who was not being paid for his work, was killed when a forklift he was driving collapsed on him at Blue Ribbon Meats.

Officials from the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union (AMIEU) investigating the death discovered the existence of laws in Tasmania's criminal code, dating back to the '20s, that make a crime of unlawful killing in the workplace.

"We're the only state to have

industrial manslaughter legislation", the union's State Secretary, Grant Courtney, said.

"We want this tragedy thoroughly investigated. It's a disgrace."

Matthew, who was not supposed to be working on the site, was unlicensed for either a motor vehicle or a forklift. His family claims he came home filthy and dirty every day; it is further alleged the 16-year-old took instructions from Blue Ribbon Meats employees.

The union says the company has "washed their hands of the incident" by claiming he was the responsibility of a contractor.

The union understands Matthew was the son of a "mate" of the contractor.

"Some mate!" says Mr Courtney.

The contractor was working on a federally-funded job at Blue Ribbon Meats, who have locked out 20 workers since April, 2003. The workers are seeking award protection.

Mr Courtney contrasted federal funds being directed to a "murderous" Tasmanian employer, while being denied to unionised projects on the mainland.

Locked out Blue Ribbon workers have won their case in the Industrial Relations Commission and the Supreme Court. They are currently awaiting a decision on Blue Ribbon's appeal to the full bench of the Supreme Court. ☛

Obituary

Wal Buckley 1913 – 2004

M Ewer

A well attend celebration of the life of Wal Buckley was held recently at the Sutherland Trade Union Club in NSW.

Wal was an official of the Amalgamated Engineering Union for many years through the turbulent '50s and '60s and later on for the Metal Workers Union.

The '50s and '60s were a period of innumerable struggles for fair wages and conditions and against the draconian legislation of the Menzies Liberal/Country Party Government of the time.

Wal was prominent in the struggles against the Penal Provisions of

the Arbitration Act and against outside interference by the Arbitration Court in trade union ballots.

Other attempts by the Menzies Government to strangle opposition per medium of the Communist Party Dissolution Bill were resolutely resisted.

Participation in the struggle for Peace and against the War in Vietnam was always high on the agenda.

Hanging over all this like a black cloud was the National Civic Council (NCC) which was the industrial wing of the [extreme right-wing] Democratic Labor Party.

Wal played his part in exposing

the NCC for what it was – an enemy of working class unity in the fight for a fairer society.

Wal Buckley was as popular and competent as any trade union official of the post war period.

Through all of these activities Wal was never a "hater". For him issues were what mattered not personalities.

As a public speaker Wal was always entertaining and interesting both within the trade unions and on the Communist Party's platform in the Sydney Domain.

For those who knew Walter James Buckley he will always be remembered for what he was – a champion of the working class. ☛

Fire and New Building Appeal \$10,000

Fine response

The response to our fire and new building appeal this week was great. We are off to a good start but still have some distance to travel to reach \$10,000 by mid-August. If you have not already heard, the CPA and *The Guardian* will be moving towards the end of August to 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills. Our Appeal seeks 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.

Meanwhile there is a lot to be done and Party members and supporters living in Sydney are welcome to visit the office and help with the many tasks. Just ring us first on 9212 6855 to let us know when you are coming.

Many thanks to those who have already given a hand and a special thankyou to the following for their contributions: Kevin Manski \$100, Charly Maarbani \$100, Frank Vouros \$200, Robert J Girvan \$25, C.W. Reed \$50, Tom Curphey \$20, Ian Macaulay \$40, Geof Boote \$100, B Appleton \$100, K (Della) Elliott \$200, Noel Wilson \$10, CGJ & PJJ, LLH & GLH \$125, Greek Atlas League \$1,000, Glenn Humphreys \$20, Betty Stewart \$100,

This week's total \$2190 Total so far: \$2725



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.

Communist Party of Australia badges

A new CPA badge with the official CPA logo in yellow outlined in black on a red background. Light weight, 3 cm x 1.5 cm, iron stamped, soft enamel with plating & butterfly clutch on back.

Cost: \$5 each plus \$1 postage and packing. For CPA branches ordering 20 or more badges, the cost is \$4 each plus \$4 postage and packing.

Please send orders with payment (no cash or credit card payments please).

Make cheques payable to CPA Port Jackson Branch) to:

CPA Port Jackson Branch, PO Box 40, Glebe NSW 2037.



Govt plans another nuclear dump

With a federal election looming, and in the wake of a defeat in court at the hands of the South Australian Government and Indigenous communities, the Howard Government has withdrawn proposals to build a nuclear waste dump in the South Australian outback.

But now it has other plans. With the spitefulness he typically shows when thwarted, Prime Minister Howard declared that the Federal Government would establish a waste dump on Commonwealth-controlled land. This dump would not now be shared with the states, which will have to build their own facilities.

The Commonwealth is by far the biggest producer of nuclear waste, accounting for some 90 per cent of the total generated within Australia. This includes the most hazardous nuclear waste, almost all of which comes from the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation's reactor at Lucas Heights in Sydney.

The government is determined to proceed with replacement of the ageing Lucas Heights facility, which means that there will be a continuing – and growing – problem with the disposal of radioactive waste.

Mainland sites such as within its naval base at Jervis Bay or even at the nuclear reactor site at Lucas Heights would be extremely unpopular in electoral terms.

The state premiers have also expressed a united opposition to locating it anywhere within their respective territories.

One alternative would be to construct the Commonwealth facility on an uninhabited island such as Ashmore or Cartier Islands to Australia's north. This would overcome some mainlander opposition, but would involve an infrastruc-

ture that would be expensive to build and maintain. The decision to establish such a facility would also pose a serious risk of the facility not being subject to proper scrutiny.

Another alternative, and one that has not yet been aired in the mass media, might be to dump "first world" Australia's nuclear waste on islands belonging to tiny poverty-stricken Pacific nations. This, after all, was the terrible "solution" adopted by the Howard Government for the detention of asylum-seekers a few years ago, after all the French and the US did not hesitate to use Pacific islands as testing grounds for nuclear weapons.

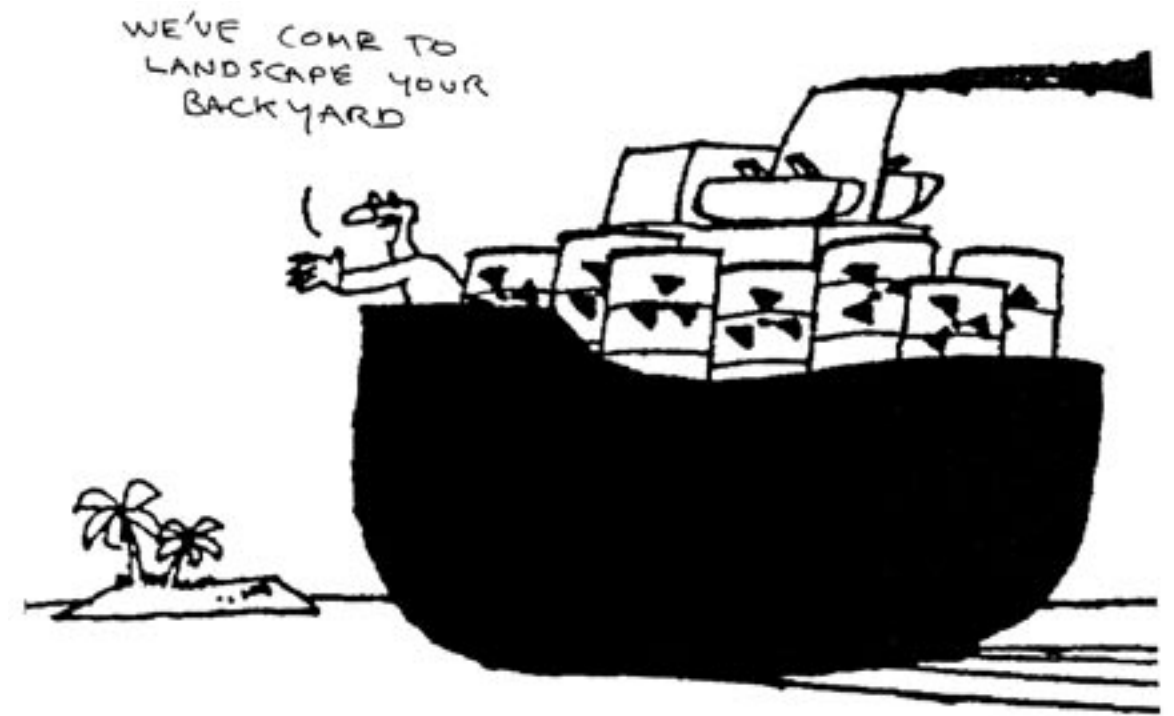
Radioactive material poses a significant (and in many cases long-lasting) hazard to human life. The question of safe disposal of radioactive waste bedevils governments around the world. Even short-lived intermediate-level waste has a minimum half-life of almost 30 years, which means that it will continue to emit radioactivity above a normal background level for a hundred years or more. Some high-level wastes will take more than 100,000 years to degrade sufficiently not to pose a serious hazard.

During these periods any facility used to store such waste would require monitoring to ensure there were no ruptures of containment vessels, which could have disastrous consequences such as contamination of subterranean aquifers.

Lucas Heights

The establishment and maintenance of nuclear facilities therefore requires extremely careful consideration.

So why has the Howard Government clung so tenaciously to the replacement of the Lucas Heights reactor, which is far and



away the biggest source of nuclear waste in Australia?

Some people (the government included) say it is because of the value of radioactive isotopes for medical purposes. However, these could be purchased from other countries.

A far more credible explanation lies in the long-held dream of Australia's cold war warriors, i.e. the arming of the nation with nuclear weapons, for which the development of nuclear technology is a necessary prerequisite.

At Jervis Bay a series of decaying concrete structures (the remnants of a would-be post war nuclear power plant) bear mute testimony to the dream of one such warrior, former Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies. He is a

hero of the present Prime Minister, who undoubtedly holds many of the views of the late PM.

The decision of the Howard Government not to proceed with establishing a joint Commonwealth-state nuclear dump does not arise from any consideration of the well being of the Australian people. It's undoubtedly due to a combination of short-term electoral expediency and long-term considerations such as use of nuclear technology for military purposes.

But if the Howard Government thinks it can get away with its latest idea of locating a nuclear waste dump on some remote uninhabited island territory, it should think again. The Maritime Union of Australia has announced its opposition to such a move unless the

government completes the most rigorous studies into the safety of the proposed dumpsite and of the means of transportation of the material.

Pacific nations are also expected to announce their opposition to the use of such a facility in their vicinity. The 12-nation South Pacific Forum has already campaigned strongly for more stringent navigations rules for shipping carrying nuclear waste. The Howard Government's move would be seen as directly contravening the Forum's wishes.

Perhaps the Howard Government should seriously examine the possibility of replacing their nuclear capability with other forms of industrial development which are more benign and which do not have the potential for military aggression. ✪

Time is running out: Say "NO" to the FTA!

Anna Pha

The Senate Committee on the FTA (Free Trade Agreement with the US) reports back on August 3. This leaves less than two weeks to pressure the ALP into voting "NO". The necessary legislation

has already passed through the US Congress. If it passes both Houses here it will be legally binding and breaking its punitive and exploitative grip will become extremely difficult.

The FTA will affect everyone in all aspects of their lives, laying open

Australia's economy to the plunder of the major US corporations:

- Pharmaceutical medicines will cost at least \$1.5 billion more per annum. US pharmaceutical companies will be able to challenge price controls under our Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

- It will cost thousands of jobs, put downward pressure on wages and working conditions.

- The impact on our balance of trade with the US will be negative, to the tune of billions of dollars.

- Quarantine restrictions will be eased or lifted, putting our agricultural sector at risk.

- It opens up Australia to almost unrestricted investment and wholesale takeover by US transnational corporations.

- It undermines the government's right and capacity to protect the environment, including preventing the release of genetically modified organisms.

- Adopts US copyright law, pushing up the cost of the use of materials for schools, universities and libraries.

- It severely restricts the right of the government over media content and ownership.

- Outlaws solidarity and other industrial action by trade unions against US corporations.

- * Enables the US to challenge laws on essential services such as water, electricity and public transport and facilitates their privatisation.

- Prevents governments at all levels from favouring Australian companies for the purposes of job creation and developmental reasons. And much more.

The agreement favours US corporations at the expense of the Australia people. It undermines



Australia's sovereignty, in particular the right and responsibility of elected government to make economic, political, environmental, social and other decisions.

It consolidates the Australia's military alliance with and neo-colonisation by the US.

ALP leader Mark Latham wants to win the next election. So do his parliamentary colleagues.

So contact your MP and Senators, speak to them, fax them, email them, write letters, get on to talkback radio – wherever you can, raise the urgency and dangers of the FTA. And don't forget to lobby ALP leaders, Democrats and Independents and let the Greens know you appreciate their opposition to the FTA. To send letters, learn more about the FTA and find email addresses visit AFTINET and NOFTA websites.

Let them know that the people of Australia say:

NO TO THE FTA!

www.aftinet.org.au
www.nofta.org ✪

Pete's Corner



Teachers tell Minister: "Don't bother coming"

Over 600 NSW Teachers voted in favour of banning NSW Education Minister Andrew Refshauge from visiting schools and TAFE Colleges, at the NSW Teachers Federation Annual Conference held in Sydney on July 4. Teachers are also considering boycotting outside-of-school activities in their ongoing battle with the NSW State Government.

The bans come after a number of conditions were attached to a pay rise offered by the government last week to supposedly bring senior public school staff salaries into line with a wage increase granted recently to Catholic school staff.

These conditions include placing all new principals on performance based, fixed term contracts from January 1, 2005, and the allowing of private and interstate teachers straight into senior positions in the NSW public school system.

The union is also angry about changes that would allow school principals to hire and fire staff, as well as increase their responsibility for occupational health and safety. It would also put them in charge of determining teachers' leave.

President of the NSW Teachers' Federation Marie O'Halloran said if principals were given these new responsibilities then "schools will

be left in their local cases to sink or swim with ever decreasing [amounts] of money".

The teacher's conference was also critical of the Howard Government's approach to public schools.

"There is no doubt the Howard Government's agenda is to destroy the transformative nature of public education so that class privileges are retained and expanded", according to conference documents.

The conference also made a decision to investigate a constitutional challenge in the High Court regarding government funding of private/religious schools.

One of the aims of the challenge would be to test the values of the Howard Government against the values embodied in the Australian constitution.

Some of the changes that the union will examine include:

- The huge increase in direct federal funding of private schools vis-a-vis public schools.

- The increase in the number of private schools funded by the government.

- The decision of the Full Bench of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission in the *Teachers (Archdiocese of Sydney and Dioceses of Broken Bay and Parramatta) (State) Award 2004* and other awards (2004) *NSW IR Comm 159* which was quoted at paragraph 108, page 48 from the "Agreed Statement of Facts" between the Independent Education Union and the Catholic Employers. That paragraph states:



A teacher action in Sydney in May

"108 Principals and those in leadership positions within a Catholic school community are required to uphold the mission of the Catholic Church and to build the faith community. This derives from the transfer of leadership from religious congregations to lay leadership with the church. It requires such leaders to have imbued themselves with the spirit and reform of the Church consistent with the Vatican II council. The importance of Principals in particular, in the renewal of the Church cannot be overstated.

In providing education from a Catholic world view, the incorporation of the mission and values of the church becomes the primary responsibility of the Principal and those in other leadership positions."

That "Agreed Statement of Facts", also acknowledges that 80 per cent of the wages bill in Catholic schools is funded by government. The NSW Teachers' Federation will now be seeking legal advice about the potential for the High Court challenge.

NSW Teachers Federation ☘

LABOUR NOTES

Prime Minister John Howard has not surprisingly supported an Access Economics report into labour market deregulation advocating the slashing of the Australian minimum wage to US levels. The report urges a reduction from the present Australian minimum wage level of \$12.30 per hour to \$7.30 per hour. NSW Labor Council Assistant Secretary Mark Lennon has responded, noting that the report's claim that lowering the minimum wage would reduce unemployment is nonsense. "If people are struggling on \$12.30 an hour, how would they survive on \$7.30 an hour?" Mr Lennon said. Economic integration with the US under the US-Australia FTA means "harmonisation" to the lowest common denominator for workers.

Australian workers will be forced to compete for jobs with workers earning as little as \$4.60 per day under the free trade agreement signed with Thailand, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) has warned. AMWU National Secretary Doug Cameron said the agreement totally ignored Australian workers' rights by failing to consider core labour standards. "How can Mr Howard expect Australian workers to compete with workers from a country with effectively no labour rights at all? "This agreement shows how Free Trade Agreements may be good for global businesses trying to cut costs, but are a real threat to the security of Australian workers."

Workers at Forgecast's metal parts factory in Melbourne are concerned that they may not be paid their full entitlements since the company went into receivership last month. The company is now in the hands of administrators and, according to the administrators, the workers will be paid all holiday and sick leave entitlements. But the payment of redundancy entitlements in excess of the Howard Government's redundancy scheme's maximum of eight weeks is in doubt. Many of the Forgecast workers are long standing employees and are entitled to a lot more than the inadequate Commonwealth scheme allows. The workers are at a further disadvantage, as the Howard Government has not legislated that workers be paid ahead of the banks or other major creditors. Forgecast is believed to owe the National Australia Bank more than \$2 million. This situation once again demonstrates the failure of the Howard Government's redundancy scheme and its unwillingness to protect workers.

NSW firefighters have reaffirmed its opposition to the use of recycled water for firefighting, except as a last resort to protect life. A ban was placed on the use of recycled water (effluent) in October 2003 until such time as it could be established that it would not pose an increased risk to firefighters or other members of the community. "Nothing has happened since to change our opposition to the Department's expectation that firefighters should work with - and cover themselves in - other peoples' sewerage", said the Firefighters' Union in response to the publication of new Orders Friday last week attempting to impose the use of recycled water on the back of Sydney's growing water shortage crisis. "Drought or no drought, the Union will not allow its members to be used by the Carr Government as water conservation guinea pigs."

Miners' union renews call to reform unfair dismissal laws

A Full Bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission last week ordered Rio Tinto to immediately offer jobs to 13 of the 16 unfairly sacked Blair Athol workers. Tony Maher, the General President of the coal miners' union, the CFMEU, called on Rio Tinto to end its bloody-minded crusade against the workers and to accept the umpire's decision.

"This decision - as welcome as it is - is just the last instalment in six years of litigation. It has been a terrible ordeal for the sacked work-

ers and their families. Each time we achieve legal vindication, Rio Tinto simply finds another means to delay and frustrate", said Mr Maher.

The Blair Athol 16 is a dramatic illustration of how a cashed-up multinational can make a mockery of Australia's unfair dismissal laws.

Mr Maher said the case highlighted the need to introduce time limits for decisions and restrictions upon the use of legal counsel in unfair dismissal cases.

"The little person, the ordinary

worker, doesn't stand a chance against a corporate giant like Rio Tinto. When it comes to spending on legal matters, money is no object for them. We estimate that Rio have spent in excess of \$6 million in legal fees to keep out the Blair Athol 16. And at the end of all this spending and legal manoeuvring what is the result? The same as it was six years ago - these workers have been victimised because they are union members and Rio have been told to put them back on the pay-roll. It's a disgrace." ☘

Meat smuggling threatens industry

Investigations by the Maritime Union of Australia and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) have revealed a serious breach of Australian quarantine regulations. This has been facilitated by a Single Voyage Permit granted to a foreign ship by Transport Minister John Anderson.

ITF National Coordinator Dean Summers has received information that Australian authorities questioned the captain of the Flag of Convenience ship *Cape Donington* over the discovery of meat smuggled into the port of Brisbane in empty cabins.

"This ship first came to our attention last month when we

received complaints from concerned workers in Port Kembla that its stores were empty and crew were forced to fish in the harbour for food", said Mr Summers.

"The ITF made sure stores were purchased before she was allowed to sail and complained to Australian charterers Austral Asia Lines in Brisbane. They've obviously done nothing about it."

"At a time when the government is crowing about our national coastal security they are scattering permits to all-comers allowing them to undermine Australian shipping, security and now primary industry", he said.

As Minister and leader of the National Party, Mr Anderson should

be aware of the potential damage the smuggling of raw unprocessed meat into Australia could do to the domestic meat and livestock industry.

Mr Summers said *Cape Donington* should be made to order enough fresh stores on board to support all 13 Filipino and six Ukrainian crew for a month before she can leave Newcastle.

The MUA is calling for a full investigation of the AAL fleet to determine who was responsible and to ensure the problem isn't systemic. The union also calls on the government to affect an immediate review into continued abuses of the permit system and to revoke the Australian trading permit for this ship. ☘

Hardie's "disgusting" plan

The corporation responsible for the deaths from asbestos-related diseases of many thousands of its workers has pitched a plan to the NSW Government that would allow it to avoid paying compensation. James Hardie Industries has already skipped the country, leaving behind a cash-strapped compensation fund. Now it wants a statutory scheme that would limit the rights of the victims of its deadly asbestos products.

Hardie wants to bypass the court system, effectively taking away the right of asbestos victims to common law to sue the company. Asbestos sufferer and Secretary of the Asbestos Victims' Association of SA, Terry Miller, called the company's plan "disgusting".

"What I think they are trying to do is strip away the legal rights of victims", said Mr Miller. "I think they should stand by what they said initially – that they fully fund the foundation [set up by Hardie] to cover all victims for as long as it takes".

The sheer greed behind the company move includes an attempt to stop the case from harming Hardie shares, which one share dealer described as "outstanding stock".

Under the proposal Hardie shareholders – which include the likes of NAB and AMP – would provide an additional lousy \$500-600 million to the fund and the Carr Government would introduce legislation to prevent any legal action by victims.

The union movement has been on Hardie's hammer in pursuit of the workers' rightful compensation. Paul Bastian, Secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, pointed the finger at the Carr Government for not ensuring there were adequate funds made available.

"We made our position pretty clear then [in 2001] that there would be a shortfall of between \$800 million and \$1 billion."

At that time Hardie had already put its plan in place to skip the country, close down its headquarters in Australia and set up house in the Netherlands.

In a statement the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) called Hardie's move "the meanest act in corporate history" pointing out that an estimated 60,000 Australians will ultimately die as a result of exposure to work-related asbestos.

"That's the number of Australians who died in World War One", said the peak union body's Assistant Secretary, Richard Marles. "The notion that we should limit access to proper compensation for the death of so many people is a disgrace."

The ACTU called on Hardie to repatriate all of the money it has taken out of Australia and face up to its responsibilities to fully compensate asbestos victims.

Unions will have to fight hard to get any justice from the state Labor Government, which has

carried out a vendetta on behalf of employers against the rights of injured workers, including taking away their right to sue negligent employers.

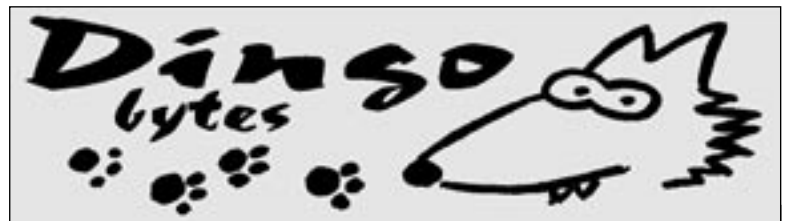
The Hardie case saw the involvement of former federal Labor minister Stephen Loosley, now a "business lobbyist". The whole process was put into gear by a consultancy engaged by Hardie which just happened to be operated by two of Premier Carr's ex-staffers.

Through these connections Loosley arranged meetings in 2001 between Hardie executives and Carr's chief of staff, Graeme Wedderburn. These gatherings also included Mathew Strassberg, chief of staff to Special Minister for State, John Della Bosca, the architect of the attack on the state's workers' compensation system.

In February of that year Della Bosca stated: "The foundation's capacity to fund claims will be tested vigorously by this government".

Loosley was paid a "completion fee" of \$25,000 by Hardie for ensuring that the Carr Government did not put any "legislative impediment" in the way of its setting up its totally inadequate fund.

On Monday this week, the ACTU called for the Federal Government to take steps towards a treaty with the Netherlands where the James Hardie company is now based so that asbestos victims can pursue their rights to full compensation. ☘



What else would you expect from the Howard Govt?

Last week the Howard Government proudly announced the re-appointment for a new three-year term the Commissioner of the Private Health Insurance Administration Council (PHIAC).

PHIAC's central functions are to monitor and regulate the private health insurance industry. It monitors compliance with the solvency and capital adequacy standards to ensure that private

health insurers remain prudentially sound.

PHIAC is a statutory authority set up by government to monitor an industry so as to protect the public interest – as such one would normally expect a government to appoint an independent and impartial Commissioner.

Of course, the Howard Government would never let a Commonwealth statutory authority get in the way of big business, so

true to form Mr Howard has reappointed the current Commissioner, Mr Garry Richardson, to the position.

Not only was he chosen because of his previous "extensive experience" in the industry but he is also currently the Chairman of the Board of two insurance companies!

To say Mr Richardson has a conflict of interest in the job would be a gross understatement. ☘

Rich private schools are poaching students from public schools not only to increase student numbers but also to raise academic levels. Federal and state governments are moving toward a system of funding schools based on the number of pupils and on performance tables. So the rich private schools are out to lure students into their ranks with offers of scholarships, including the outstanding performers in sport (it's a prestige/PR thing). As the push to privatise education gathers speed, the majority of public schools will be cash strapped and marginalised. Thus equity will go out the window: public schools educate the overwhelming percentage of higher-cost disabled students as well as 88 percent of Aboriginal students and the vast majority of disadvantaged students.

In Victoria, the state police union apparently wants an all-out war on the streets, demanding that its 11,000 members be armed with semi-automatic weapons. The reasoning? "The crooks have access to these superior-calibre weapons ..." So the current gangland violence – with crims targeting each other – is to be used as a pretext to turn the state constabulary into a paramilitary force. The Police Association also wants officers to have as standard issue bullet-proof vests and stun guns.

The News Ltd gutter press on Sunday in NSW, the *Sunday Telegraph*, promotes itself as "informative, incisive, influential". It has as columnists the likes of religious fanatic Archbishop George Pell, reactionary windbag Piers Akerman, toady to the USA Greg Sheridan, and former-right wing federal Labor minister Stephen Loosley. The latter certainly deserves the "influential" tag. He stitched up a deal between the Carr Government and asbestos producer James Hardie that allowed Hardie to dodge paying compensation to asbestos victims by setting up a cash-strapped fund and skipping the country. For the Carr Government not putting a "legislative impediment" in Hardie's way, the company paid Loosley a \$25,000 "completion fee".

Was anyone surprised when the Howard Government this month officially dumped as a goal reconciliation with Indigenous Australians? Howard has signed an order in the Commonwealth Gazette omitting "reconciliation" from Indigenous affairs. The move is part of the mainstreaming of Indigenous programs following the Government's gutting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. The Commission's chairman, Lionel Quartermaine, noted, "The Prime Minister is moving towards assimilation".

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is Kim Beazley. So, he's back, and Labor has a CIA defence spokesman, itself a sure-fire ticket into the White House. Bomber Beazley is so handy, interchangeable with, say, the current Defence Minister Robert Hill, or any other Howard Government minister; even with Flackjacket Johnnie himself. Beazley's appointment drew praise from none other than the US ambassador to Australia, Tom Schieffer, who enthused, "Kim Beazley is a great friend of the United States and is highly esteemed in Washington by both political parties".

Sydney

Sydney Branch, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, with the Business and Labour History Group, University of Sydney presents:

Damien Cahill, speaking on

From Fringe Dwellers to Opinion Makers: A History of the Radical Neo-liberal Movement in Australia

Sunday 25 July (2-4pm) Level 7, PSU House 191 Thomas St, Haymarket, Sydney

Damien discusses the origins and history of the radical neo-liberal movement – what is commonly called the "new right" – in Australia. The central question addressed is: "How was it that a small, fringe movement was able to develop, within a relatively short period of time, into a powerful and vocal political force in Australia?" It is argued that the answer to this question has more to do with the alliances the movement made with key fractions of capital than with the organisational strength of think tanks or the power of neo-liberal ideas. In analysing the movement's history and its relationships with capital, this paper also discusses the impact that the movement has had in Australia.

Damien Cahill is a researcher in the School of Social Sciences, Media and Communications at the University of Wollongong and a research officer for Michael Organ MP, Member for Cunningham. He has recently completed his PhD thesis on the radical neo-liberal movement in Australia.

Entry is free. All welcome. Tea and coffee will be provided. Due to difficulties in accessing the building, we would appreciate it if you could arrive before 2pm.

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Neruda our Compañero

Juan Garrido-Salgado

Neruda was born in Parral in Chile on July 12, 1904. His father was a train driver and his mother was a teacher. His real name was Naftali Reyes Basualto. Later he adopted the name "Neruda" from a Czech poet (Jan Neruda) and "Pablo" in honour of three Spanish friends. The young poet loved his art and the small town where he grew up as a solitary person in the embrace of the landscape around the regional city of Temuco.

In 1921 he moved to live and study in the Chilean capital, Santiago. His passions were still more individual and his consciousness was not yet directed outwards to the world. His first book *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* [Twenty love poems and a song of despair] was published in 1924. With this book he became well known as an intelligent young poet of great originality.

He later joined the diplomatic corps and was Chilean Consul in Burma, Indonesia, Mexico, Argentina and Spain. During the Civil war in Spain his heart went out to the Republic being attacked by Franco's fascist forces and their allies. He was greatly influenced by the progressive poets such as Lorca, Miguel Hernandez, Alberti and others that he counted among his friends.

He was serving at the Chilean Embassy in Madrid when he organised a ship, the *Winnipeg*, to take 3000 workers and their families from a concentration camp in France to Chile as political refugees. The war in Spain and all the solidarity that Neruda mobilised transformed him into a more universal poet.

He joined the Communist Party

of Chile and was elected a Senator. He came back to struggle in his land where he joined forces with Salvador Allende in a Popular Front to create socialism in Chile.

In 1943, the "leftist" candidate Gonzalez Videla became President but soon after turned sharply to the right. Neruda published an open letter accusing Videla of betraying the Communist Party and Popular Front. The Communist Party was declared illegal, forcing Neruda into hiding and then exile. During this time he wrote his main work *Canto General* in which he traces the history and struggles of the people of Latin America, particularly of the Indigenous people.

It was also at this time that Neruda's life became joined to that of Matilde Urrutia, his third wife and compañera for the rest of his life.

Neruda moved underground and the Party took him into exile through the Andes Mountains on horseback with the manuscript of *Canto General* in the saddlebags. He lived in Europe with his main residence on the Italian island of Capri. His stay on the island was the subject of the Oscar winning Italian film *Il Postino* [The Postman].

Historic election win

When conditions allowed, he returned to live and join in the political struggle in Chile once more. He was nominated as the Communist Party's presidential candidate for the Popular Unity alliance but he declined in favour of his comrade Salvador Allende of the Socialist Party. Neruda worked tirelessly for Allende during the campaign for the presidential elections, travelling with him to nearly every city and town in the country. The campaign



Allende with Neruda – friends and comrades

was crowned with the great victory of 1970 when, for the first time in the history of the bourgeois political system, a Socialist had been elected President.

In 1971, Neruda returned to Europe to serve as Chile's ambassador to France. In 1972, he received the Nobel Prize for literature. For us this was a beautiful fiesta with people filling the streets. Everywhere we could hear people reading the poems of Neruda. Allende consulted the Education Minister and a book was published and made available free of charge to all students in Chile. Virtually every household had its own special selection of Neruda's work.

After the coup of September 11, 1973 Pinochet seized power and set about killing many political opponents and exiling many others. Neruda's friends suffered this persecution. Others, including Allende and singer Victor Jara, were murdered. Neruda knew that Fascism was sweeping Chile. His heart was weak and his health deteriorated with every report of the persecution of his friends and the ordinary people at the hands of Pinochet's thugs. He died only a few days after his friend and comrade, Salvador Allende. His house at Isla Negra was closed and occupied by police. His books were prohibited and burned by the military and the police.

After his death the struggle continued. Neruda was alive in our hearts and in our daily striving for freedom and justice. July 12 became a massive celebration and on trips to his former home at Isla Negra we wrote verses on the wall built by the Fascists to stop people paying respects at his house. We read our own verses alongside his poems and we sang our song for the poet to show that the repression never forced us onto our knees. We were strong in the struggle, ready to celebrate as well as to fight for our rights and freedom.

**Compañero Pablo Neruda,
Presente Ahora y
Siempre!!! ☺**

To My Party

You have given me fraternity toward the unknown man.

You have joined the strength of all the living.

You have given me the country again as in a birth.

You have given me the freedom that the loner cannot have.

You taught me to kindle kindness, like fire.

You have given me the rectitude that the tree requires.

You taught me to see the unity and the difference among mankind.

You showed me how one being's pain has perished in the victory of all.

You taught me to sleep in beds hard as my brothers.

You made me build on reality as on a rock.

You made me adversary of the evildoer and wall of the frantic.

You have made me see the world's clarity and the possibility of happiness.

You have made me indestructible because with you I do not end in myself.

Pablo Neruda

Explico algunas Cosas A few things explained

Generales

traidores:

mirad mi casa muerta,

mirad España rota:

pero de cada casa muerta sale metal ardiendo

en vez de flores,

pero de cada hueco de España

sale España,

pero de cada niño muerto sale un fusil con ojos,

pero de cada crimen nacen balas

que os hallarán un día el sitio

del corazón

Preguntaréis por qué su poesía

no nos habla del suelo de las hojas

de los grandes volcanes de su país natal?

Venid a ver la sangre por las calles,

venid a ver

la sangre por las calles,

Venid a ver la sangre

por las calles!

Turncoats

and generals:

see the death of my house,

look well at the havoc of Spain:

out of dead houses it is metal that blazes

in place of flowers,

out of the ditches of Spain

it is Spain that emerges,

out of the murder of children, a gunsight with eyes,

out of your turpitude, bullets are born

that one day will strike for the mark

of your hearts.

Would you know why his poems

never mention the soil or the leaves,

the gigantic volcanoes of the country that bore him?

Come see the blood in the streets,

come see

the blood in the streets,

come see the blood

in the streets!

An excerpt from Pablo Neruda's *Explico algunas Cosas* [A few things explained], a poem from the *Residencia en la tierra* [Residence on the earth cycle] that speaks about the suffering of the Spanish people during the Civil War.

Luis Emilio Recabarren

The following are excerpts from Neruda's greatest and most well-known work *Canto General*. They are part of his homage to Luis Emilio Recabarren, the founder of Chile's Communist Party and the most influential figure in the history of the early labour movement in the country.

Envoi (1949)

Recabarren, in these days
of persecution, in the anguish
of my exiled brothers,
assailed by a traitor, and with
the homeland enveloped in hatred,
struck by tyranny,
I remember the terrible struggle
of your imprisonment, your first
steps, your solitude
of an unyielding turret,
and when, leaving the wasteland,
one man and another joined you
to collect the dough
of the humble bread defended
by the unity of the august people.

Father of Chile

Recabarren, Chile's offspring,
father of Chile, our father,
in your construction, in your line
forged in lands and tempests,
the strength of the victorious
days to come is born.

You're homeland, pampa and people,
sand, clay, school, home,
resurrection, fist, offensive,
order, march, attack, wheat,
struggle, greatness, resistance.

Recabarren, beneath your gaze
we swear we'll cleanse the country's
festering mutilations.

We swear that freedom
will raise its naked flower
over the dishonoured sand.

We swear we'll follow in your footsteps
to the victory of the people.

"Isla Negra"

"I leave to the Unions
of copper, coal and nitre
my house by the sea on Isla Negra.
I would like all the mistreated children
of my homeland to find rest here,
my homeland pillaged by traitors' axes."

- Pablo Neruda (*Testament II*)

You were black.
You were sand, rock and solitude.
Black hammers, wood,
cement, nails and hands
built humble landing places
on the shores of the island, windows of sun and sea,
blue mirrors for the motionless Captain
asleep on the horizon.

Dark skies and black seagulls
gave the island its name,
the two words became a line of poetry.
The poet made a ship's bell
announce each time a wingless poem set flight
and when the poet was absent in winter
the wind wrote its anonymous poems by the hundreds.
The poet's house on Isla Negra
is a boat on the world's ocean.

September 1973,
sand, gunshots, rocks and waves
tumble into emptiness.
An ill-omened helicopter
spewing out wounds and lives.

July 1982,
I remember Isla Negra in the 'eighties.
One by one we came to plant a dream,
to talk sadly with your bells, our words
stones tossed to the wind.
Through our speech we sailed with your ships' figureheads.
Hundreds of voices, we were the sound
of the always present sea.
In your name we drank and sang
from the cup of the dark shore,
your testament as eternal Captain
for the liberation of dreams from injustice.

Juan Garrido-Salgado
Translated by Peter Boyle

From the book *Motionless navigator of silk and sword,
who fell in love with the ocean's darkness.*

Asbestos/chemical risk hangs over cement works plan

Bob Briton

The Adelaide Brighton Cement (ABC) plant in the portside suburb of Birkenhead has been operating since 1914. It currently employs about 190 workers and produces 1,200,000 tonnes of clinker and 1,000,000 tonnes of cement per annum. Over the years, residents on Adelaide's Le Fevre Peninsula have lived with the eyesore of the giant plant, the noise and disruption of truck and rail transport and the occasional showering of dust, to come to a grudging acceptance of its existence. However, plans announced late last year by ABC are set to further test the patience of residents and workers alike.

ABC is planning to burn demolition waste wood in its cement kiln as a supplement to the current natural gas. New facilities for handling the fuel will operate seven days a week, 365 days a year and involve 60 truck movements a day. A 21-metre high building will house a feed elevating system for the waste woodchips. A new entry road to the plant will be required.

ABC and recyclers ResourceCo are keen to promote the "green" credentials of their Alternative Fuels Company joint venture that will provide the waste wood. They point out that it will reduce ABC's reliance on fossil fuels and prevent upwards of 100,000 tonnes of waste wood a year going to landfill. However, others including the CFMEU (the main building union involved) are advising caution. The union wants the development declared a major project so that full environmental assessments, public health impact tests and community consultations are done.

The union's major concern is that asbestos fibres that remain attached to the timber of incorrectly demolished homes will pose a threat to workers and the community at every stage of the process – during transit, chipping, the stoking of the calciner and emissions entering the atmosphere. CFMEU Assistant State Secretary Dave Kirner describes the problem this way:

"Asbestos is part and parcel of the demolition industry and it is known that not all houses are demolished according to safe standards. Trucks roll into ResourceCo without asbestos sorted out and we are told that they use video cameras to check the loads and then have to sort the asbestos out on site rather than require that all demolition loads are correctly demolished."

The CFMEU wrote to Local Federal MP Rod Sawford who indicated concern at the use of contaminated timber. SA Industrial Relations Minister Michael Wright dispatched three inspectors to investigate the issues after contact from the union.

Asbestos risks

However, not all official responses have been so helpful. It appears that the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has taken a position that the burning of the woodchips poses no greater threat



Photo: Avante Media Australia

Asbestos a big worry – Adelaide Brighton Cement

than the burning of natural gas and that the CFMEU should provide the evidence of the asbestos risks of the demolition timber.

While the project has yet to be cleared by the Development Assessment Commission, a massive shed is currently being built in nearby Wingfield for the production of the "alternative fuel" for the cement works. ABC and ResourceCo are clearly very confident that the various administrative hurdles will be cleared.

Another major hazard identified by the CFMEU is the burning of timber treated with copper chrome arsenate (CCA). The treatment has been banned in Germany since the 1970s and the use of timbers for decking and children's equipment has been banned in the US since 2003. In 1988, the EPA in the US required that workers who come into regular contact with CCA wear protective clothing and respirators.

Timbers treated with CCA are extremely common in Australia. The process took over from the even more hazardous preservatives pentachlorophenol and creosote. Copper and arsenic are added to wood as fungicides and insecticides. Chrome is used mainly as a fixing agent to bond the other chemicals to the wood.

Arsenic & chromium

Arsenic and chromium are human carcinogens and mutagens. High or repeated exposure can cause cancer, foetal toxicity and birth defects, neurotoxicity including paralysis, warty skin growths, liver and kidney failure. Unfortunately, the thoroughness of the fixing varies considerably and the leaching of the chemicals from the timber remains a threat. A US study has shown that between 20 and 50 per cent of the toxins can leach out of the wood presenting a serious hazard to workers handling the product and children using equipment constructed from it. A further threat is presented

to individuals who saw or sand the timber.

In 2000, the UK's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs produced a waste strategy for England and Wales. In it the authority recommended the use of waste timbers for energy recovery with two notable exceptions. Mixed waste contaminated with asbestos should not be used. Another "special waste" warranting close tracking and care is timber treated with CCA.

The Strategy lays down that CCA treated timber should not be incinerated under any circumstances because of the dangers to the community of chemicals released into the atmosphere. Like asbestos, its disposal has created a dilemma. Landfill is, for the time being, the only practical way to deal with asbestos waste. However, the disposal of CCA treated timber in landfill may contaminate groundwater. The US state of Minnesota has stopped taking CCA treated scraps at its landfill facilities for this very reason.

Clearly, there has to be a more extensive investigation of how to deal with the risks associated with the disposal of CCA treated timber. It is not the time to be rushing headlong into a scheme like the "alternative fuel" at ABC's plant that proposes to keep the hazardous materials out of its processes by a system of "sampling".

The people of the industrialised Port Adelaide and Peninsula area deserve the utmost consideration when it comes to potential hazards. Recent figures from the state cancer registry show that some local postcodes (like Osborne) have DOUBLE the state average rate of lung cancer. This alarming situation has arisen despite the fact that the prevalence of smoking is only three per cent higher than average. It is time to be removing risks from this long-suffering community, not adding to them. ☹

Re-colonising Papua New Guinea

The Australian Government has at last "persuaded" the government of Papua-New Guinea to sign an agreement to admit over 200 police, judges and "economic managers", allegedly to help restore "law and order" and to overcome severe economic difficulties there. Australian police officers are expected to move into PNG later this month.

For some time the PNG Government has been holding out against this intrusion, including refusing to accept that these Australians should have immunity from PNG laws during their stay.

However, an agreement has now been signed by PNG Foreign Minister Sir Rabbie Namaliu and Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer. Downer is well known in the region for his stand-over tactics.

This move into PNG follows a similar operation in the Solomon Islands.

Australia is flexing its imperialist muscles in the region having reached an understanding with the United States that the South Pacific region is "Australia's patch".

Real objectives

The real objectives of the Australian Government's operations have been set out in an article by Helen Hughes who is described as a Senior Fellow of the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) and is also an Emeritus Professor with the Australian National University. CIS and that other "think tank", the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), are well known as the source of policies subsequently implemented by the Howard Government in the region.

Helen Hughes bemoans the "civil strife and crime" in PNG, the "unconscionable" delay of PNG in reaching an agreement with the Australian Government, the lack of productive work, the absence of "secure private property rights", corruption, the impediments to local entrepreneurship, and, above all the continued existence of communal ownership of land.

Her "solution" for all these supposed "ills" is the imposition of a full-blown capitalist economy and the necessary political structures to go with it.

Helen Hughes fails to analyse the cause of PNG's difficulties

except to say that "Australia's transfer of its social and political institutions to PNG before and at independence are now widely seen as misguided" and that "External attempts to guide PNG's political development are doomed to failure".

However, she fails to take her own advice and asserts that "Australian assistance to policing and making the existing legal system function before it disintegrates could be a catalyst for change".

Colonisation

She claims that Australia's intervention "is not a step towards re-colonisation" and that "After independence, Australia took a 'hands-off' stance so as not to appear to pursue colonial policies..." Helen Hughes makes it clear that that approach has now been dumped. It is to be hands-on in PNG and "do as you are told" in future.

This is exposed in a comprehensive political and economic program outlined by Hughes.

She calls for the adoption of "mutual obligations" by the two countries which is a sort of "work for the dole" scheme applied to international relations. Hughes asserts that "in return for financial assistance the PNG Government pursues reforms that will remove the roadblocks to growth. Where reforms take place, Australian aid could perhaps be effective".

In plain language this means: without reforms acceptable to the Australian Government, no aid.

She provides the Australian Government with the necessary justification for such policies by hypocritically claiming that "Australian Governments are accountable to taxpayers and voters so that aid has to be seen to be effective" and that "If components of the aid pro-

The domination of one country by another, even when it is claimed not to be colonialism, is colonialism none-the-less.

gramme are not working, they have to be suspended until performance improves."

The economic and social programme put forward by Helen Hughes asserts that:



Australia is flexing its imperialist muscles in the region

- Removing impediments to local entrepreneurship will be key;
- Secure private property rights, the rule of law and appropriate economic policies are essential;
- Communal ownership [of land] has not permitted any country to develop;
- Privileged consumer and construction goods still have high import barriers;
- Banking, water, power and telecommunications ... have continued in the public sector ... long after the inefficiency of public enterprise was recognised worldwide;
- The lack of security makes investment dubious for foreign operators with effective public utility experience;

Public services and enterprises have been unable to shed surplus workers because there is little new employment;

Awards still specify inappropriate shift, weekend, holiday, long

service pay and other on-costs that raise wages and salaries well above productivity;

- Attempts to establish internationally competitive labour-intensive export industries have failed;
- Firms will require location in secure manufacturing estates and secure dormitories for workers;
- PNG trade unions would have to give their support to such an initiative.

Political will

"All that is needed is the political will to act", says this advocate of unbridled capitalism and spokesperson for Australian big brother imperialism.

These policies, taken straight from the agenda of the International Money Fund and the World Bank, have failed in all other third world and former colonial countries. They have created massive poverty and unemployment and are intended to serve the economic and political interests of the developed industrialised countries and not the people of the countries that are forced to endure to them.

Furthermore, the domination of one country by another, even when it is claimed not to be colonialism, is colonialism none-the-less and will

inevitably bring forth a national liberation movement.

The Australian Government has acted hastily, concerned that several Asian countries are offering assistance to PNG. These include China which is putting up 100 percent of the capital to develop a nickel/cobalt mine. PNG will own 35 percent and another five percent ownership is going to PNG landowners.

But Hughes attempts to decry this Chinese/PNG project, suggesting that the Chinese have "no experience in open-cut mining" and that "New projects are reducing pressure for reform".

At the same time she links the disastrous records of BHP at Ok Tedi and Bougainville Copper at Panguna with "civil strife and crime". By "crime" Hughes does not mean by the criminal destruction of the environment by these two companies or their disregard of the interests of landowners.

Help your neighbour

Yes, Australia should aid PNG and other countries in its neighbourhood but as a good neighbour, not as one that comes to dominate and exploit. Instead of "mutual obligations", policies based on "mutual benefit" are more likely to succeed and be accepted. ☛

The price of occupation

Juana Carrasco Martin

The number of dead US soldiers in Iraq and in Afghanistan has already exceeded 1000. The weekend of July 10-11 was particularly bloody, leaving seven US soldiers dead. As of July 12, 887 had perished in Iraq and 129 in Afghanistan – we shouldn't forget that other war of injustice – augmented by 117 troops from other forces involved in the coalition. Those crosses hang like swords over George W Bush and his desperate search for oil and strategic geopolitical positions, and now, for a new term in the White House.

They barely want to show those bodies, much less those of the Iraqis, civilian or military.

However, since May, a singular exhibit has been touring US cities and towns. Part of its title is "Eyes

Wide Open". The show, which has only two elements or sets of elements, is very simple and terrible: more than 800 pairs of combat boots, each one of them bearing a tag with the name, rank and place of birth of a US soldier who died in the Iraq war, and a sort of 24-foot-long-wall bearing the names of Iraqis and the incidents in which they died.

They now number more than 16,000. In other locations, each one of those men, women and children, murdered in their own land, has been represented by an empty bullet casing.

The name of the exhibit is thus completed in some places: "The Human Cost of War in Iraq". In others, it is "Beyond fear and towards hope..."

What is terrible is that the number of boots will continue to increase, as will the length of the wall or the number of spent bullets.

It is about trying to put a face on war, like a portrait of Bush that we received in an e-mail. When the likeness is enlarged, we can see that the emperor's image is made up of photographs of each one of his soldiers who has died in Iraq.

It is an impressive image. However, imagination is not needed; one only needs to contemplate the everyday things to realise what the war represents in pain and suffering for hundreds of families.

Nevertheless, such a sadly necessary accountability does not appear to apply to the White House or to the Pentagon, although they should be paying attention, while the exhibit has already been seen by thousands of people in the capital, Washington DC, in Chicago, Philadelphia, and various cities of Ohio: Cleveland, Cincinnati, Akron, Youngstown, Oberlin... And in the months to come, as we draw closer

to November 2, it is to tour another dozen cities.

In Washington, the event was accompanied by speeches from various peace activists and three men with a special link to those military boots. Paul Vogel, the father of a 24-year-old veteran of

The emperor's image is made up of photographs of each one of his soldiers who has died in Iraq.

the war in Iraq who has returned to his home in Chicago but who knows the anguish of waiting; Ivan Medina, also a veteran of that war, whose 22-year-old twin brother died there; and Fernando Suárez del Solar, a father from San Diego, California, whose only son died on Mesopotamian soil.

Mary Ellen McNish, general secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker-led organisation, explained this live memorial, this multi-sensory journey reached via words, images and the sounds of war, in the following way: "We have placed

these boots and we embrace this wall of names in the capital of the United States to show this nation and the world the human cost of that unjustified and immoral war that has now spiralled into the irrational abuse of prisoners and chaos."

Granma (abridged)☛

Whitewashing Blair's war guilt a farcical stitch-up

"Tony Blair must think that we were all born yesterday if he believes that the half-hearted apology for an inquiry announced yesterday by Jack Straw will be given more than a split second's credibility."

"Why didn't he go the whole hog and appoint Lord Hutton to chair it?"

That was the *Morning Star's* comment on February 4 when the Prime Minister acted quickly to set up the Butler inquiry into the intelligence material deployed to justify the Iraq war just hours after President George W Bush had announced a US inquiry.

It is worth looking back to counter any repeat of attempts by government apologists, in the face of outrage at the Hutton inquiry whitewash, to claim that people had agreed to the inquiry and must welcome its findings.

Anti-war campaigners had no confidence in any Establishment inquiry.

They expected a farcical stitch-up this time and were not disappointed, while the Liberal Democrats refused to nominate a member to the committee, complaining that it would fail to investigate political responsibility.

In fact, Butler's report is an Establishment classic of its kind.

It can be summed as saying that things went wrong, some intelligence was flawed, reports may have left people with false impressions, but no-one really acted out of order, so don't pin blame on anyone and let's simply draw a line under the fiasco and try to do a little better next time.

This means that the false claims about Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of which Britain went to war, were soundly based but just a little inaccurate.

And if this has led to 15,000 Iraqi civilian casualties and the destruction of much of Iraq's infrastructure, then that's rather unfortunate, but it couldn't be helped.

The truth is that there were no chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

The 45-minute readiness claim was fabricated. The documents revealing uranium exports from Niger to Iraq were forgeries.

The British and US intelligence services knew this, as did the Bush-Blair coalition of the lying, who decided in spring 2002 that an invasion would take place a year later to fit in with a timetable that owed

everything to this year's US presidential election.

Iraq was invaded precisely because it had no WMD. It was an easy touch.

The intelligence services in Britain and the US played along with the war plans, offering "evidence" that backed up the false claims, even as Hans Blix's inspectors, who were conducting a genuine search, were rapidly coming to the conclusion that WMD were non-existent.

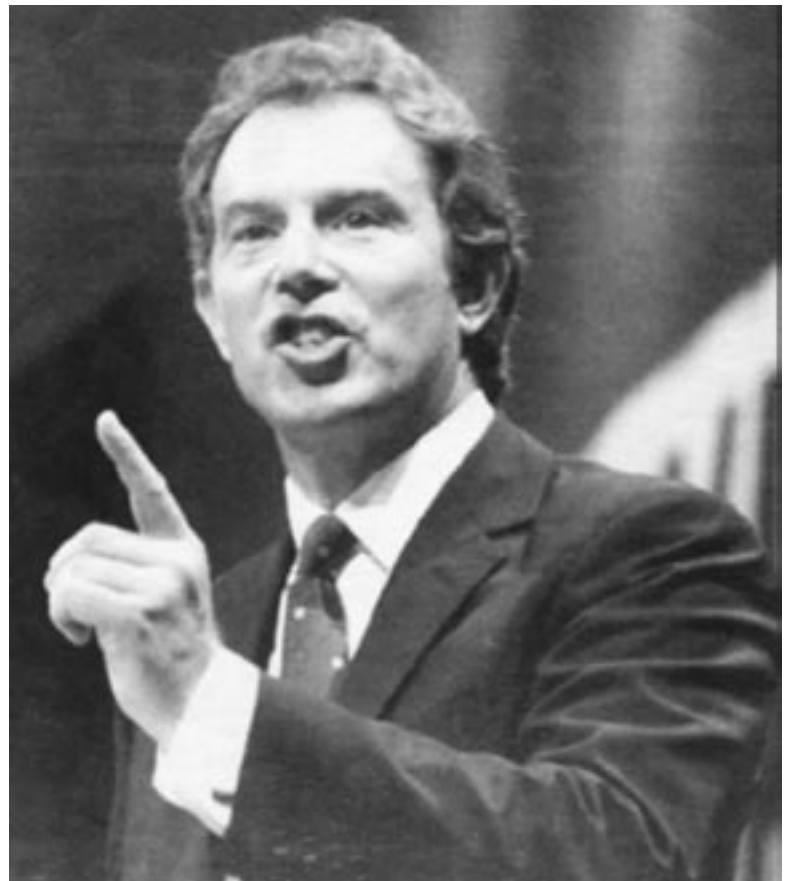
They were complicit in the war crimes authorised by Bush and Blair, but they do not bear central responsibility for them.

As the *Morning Star* said, "The blame for that ongoing tragedy does not lie with the intelligence services. They don't send armies to war. Politicians do and Tony Blair did."

"No soft-soap inquiry, filled with Establishment pillars of sanctimony, can alter that fundamental truth."

And no soft-soap inquiry can clear the Prime Minister of foul deeds, which ought still to see his removal and subsequent arraignment before a war crimes tribunal.

Morning Star,
Britain's socialist daily



Blair and his partner Bush are responsible for war crimes

The apartheid wall must be dismantled immediately!

Statement: Communist Party of Israel

The Communist Party of Israel (CPI) calls upon all supporters of peace in Israel and the world to pressure the Sharon Government to immediately implement the recommendations of the International Court of Justice in The Hague concerning the apartheid wall.

The recommendations of the International Court of Justice con-

cerning the apartheid wall are an important contribution to the public struggle against the construction of the wall and the continuing occupation, and for the achievement of a just and stable peace which is the real guarantee of security – so states the position accepted by the political bureau of the CPI on July 9, the day the court published its recommendations.

The CPI reiterates that the Sharon Government's purpose in this wall's construction is the continuation of the Israeli occupation (of the Palestinian territories), the perpetuation of the settlements in the West Bank, and the prevention of the establishment of a viable Palestinian state. The construction of the wall, as determined by the International Court of Justice, has caused daily intolerable suffering to the Palestinian people while grossly violating international humanitarian law.

The CPI warns that the arrogant dismissal of the United Nations court's findings may lead to the international isolation of Israel, and to the imposition of sanctions such as those imposed on South Africa during the apartheid regime.

The CPI calls on all forces of peace, human and civil rights, in Israel, Palestine, and all over the world:

Let us join forces in a public crusade to demand that the Sharon Government carry out immediately the recommendations of the International Court of Justice, dismantle the wall built in the occupied territories, and compensate those Palestinians whose lives and property were damaged by it.

Dismantle immediately the apartheid wall!

Dismantle all the settlements in the occupied territories!

Isolate the occupation government!

Yes to peace between Israel and Palestine!

July 9, 2004

USA Miners march for health care, pensions

"There is something wrong in America when 40 million Americans lack health care, millions of children are living in poverty, 3 million good paying manufacturing jobs have left the country and management can screw up companies like Horizon Natural Resources and then walk away from their obligations for providing health care and pensions to employees and beneficiaries", United Mine Workers of America Union President Cecil Roberts thundered before 800 miners and their families marching on the bankruptcy court in Lexington, Kentucky. Horizon Natural Resources is the US's fourth largest coal corporation.

"It is not just Horizon but the entire system that is bankrupt!", Roberts continued. "The question I pose, is not why the United Mine Workers are marching. The question

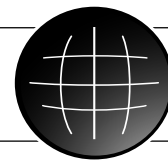
is why isn't everyone in America marching?"

Miners rallied and marched June 30 to save their health care and pensions from the bankruptcy court axe. With one stroke of the pen, bankruptcy Judge William Howard can destroy hard-earned and hard-won benefits to 1000 active coal miners and 2300 retired miners.

"All they want to do is cut, cut, cut", protestor Johnny Viars, a miner at Horizon subsidiary Starfire Mining, said. "We've had all the cuts we can take."

Mining coal is not getting any safer. Since June, four miners have been killed at work bringing this year's total to 14. On May 11, 200 miners demanded increased safety enforcement by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration in Hueytown, Alabama.

People's Weekly World



Global briefs

BRITAIN: British hospitals are alarmingly dangerous for patients. Deaths from hospital infections are at 5000 a year. Hospitals have cut back on cleaning and medical staff no longer always wash hands as they move from patient to patient. The Health Secretary has ordered action to improve hygiene, while cost-cutting continues regardless. In the latest scheme being considered by ministers, patient's blood and urine samples are to be shipped to India for clinical testing – at a fraction of the price such testing costs in Britain. How it will fix the health crisis in Britain and help patients is not clear.

ISRAEL: A protest song topped the Israeli charts recently. A cover version of an army number from the 1970s, "Flowers in the Barrel", it calls for Israel's troops to hang up their guns. It was recorded by Israel's first super-star rapper, Subliminal.

THE PHILIPPINES: Global warming has cut rice harvests by at least 10 per cent, according to scientists in the Philippines. After studying 12 years of rising temperatures and falling yields, they calculated that rice yields fall by 10 per cent for every 1 degree C rise in night-time temperature. If they are correct in their calculations, the predicted rise in temperature of 3.5 degrees C this century could diminish rice yields by a further 30 per cent. This would threaten the world's poor, as rice production must rise by one per cent per year to meet world demand.

JAPAN: Nine Japanese writers, scholars and critics have formed the "Article 9 Committee" to help increase popular pressure to uphold the article in the Japanese Constitution which renounces war.

NORWAY: Peace activists from Sweden, Germany and Britain carried out a "citizens' weapons inspection" of the Vardo top-secret radar base in northern Norway on June 24, to investigate its involvement in the Pentagon's missile defence system and militarisation of space. Vardo's radar antenna is less than 50 miles from the Russian border. The radar was developed at California's Vandenberg Air Force Base as part of the US National Missile Defense System, and then installed at Vardo. Its stated purpose is to track debris in space, but the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has said its real mission is to monitor Russian nuclear missile launches.

CHINA: China has increased its financial support for its farm sector in the first five months of this year by 2.5 per cent to US\$302 billion from the same period last year. The increase is aimed at addressing the income gap between rural and urban workers which is partly blamed for millions of rural workers going to the cities to seek jobs.

Letters to the Editor
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Public works

Remember there used to be a Public Works Department? If my memory serves me well it used to build roads, government offices, public housing and carry out repairs on these. The Department ordered supplies and furniture for government departments. And probably did other things I have forgotten.

That was in the days when government departments occupied buildings that were owned by the Crown, they did not have to budget for rents or taxes. They employed full-time permanent staff; their workforce – public servants – enjoyed relatively humane working hours and conditions. Wages were not so high, but the conditions and job security made up for that.

There were even prospects of paid training, career paths and protective measures against victimisation.

Perhaps it is all looking a little rosier than it was as time has passed and memories become hazier.

I am sure inefficiencies, mistakes, incompetence and rotting took place but I have no recollection of anything of the magnitude of today's problems.

Headlines such as "Station fiasco heading to court" (*The Age*, 15-07-04) do not ring a bell.

The likes of the present brawl

between the Victorian Government and Leighton Holdings – between the public sector and a private transnational corporation – could not have happened then.

Victorians are faced with funding huge court battles and massive cost blow-outs of tens of millions of dollars as public and private sectors battle it out and the buck gets passed as to why Leighton's is behind schedule and whether it should or should not be exposed to damages claims.

On its part Leighton accuses the government of not co-operating and on their part the government points to Leighton's mistakes, poor management (its project management was replaced) and risks taken.

The \$700 million plus Spencer Street project is a classic example of the now much heralded Private-Public-Partnerships. The government has a partnership with Civic Nexus consortium to build the station. Leightons has a contract with Civic Nexus to build the station. Other contractors have contracts with Leightons. These contractors hire subbies ... and so it goes. At the bottom of the layers of profit-making are the poor workers, being squeezed for every ounce of labour that can be got and more on top of that.

There are layers of bureaucracy, of contracts, management and inefficiencies through duplication. I'm sure that the old Public Works Department, notwithstanding its own shortcomings, could not compete with the present set-up for ridiculousness or cost-inefficiency.

Bring back the old Public Works

I say.

Jackie C
Bondi, NSW

Two Australias

The 2004 Human Development Index report, a United Nations publication, places Australia in a closer to the top position as regards to education, life expectancy and living standards. However, it also shows the huge gap which separates groups of Australians and diminishes the pride we all want to share in the country

I refer to the fact that almost 20 per cent Australians are illiterate (as the report puts it, one in six Australians cannot follow basic medical instructions).

Indigenous people's life expectancy is nowhere near the national average – a 20-year discrepancy in life expectancy is a shame in a developed country.

As for poverty, Australia has the second highest number of people living below the income poverty line at 14.4 per cent. In effect, there are two Australias – the haves and the have-nots.

Classless society full of mates? I don't think so.

And the way we are going – in health, education, and social welfare – the gap will continue to widen. It's no use hoping that an investment (with borrowed money) would turn a worker into a

big-time financial speculator with money to burn.

Separating workers from their money has always been the way of enriching the few. Understanding the way the society works, getting organised and fighting for workers' rights is the way to go.

J B Armstrong
Sydney, NSW

Hands off abortion rights!

Political leaders have jumped on the abortion issue with gusto. That is perfectly understandable. Federal Elections are just around the corner and the incumbents do not want to spend their time being confronted with the record of their labours: children overboard, the GST, the bulk-billing crisis, the illegal destruction of Iraq and the many other issues they would rather have forgotten.

What better way of fighting for your political life than to go for issues that could split the voters?

Abortion is one of those issues that people feel very emotional about. A coming documentary on the ABC, *My Foetus*, has provided an excuse to re-start the anti-abortion campaign.

Tony Abbott, the Health Minister, has taken it upon himself to write an article published in *The Catholic Weekly* in which he incited Catholics to act against abortion.

As a private citizen, Mr Abbott is certainly entitled to his views and to his religious beliefs. As a public figure and Health Minister he has no right to impose his views on abortion on women. To have or not to have an abortion is a decision best left to a woman in consultation with her doctor.

There have been enough backward steps taken during the Howard Government's tenure in all aspects of our lives. Undermining a woman's legal right to a safe abortion is a crime and any attempts to revive the anti-abortion crusade must be stopped immediately.

There have been a number of articles in daily newspapers calling for a "wide discussion" of abortion. There is nothing wrong with having a discussion at any time – provided the discussion itself is not being used as an election weapon.

Abortion was and remains a health issue and should be treated as such. Religious or political opportunism has no place in this issue.

Sue Anthony
Melbourne, Vic

Melbourne

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Culture & Life

by
Rob Gowland

Compensation for what?

In Robert Standish's novel *Mr On Loong*, about the sole Chinese resident on one of His Majesty's Caribbean colonies before and during WW2, one of the characters explains the thinking of your typical planter and merchant.

"If two of them are walking down a street", he says, "and they spy a pound note lying on the footpath, they will both make a grab for it. Afterwards, the one who missed out will go around saying he was robbed of a pound.

"Even the one who got the note won't acknowledge that he made a pound, because the note belonged to him the moment he saw it!"

It is probably 40 years since I read *Mr On Loong* but the scene has stuck in my mind, to be instantly brought to the surface by the news of the Land and Environment Court's outrageous decision on the Ballast Point industrial site in Sydney.

For those of you who do not live in the harbour-side city, the former Caltex refinery and depot at Ballast Point covers 2.6 hectares of contaminated land that Caltex sought to off-load in 1997.

The oil company granted the property developer Lang Walker an option to acquire the site for \$16.5 million. It is harbour frontage land and Walker hoped to build lots of

expensive units there, after decontaminating the land, of course, and always assuming he could get planning permission for such a development in the sensitive harbour foreshore area.

But you don't get to be what the *Sydney Morning Herald* called a "property tycoon" without being canny, and Mr Walker probably had a shrewd idea that if the project for 138 waterfront units was unable to proceed he'd still be able to make a packet from Government compensation.

Which is no doubt why Walker only exercised his option to buy the site two months after the State Government announced it would buy the site for public land. The cost of decontaminating the site, incidentally, has been estimated at \$2.12 million.

Walker's only outlay was a \$825,000 deposit which has since been repaid. But like the characters in Standish's novel, the money he might have made if conditions had been different somehow already belongs to him. He has been robbed of it!

If he had been able to get permission to build homes on contaminated land, if he had been able to get planning permission for almost 12 dozen units on the harbour foreshore, if the housing market had held steady, and probably several other ifs, then he stood to make, according to his own estimate, "up to \$80 million".

So he sued the NSW Government for that much in "compensation". Compensation for what?

Walker was not out of pocket. He had not lost a penny. But the money he could have made, if everything had gone according to his hopes and wishes, he (as a good capitalist) sees not as hypothetical money but as his money.

He is being denied it, and he wants compensation for it.

To the amazement of most people, but not of close observers of the capitalist system, Justice Robert Talbot of the NSW Land and Environment Court sided with Walker, and ordered the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority to "compensate" the poor fellow to the tune of \$60 million from the public purse.

As Roger Parkes, chairman of environmental group the Ballast Point Campaign Committee, observed: "The magnitude of the payout verges on the obscene".

"Verges" nothing, Roger; it is obscene.

Recognising that the logic at work in the Court's decision is not the logic of normal people, Roger Parkes called for the decision to be appealed against "to ensure common sense and some sanity be introduced".

But when did common sense and sanity ever have much influence on capitalism, eh?

Preparing for new colonial wars

In the same issue of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (July 12), Hugh White argued against the Defence Department's call for the Australian Government to buy two 27,000 tonne specialist ships called LHDs. The ships are specifically designed for making large scale amphibious landings against hostile shores.

They are for full scale war against North Korea or even China, although White does not admit this. He does declare them to be unnecessary and unwarranted.

Instead, he advocates getting a larger number of 12,000-tonne amphibious ships, which he says would be "fine" for the kinds of



"lower-level operations" we would encounter in our immediate neighbourhood, "such as East Timor and the Solomon Islands".

These smaller vessels "would be capable of handling tougher fights against the kinds of forces" we might find closer to home, it seems.

So that's the choice: preparing for war on a really large scale, or preparing to be the heavy handed neo-colonial local bully. Peace or even defence are apparently not options.

To back up his case, White lets us in on the interesting fact that

"France and Britain are building ships of this size [27,000 tonne LHDs] to provide expeditionary forces for remote operations in places such as Africa".

What African country is threatening France or Britain? Or is it rather that these imperialist powers cannot get African countries to do their dirty work for them, or even to do as they are told, and are looking to "expeditionary forces" to enforce the new colonialism that London, Paris and Washington are now trying to impose around the globe? ☛



Sun July 25 ~
~ Sat July 31

Early in the episode of *Visions Of Space* devoted to Hitler's favourite architect, **Albert Speer: Size Matters (ABC 2.00pm Sunday)**, Robert Hughes intercuts his own arrival in Nürnberg by air (in an aging DC3) with Hitler's similar arrival in the opening sequence of Leni Riefenstahl's Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will*. The parallels become so marked you wonder what Hughes can possibly be thinking.

Soon after, he tries to excuse Speer's devotion to Hitler by references to Speer's youth (he was almost 30 when he first met Hitler) and that Hitler was the country's leader, with grand plans for Germany's capital, plans which apparently would have seduced any architect.

But Hitler was not Chancellor when Speer joined the Nazi Party (in January 1931). Speer was an enthusiastic Nazi who, as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* puts it, "so impressed the Führer by his efficiency and talent that, soon after Hitler became chancellor, Speer became his personal architect".

Speer, whom Hughes is so intent on at least partially excusing, is a convicted war criminal, and not because he planned a grandiose new Berlin (to be called Germania and filled with monuments to German victories in wars they had not yet fought but were already planning).

Nor was he convicted for designing the Nürnberg rallies to impress the German people with Hitler's godlike status and Germany's invincibility. No, he

was convicted for his dedication in enabling the German armed forces to kill millions of people, and for his use of slave labour to achieve his ends.

For Speer was more than just an architect. He was by 1942 Reichminister of armaments and munitions, a title enlarged the following year to Reichminister of armaments and war production.

To ensure supply of raw materials and maintain production of war material, Speer expanded a system of conscript and slave labour, supplied primarily from concentration camps.

Speer was lucky to receive a 20-year jail sentence as a war criminal, but like other prominent Nazis, when he was released into Adenauer's West Germany in 1966 was treated as a celebrity. Hughes himself interviewed him in 1979 for his series *Shock of the New*.

Hughes claims this episode of *Visions of Space* explores architecture as a response to the power of the state. In the course of it he laments the obliteration of Nazi buildings and especially Nazi statues, memorials and memorabilia. He derides the fear that neo-Nazis would make Hitler's bunker into a shrine.

On the other hand, he has enough perspicacity to see that the absolutely enormous dome and surrounding buildings that were to be the centre-piece of Speer's new capital were intended to dwarf people, to render them insignificant and powerless.

Robert Hughes is the kind of presenter who rates himself as the main attraction, not the work he is showing you. So he puts himself in front of the camera at every opportunity. He becomes, very quickly, a pretentious bore.

The National Geographic special ***Dawn Of The Maya (ABC 7.30pm Sunday)*** deals with the pre-history of Mayan civilisation, one to two thousand years before the classic period. Previously dismissed as a primitive era, it is now revealed as a time of awe-inspiring development.

The program also deals with the destruction of modern day

Guatemala, by fire and land clearing, and parallels this with the demise of the Mayan civilisation, ironically from, at least partially, from the felling and burning of thousands of trees to make the lime with which the Mayan rulers covered their multitude of temples and tombs.

This environmental devastation brought the Maya to their knees and the archeologists standing on the ruins of their civilisation, amidst the smoke from 100,000 acres of burning rainforest, see a tragic repetition taking place.

Spanning more than two millennia, the world of the Maya evokes images of ancient pyramids soaring over the jungle, giant carved stones covered with hieroglyphics, and a sudden mysterious demise.

The program includes an account of the Soviet soldier who rescued a book of Mayan hieroglyphs from the burning Berlin National Library and then spent the next 30 years cracking their code. His ultimate discovery enables Mayan temples and tombs to be "read" like books.

While the ABC is digging up the early Maya, over on SBS at the same time they are digging up a Bronze Age settlement destroyed by Vesuvius 1700 years before Pompeii.

The First Pompeii (SBS 7.30pm Sunday) uses computer graphics, artefacts and interviews with experts to reveal the cataclysmic events of that day in 1680 BC.

Coffin Joe: The Strange World Of Jose Mojica Marins (SBS 10.00pm Tuesday) is typical of much of what passes for "cult" movie-making on SBS: decadence presented as entertainment.

José Mojica Marins is described as Brazil's most famous horror film director. He not only writes and directs his own movies but, inevitably, also stars in them.

He also writes and draws his own comic books. His most famous creation, Zé Do Caixão or Coffin Joe, is easily recognisable with his black top hat and black cape, his thick, heavy black eyebrows and black beard, and his long, curly, clicking fingernails.



Tricky Dick was exposed and brought down (*Watergate Plus 30*)

Marins affects a "method" approach to acting and direction (such as covering actors with live rats, snakes, lizards, and scorpions supposedly to test their ability to withstand his frightening sets).

"Magic Realism" was an aesthetic movement in Brazilian literature and cinema that was a reaction to the decadence of capitalist society in that country. Marins and his films are an expression of that decadence.

This week's ***Message Stick*** episode, ***Faith Thomas (ABC 6.00pm Friday)***, recounts the life of Faith Thomas, one of the first Indigenous nurses to graduate from the Royal Adelaide hospital, and the first Aboriginal nurse in South Australia to become a public servant and run a hospital.

Faith was also the first Indigenous person to be selected to play cricket for her country, the first

Indigenous woman to be selected to play any sport for Australia and is the only Aboriginal woman to play international cricket for Australia.

Finally, the 30th anniversary of the Watergate break-in and consequent scandal that exposed and brought down "Tricky Dick" Nixon (but left the system unharmed) is the excuse for ***Watergate Plus 30***, a two-part series in the ***As It Happened slot (SBS 7.30pm Saturdays)***.

Made in association with the *Washington Post*, and claiming to tell the whole story, it includes interviews with numerous Nixon aides (there's nothing like unbiased comment, is there) as well as *Post* journalists Woodward and Bernstein.

In the light of the overt behaviour of the Bush Whitehouse, Nixon's covert activities seem almost benign. ☼

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July 30
What do women want... from a Labor Government?
Anne Summers: noted author, feminist and former political adviser to former PM Paul Keating
Marian Baird: Work and Organisational studies, Economics, Sydney Uni

August 6
Education in Australia: What must be done
Prof Bob Connell Education, Sydney Uni
Maree O'Halloran Pres NSW Teachers Federation (to be confirmed)

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Nanotechnology – private profit vs public protection

On June 17-18, the first inter-governmental dialogue on "Responsible Research and Development of Nanotechnology" was convened in Washington with representatives from 26 countries. In his introductory remarks, Mike Roco of the US Government's National Science Foundation explained that the meeting was dedicated to the examination of broad societal issues that cannot be addressed by any single country. Roco asked: "How can we prepare our world for the emergence of nanotechnology?"

Nanotechnology refers to a spectrum of new technologies involving the manipulation of matter at the scale of atoms and molecules – the nanoscale. A nanometre is one-billionth of a metre.

"Ironically, governments are talking about the need to be proactive, failing to admit that they're at least one decade late: nanotech products are already commercially available and laboratory workers and consumers are already being exposed to nanoparticles that could pose serious risks to people and the environment", said Pat Mooney, Executive Director of ETC Group in Ottawa.

Already on the market

An unofficial document generated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists well over 100 commercial products based on nanotechnologies (available at www.etcgroup.org/documents/nanoproducts_EPA.pdf).

These are already on the market or soon will be. They include a vast range of uses such as: stain-resistant fabrics for clothing and bedding, cosmetics and sunscreens, tennis balls and racquets, bowling balls, odour-eating socks, time-release perfumed fabrics, paints, capsules carrying haemoglobin (under development), sensors to test water impurities, sprayable vitamins, nanoparticle water purifiers, ski wax, 4-wheel drive turrets, long-lasting paper, nanotubes for flat panel display screens, artificial silicon retinas, drug delivery systems, flash memory devices, diagnostic agents for use in MRI scans.

The US Government estimates that one million new workers will be employed in nanotech-related industries within the next decade and the global nanotech market is expected to tip \$1 trillion in just seven years.

As a science nanotechnology is in its infancy, but the claims about its potential are almost the stuff of science fiction.

One of the most promising and also worrying aspects of this technology lies in the changes that take place to the properties of a substance when reduced to nanoparticles. A reduction in size – with no change in substance – can make a substance stronger or more reactive

or lighter or more water-soluble or more heat-resistant or a better conductor of electricity. The engineering of nanoparticles can also bring about significant changes in the properties of a substance.

Property changes begin to happen with materials 100 nanometres or smaller. It is these "quantum effects" that make nanoscale materials interesting to scientists and potentially profitable to industry, who are taking advantage of unique property changes in order to create new products and new markets.

Manipulation of matter at the nanoscale and its control (through wealth and patents) could increase the power and domination of the largest transnational corporations over industrial manufacturing, food, agriculture and health in the 21st century.

However, propelled by venture capital and taxpayer dollars, the field of nanobiotech is advancing rapidly without public debate or regulatory oversight. For most government policymakers, the implications of nanobiotech are not even on the radar.

In recent months, governments in the USA and Europe have reluctantly conceded that current safety and health regulations may not be adequate to address the special exigencies of nanoscale materials. Though it is often the case that the substances themselves have been well studied and some controls put in place at larger scales, they have not been similarly vetted at the nanoscale.

It should be no surprise that toxicity is one property that can change with a reduction in size: a chemical compound at the micro-scale – titanium dioxide (TiO₂), for example – may be benign, but a nanoparticle of that same TiO₂ could be toxic.

From the few toxicological data that exist, it seems that a particle's size, shape, surface chemistry and composition can all contribute to a changed level of toxicity at the nanoscale. There are no labelling requirements for nanoparticles nor is special toxicity assessment required.

Green Goo

Green goo refers to potential dangers associated with nanobiotechnology. Nanobiotechnology involves the merging of the living and non-living realms – biological materials with synthetic materials – at the nanoscale to make hybrid materials and organisms, to build new molecular structures or products.

This raises many potential concerns: will new life forms,

especially those that are designed to function autonomously in the environment, open a Pandora's box of unforeseen and uncontrollable consequences?

Researchers are coaxing living organisms to perform mechanical functions precisely because living organisms are capable of self-assembly and self-replication. With nanobiotech, researchers have the power to create completely new organisms that have never existed on Earth.

Angela Belcher, Professor of Material Science at MIT, reported earlier this year that her research team has genetically engineered the DNA of viruses and induced them to produce inorganic materials in the form of tiny wires with magnetic and semiconducting properties.

"Don't build a factory. Get a virus to do the work for you", says Ms Belcher. "We programmed the virus to grow a particular



ILLUSTRATION: MATT GOLDING

material at a particular length. Then we burned off the virus and were left with single-crystal semiconductor wires." Belcher refers to her viruses as "a genetic tool kit for growing and organizing nanowires."

Belcher has so far induced viruses to grow roughly 30 different inorganic materials, and she plans to work her way through the entire periodic table.

It is important to acknowledge that nanobiotechnology does not always involve self-replication, and biological materials can be harnessed for more mundane applications.

Occupational Health & Safety

"Currently, the toxicological studies of engineered nanomaterials can be counted on one hand, and more ambitious risk assessments are at least several years away", was the warning given to the European Commission by Vicki Colvin, Associate Professor and Executive Director of the Center for Biological and Environmental Nanotechnology.

A further warning was issued by the world's second largest re-insurer, Swiss Re in a report, *Nanotechnology: Small Matter, many unknowns*. The report strongly recommended that the

precautionary principle "be applied whatever the difficulties" and that "no reasonable expense should be spared in clarifying the current uncertainties associated with nanotechnological risks".

The US National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) announced it was preparing a "best practices" document for working with nanomaterials. "Very little is known currently about how dangerous nanomaterials are, or how we should protect workers in related industries.

"Research over the past few years finds that nano-diameter particles are more toxic than larger particles on a mass basis. The combination of particle size, unique structures, and unique physical and chemical properties, suggests that a great deal of care needs to be taken to ensure adequate worker protection when manufacturing and using nanomaterials."

The agency estimates that one million new US workers will be employed in nanotech-related industries within the next decade.

"Materials and devices [that] are under development are so far from our current understanding that we can not easily apply existing paradigms to protecting workers", says the NIOSH.

Carbon nanotubes are straw-shaped molecules of pure carbon discovered by Sumio Iijima of Japan in 1991.

They have been dubbed the "miracle molecule" because they are 100 times stronger than steel and six times lighter. Nanotubes can be as small as 1 nanometre (nm) in diameter and as long as 100,000 nm. They can be single-walled, like straws, or they can be multi-walled,

resembling posters in a mailing tube. Depending on how they are configured, they can act as semiconductors or as conductors.

There are an estimated 16 major producers of carbon nanotubes worldwide. The global market for carbon nanotubes was estimated at \$12 million in 2002, but was expected to have grown to \$430 million by 2004.

Two Japanese companies have plans to produce 40 tonnes of nanotubes this year with Carbon Nanotech Research Institute aiming for an annual production of 120 tonnes. In the USA, Carbon Nanotechnologies, Inc. has plans for a new plant that will produce between 150 and 300 tonnes per year.

Electronics giant NEC plans to start selling nanotube fuel cells for laptops and mobile phones within a year and nanotube flat screen displays shortly thereafter.

Because nanotubes have a high aspect ratio (i.e., they are needle-like in shape), there was some speculation initially that they could behave like asbestos fibers if they became airborne and were inhaled. Until this year, there existed only one published study addressing the issue of carbon nanotube toxicity: researchers at the University of Warsaw concluded, after a four-week trial in which nanotubes had been injected into the tracheas of guinea pigs, that working with nanotubes was "unlikely to be associated with any health risk".

A second nanotube toxicity study at the Johnson Space Center, NASA, got underway last year. Hardly had the NASA researchers begun when the *Financial Times* pre-emptively (and mistakenly) assured its readers that the soon-to-be-released NASA study would give nanotubes its second clean bill of health.

Rather than declaring carbon nanotubes safe, the researchers warned that the carbon tubes they tested (three different kinds) were more toxic than quartz dust – the material that causes silicosis among miners and railroad workers.

One of the researchers recently told *New Scientist*, "The message is clear. People should take precautions. Nanotubes can be highly toxic."

Next Week: part 2 looks at the uses of nanotech in food, agriculture, the patenting of life and some of the issues arising from these developments. This article is compiled from material from ETC – the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (formerly RAFI) – which is an international non-government organisation headquartered in Canada. ETC is dedicated to the advancement of cultural and ecological diversity and human rights. www.etcgroup.org ☺



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