

Reject the FTA

It's time. Stand up for Australia!

"If this agreement is passed by the Senate it will go down in history – as the greatest economic treachery perpetrated on Australians for a questionable political outcome."

These are the words of Doug Cameron National Secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Worker's Union addressing the Union's National Conference on July 25.

His call underlines the urgency of the situation. The Free Trade Agreement is likely to be voted on soon after August 12 when the report of a Senate enquiry into the FTA is to be tabled. The Howard Government, in league with the representatives of the United States and the Australian media is attempting to rush the agreement through parliament.

Sending a direct message to the Labor Party Doug Cameron said: "History will judge this agreement – and if it is passed with Labor Party support, history will also judge the Labor Party as having made a terrible, terrible decision".

Humiliating sellout

He quoted Tim Colebatch writing in *The Age*: "*this actually isn't a Free Trade Agreement – it's a half a free trade agreement – it simply means free trade for American exports to Australia. Australia is watering down, weakening and destroying our barriers, tariffs and industry protections – while the US is ensuring they continue to protect their industries ... The Labor Party can*

not and must not accept this cringing, second rate outcome – to do so would be a humiliating sell out".

Doug Cameron said that the most important of the [Union's] battles is the campaign against the free trade policies of our national political parties.

He spoke of the experience of the AMWU, "No-one knows more about the impact of globalisation in Australia than manufacturing workers and their communities.

"We are losing jobs, industries and factories, communities are losing their security, their incomes and their lifeline to future economic prosperity ... we are living it everyday.

"We do not have our heads in the sand about the nature of globalisation as many politicians like to accuse us – our argument is that the interests of big business is shaping and framing and hijacking the process of globalisation in the interests of a few, and at the expense of the many.

"Never before has an Australian Government been prepared to give away so much on behalf of so many, for so little return."

He quoted the US Ambassador to Australia Tom Schieffer who claimed that the FTA "is an opportunity to receive American parts for your cars without the 15 percent tariff that you now have to pay. That will make the cars you make here cheaper and more competitive in markets around the world, not just in the United States. Rear wheel



drive cars, which are still preferred by many drivers, could be manufactured here while parts inside them could be manufactured in the United States".

Doug Cameron pointed out the realities: "The four major car companies employ 17,000 people. The component sector comprises 200 separate companies employing some 30,000 people.

"If we lose the skills, research and development and innovation from our component sector then our manufacturing industry will be dealt a blow it may never recover from."

The AMWU along with a host of community groups, other unions, economic experts and academics have campaigned against this agreement said Doug Cameron.

"We have been overwhelmed with support from members and delegates, who have rallied, written letters, turned up to Senate Inquiries, lobbied politicians and talked to literally thousands of people to inform them about this sell out by the Government.

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What do Australian's actually think about the FTA?

A poll conducted by the AMWU in marginal seats over the last two weeks, found many in the community to be suspicious, cynical and worried about the impact of the US FTA:

- When we asked who was going to benefit out of the agreement, 9 percent said Australia, 25 percent said both countries and 61 percent said the US;
- 65 percent think we should have done better out of the negotiations;
- 48 percent oppose it while 41 percent agree with it;
- The public tend to think it will be bad for small business, bad for Australian workers and bad for our economic and political independence;
- 52 percent of the public believe the Prime Minister is putting America's interests ahead of Australia's.
- 27 percent of those polled believes we should pass the FTA, 12 per cent believe we should reject, and 53 per cent believe the FTA should be renegotiated.
- 72 percent believe that if Labor politicians vote against the FTA in Parliament, then this would not be anti American.

"History will judge this agreement. If it is passed with Labor Party support, history will also judge the Labor Party as having made a terrible, terrible decision."

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Affront to humanity

The Howard Government's foreign policy sank to its lowest and vilest depths last week when Australia, the US, Israel and three other US puppet governments voted against a UN General Assembly resolution condemning the construction by Israel of a wall which cuts deep into Palestinian territory on the West Bank.

The three other governments opposing the resolution were the former US colonies and now moninally independant tiny Pacific Island states at Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands.

The wall is an affront to humanity. The UN International Court of Justice, with only the US dissenting, not only condemned the wall but also demanded that it be pulled down.

The US, Australia and even Israel claim that they are bringing democracy, freedom and peace to the world and that they stand for the "rule of law". But this latest action shows again that these governments are outrageous hypocrites with their credibility and morality in the gutter. They are scum on the body-politic of the world. One hundred and fifty countries, including every government of the European Union, voted in support of the UN resolution.

The US regularly disregards and vetoes UN resolutions that do not suit its interests while cynically forcing other nations on pain of boycott or military threat and occupation to carry out resolutions that are in the imperial interests of US corporations. It also rushes to get the support of the UN whenever it finds itself in a corner as is now the situation in Iraq.

The US Government together with the apartheid Sharon Government of Israel (now joined by Australia) have been systematically sabotaging every possible step forward to this end while at the same time, talking of a "road map to peace".

The Israeli wall is a major grab of more Palestinian land. About 35,000 Palestinians will be cut off from their lands, schools and hospitals. If Israel were honest in its claim to be concerned about its security, it would build a wall on its own territory and not thieve Palestinian lands. Israel's 435 mile long wall will effectively divide the West Bank into cantonments making the creation of a Palestinian state an impossibility.

The double standards of the US and many other nations are shown by the fact that while action is demanded against Iran, Iraq, Libya and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea regarding their alleged preparations to build nuclear weapons, the reality of Israel's nuclear weapons is ignored. It is well know that Israel has nuclear weapons and has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

For many years Israel, backed all the way by successive US leaders, has ignored the unanimous UN Security Council resolution 242 adopted in 1967 that calls for the "withdrawal of Israel's armed forces from territories occupied" in its invasion of Arab territories during the six-day war in 1967.

For 37 years Israel has thumbed its nose at this and a number of similar resolutions. It has been able to get away with this defiance only because of the support from the US and the spinelessness of many other governments that lack the courage to stand up to the pressures and threats of the United States.

For its part the Labor Party, in criticising the Howard Government, said that Australia should have abstained from voting on the UN General Assembly resolution. Such a stand also ignores the near-unanimous and principled decision of the International Court of Justice, which has been recognised by Australia. It is just as much a capitulation to US and Israeli demands and interests as the open vote of Howard and Downer.

It is this sort of shilly-shallying and weakness that allows the United States and Israel to get away with policies that prevent, at every turn, any settlement on the basis of principle of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The US often complains and does not seem to understand why around the world the name of the US leader is reviled. It may not be long before the rest of the world says the same of Australian governments – unless they stop acting as a servile puppet of the US.

PRESS FUND

John Howard says he'd have ordered the invasion of Iraq even if he knew they didn't have weapons of mass destruction. You've got to hand it to him for determination – and gall! But other people have determination too. The Iraqis are determined to rid themselves of the evil coalition that's occupying their country, and *The Guardian* is determined to help them gain their independence and freedom. And if you also want to help in this respect, you could do so by making a contribution to *The Guardian* Press Fund. Our sincere thanks go to the following, for their support this week:

June Ayres \$10, Noel Hazard \$10, J A Roduner \$10, Anne Junor \$12, James Innes \$25.

This week's total: \$67. Progressive total: \$6422.

ALP health alternative needs bigger commitment

Andrew Jackson

The Labor Party has boldly declared that its new "Medicare After Hours" policy will provide after hours medical treatment "no matter where a patient lives". This would be a most remarkable achievement – even more so considering Labor claims it can provide this care for just \$32 million a year!

Labor says its "Medicare After Hours" package will address the urgent need for after hours care by providing:

- A single national telephone number linking callers to telephone triage and advice lines staffed by nurses, with a GP on hand for more difficult cases
- Medicare After Hours clinics co-located with public hospitals
- Accredited after hours GP clinics
- Medicare Teams in health hotspots

One of the key aims of the plan is to ease the pressure on public hospital emergency departments. Labor says it will invest \$128 million over four years for these new measures.

Labor's new policy was met with muted response from the press and public with one of the few excited reactions coming from the Howard Government.

Health Minister Tony Abbott claimed it was an endorsement of the Government's agenda because Labor had "plagiarised" the Government's policy on after-hours medical care.

It should be noted that this bit of provocation is from the same Health Minister who has the gall to say:

"There's really only one party in Australian politics which now totally and unambiguously supports Medicare and that is the Coalition. The Howard government supports Medicare and our message

to the ALP is, hands off Medicare, because it's a good system and Labor shouldn't try to dismantle it."

The truth is that, despite the "Strengthening Medicare" advertising blitz, the Coalition is passionately committed to dismantling the national, public health system.

Private vs Public

The difference between the Liberal and Labor health policy is underlined by the recent announcement of the expanded availability of MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) machines throughout Australia.

MRI machines are essential tools in modern medical diagnoses, providing internal images of a person far superior to x-rays or ultrasounds.

The Howard Government announced it will issue 21 "licences" for the machines, with interested parties "invited to apply". By this the Howard Government means the machines will be available on tender to private providers.

One of the selection criteria will be the "affordability to the patient" offered by the private operator.

By this the Government is indicating they will allow the operator to charge upfront fees for the tests.

In contrast the ALP policy will have 10 machines installed directly into public hospitals with the Commonwealth Government paying all costs.

Labor

While many of Labor's recent announcements are steps in the right direction, they go only a short way towards the giant leap that is needed to restore our public health system.

Labor couches its health announcements as being costed within current budget constraints.

Senator Bob McMullan justified Labor's cave-in over the 30 per cent

increase in prescription costs saying, "Tough decisions about spending priorities need to be made".

Yet there is \$2.5 billion just waiting to be spent on public health if only Labor would make the "tough decision" and cancel the 30 percent private health insurance rebate.

Labor's policy of providing free after-hours medical care to all Australians could then become a reality. Labor's promise of 80 per cent of GP visits being bulk-billed could then be raised to near 100 per cent.

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Labor's policy of providing a national dental service for pensioners and Health Care Card holders could then be extended to all Australians.

If Labor used the private health fund rebate funds to scrap HECS fees and offer professional wages to health professionals then its policy of providing more doctors and nurses could also become a reality.

The fact is that Labor still falls short of backing a truly universal, public health care system. ☺

Fire and New Building Appeal \$10,000

For those of you who have seen Mike Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, you will recall a tuxedo clad George Bush addressing a dinner packed with what he describes as the "haves and the have mores". He calls folks like those his "base". Never a truer word spoken! We're calling on our base – the workers and other exploited people of Australia – to contribute whatever they can to help spoil the party for Bush, Howard, Blair & Co.

We're halfway through our six-week special fire and new building appeal and have almost reached the half-way mark for our target of \$10,000. We shall be moving to the new building at 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills in the second half of August. This entails huge costs and we do not have commercial sponsors to fund the move. The \$10,000 we are seeking through this special appeal will only cover part of the costs involved. Please send us what you can. All contributions appreciated, no matter how small or large. And please, don't be shy about sending in a second contribution if you have contributed already.

L E Kiek \$1000; Jessie Kiek \$200; Tom Simmons \$100; Pam and Rowan Cahill \$20; Mrs M Rees \$30; W Irving \$100; Anonymous \$25; Donna \$50; Fred Rouady \$20; P & N Symon \$100; MH \$100.

Total this week \$1745 Progressive Total \$4470.



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.

Anti-unionist to push Telstra sale

Bob Briton

Telstra has finally got a new chairman. Former National Farmers Federation (NFF) President Donald McGauchie will fill the position left vacant since last April when the telco's board forced Bob Mansfield to resign.

The appointment confirms 2004 as a good year for the "straight talking" McGauchie. In January he was awarded an Order of Australia for, among other things, "economic reform of agricultural commodity handling and marketing" – a sly way of acknowledging his crucial role in the 1998 MUA dispute.

It was McGauchie who set up Producers and Consumers Stevedores with NFF backing to recruit non-union labour and train them in Dubai. Patrick Stevedores then hired the union-busting gangs at its facilities and sacked the regular, unionised workforce.

John Howard has been quick to deny that McGauchie's promotion is in return for services rendered: "It is true that Don McGauchie played an heroic role during that historic dispute and he was on the right side, but Don McGauchie's appointment as chairman of Telstra was a decision of the board of Telstra... I know that, I'm in a position to know it because it's an issue I discussed with the board, or most of the members of the board".

The PM is being cute. He knows that, as the majority shareholder in Telstra, the Government has the biggest say about who goes on the Telstra board. His discussions with its members about a new chair would, no doubt, have been anything but free ranging.

McGauchie was originally appointed to the board by the gov-

ernment in 1998 in controversial "jobs for the boys" circumstances similar to those surrounding his recently announced chairmanship. The suspicion that McGauchie keeps being rewarded by the Howard Government arises from the fact that Mr McGauchie has a long record of being on the "right side" of issues.

He led the NFF in its 18-month long campaign to drain native title legislation of any significant benefit to Indigenous Australians after the High Court's Wik decision. He helped promote the GST. He supported the part privatisation of Telstra. More recently he has headed up Brendan Nelson's committee inquiring into how to break up and privatise CSIRO and university research through a "competitively based science funding system".

He is a non-executive director of James Hardie Industries. He chairs a committee for the embattled former asbestos products manufacturer that is looking into how best to conduct the rest of the case currently before a NSW special commission of inquiry. The commission is investigating the adequacy of compensation funds left behind for victims by the former Australia-based transnational before it sold off its asbestos liabilities and moved to the Netherlands. And, of course, Mr McGauchie supports the full privatisation of Telstra.

Again, Howard has been swift to deny any special privatising role for the new chair. It is true that McGauchie did not stand out on the board by being in favour of the complete sell-off of the asset. In fact it would be an opponent of the move that would be lonely in those circles! McGauchie himself acknowledges that public resistance to the sale is stiff and that his mis-

sion has political difficulties.

However, as National Competition Council President Wendy Craik points out, McGauchie does have some special talents. "He understands how government works, and in terms of Telstra being privatised he would clearly see what's important to do and make sure it is done", she told *The Australian* recently.

Furthermore, while Mr McGauchie would now be more familiar with the boardroom than the paddocks of the family's sprawling property in northern Victoria, the government is hoping that his rural background will help them to clear a major obstacle to the full privatisation. They trust that the appointment of the former NFF chief will reinforce assurances that great advances are being made in telecommunications in the bush and that the time has come to flog off the rest of the telco.

Very few seem to be buying the line. Dick Estens, who headed the Howard Government's inquiry into regional telecommunications in 2002, conceded recently that many services are still a "shamozzle". Current NFF President Peter Cornish opposes the further sell-off of the government's share and National Party MPs live in fear of a backlash against the government's Telstra policy. City voters are similarly opposed to Telstra's privatisation. It remains to be seen if the appointment will have the desired impact.

Meanwhile, in Howard's most recent reshuffle of his front bench, Helen Coonan has taken over as Communications Minister. She lost no time in telling the media that legislation for the sale of Telstra could be passed with some further "refin-

Sell off our
essential services
to foreign companies?



ing" of the bill and the arguments used to support it.

She will find a willing ally in the new Telstra chair. He has already made his made his lofty vision for

the telco perfectly clear: "Telstra has reached an important phase in its development. Our greatest challenge now is to deliver shareholder value".

Students pay more, unis get less

Peter Mac

As a result of the Howard Government's tertiary education policies over the last eight years, university students are now carrying an ever-heavier fee load to compensate for the steady decrease in tertiary education funding.

Many students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level have already been forced to pay full university fees – i.e. their places carry no funding from the government. An analysis carried out for the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) indicates that if the present trend continues, all students will eventually be paying full fees

for their university education, and could end up carrying most or all of the financial burden of the nation's university education system.

Twenty years ago, when university places were free, the government provided full funding for courses. Since the re-introduction of fees in the late 1980s by the Hawke Government fees have risen steadily with students payer a higher proportion of the cost of their studies each year.

Under the present Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) students pay a proportion of the cost as a fee (either upfront or in the form of a loan to later be repaid to the government) and the government pays the remainder – what is now referred to as a "government subsidy". Additional places are available where students can afford to pay the full fee – no government contribution.

Funding falling

As indicated in figures supplied by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), the number of subsidised full-time student places rose by almost 35,000 over the past eight years. The government makes much of the fact that university operating funding has increased (at face value) by about \$542 million during this time. However, the NTEU analysis revealed that when those figures were adjusted for inflation and expressed in 1993 terms, funding has actually fallen by some \$317 million.

The figures have been skewed (and the funding shortfall worsened) because of the government's approach to funding.

For example, the government has consistently underestimated the number of students expected to apply for university places. Enrolments in excess of the government's anticipated quota (known as "over enrolments") attract a greatly reduced government contribution under the HECS. Until 1998 the government offered no subsidy at all for "over enrolment" places!

At the same time, the amount of funding provided per student actually fell by some \$1740 per student. This represents a total of \$784 million (when multiplied by the number of student places) for 1993, or \$2.46 billion for the full eight-year period. In short, funding in real terms has actually suffered a cut of around 13 per cent.

Students forced to make up losses

HECS fees cover a proportion of the resources that universities have available to them. In the period in question, this proportion almost doubled, rising from 19.6 per cent in 1996 to 38 per cent in 2003.

The trend revealed in the NTEU study will be exacerbated next year, when many universities plan to increase their HECS fees by some 25 per cent. Their decision to increase fees was again prompted by the Howard Government's policy of "deregulating" university fee levels.

If you can't pay, you can't study

The growth in population and the increasing importance of tertiary qualifications has led to a steadily rising demand for university places. However, each rise in student fees knocks out a proportion of students for whom the extra proves to be too large a financial burden. As a result, the number of university enrolments has now begun to fall.

Andrew Nette, NTEU Policy and Research Coordinator, commented: "Is it any wonder that fewer high school students are going on to university, given that the cost of a government-subsidised university place has almost doubled under this government?"

"... in 2003 dollar values, an average student was paying \$4413 [per annum] for a government-subsidised place compared to only \$2276 in 1996, an increase of \$2137 or 94 per cent. For a four-year degree this represents an increase of over \$8500..."

"The DEST figures underline the consequences of the Government's higher education policy. Students are finding university less attractive because of increasing costs, and universities are finding it more difficult to educate students because of decreasing resources. Students have been asked to pay more for less. No wonder they are reconsidering whether to attend university or not."

Pete's Corner



Exploiter's vicious message

A unionist's car was extensively vandalised in a laneway in the Sydney suburb of Marrickville less than 24 hours after he dropped a bucket on suppliers to fashion retailer, Valley Girl, in the Chief Industrial Magistrate's Court.

Stunned Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union (TCFUA) official, David Tritton, understood the implications of extensive scratching and gouging on the bodywork

addresses of sub-contractors provided by Valley Girl supplier, Stephanelle, had been bogus.

Under the Clothing Industry Award, suppliers like Stephanelle are required to comply with requests to supply sub-contractors' names and addresses. The measure is designed to drive sweatshops, typically paying non-English speaking women as little as \$3 an hour, out of the industry.

The vandalism incident would not put TCFUA officials off the trail of companies exploiting outworkers or using sweatshops.

of the organisation's new Holden Crewman.

"When we came out of the building there were two men just standing there watching us", he said. "They just stared at us as we walked back to the car which had been completely vandalised. It was obvious someone was sending us a message".

The previous day, Mr Tritton had told the Chief Industrial Magistrate's Court that a list of

One Stephanelle address turned out to be a surveyor's office, another a car audio showroom and a third was home to a furniture retailer. Other addresses simply didn't exist.

The union uncovered a Chester Hill garage equipped with 20 sewing machines and Stephanelle documentation indicating that blouses, tops and pants were headed for Valley Girl and upmarket boutique, Dolls Only.

The operator of that premises

said he had been manufacturing for Stephanelle for two years but could only provide wage records and workers' comp policies for two people that covered the week he was sprung.

His records showed he was receiving \$4 a unit and sub-contracting the garments out at \$3 a unit.

"We estimate, to meet award minimums only, manufacturers would have to receive at least \$5.29 a unit", Mr Tritton explained. "That doesn't include workers' compensation, super or any profit margin."

"There is no way in the world that any person actually doing the work could be paid the minimum legal hourly rate, on those figures", he said.

He told the Court that three Stephanelle sub-contractors listed company offices at fictitious Melbourne addresses but issued tax invoices from non-existent Sydney bases.

One, MTN, a company purporting to be registered at 30 Henry St, Abbotsford, Victoria; was billing customers from 20 Henry St, Abbotsford, NSW.

While still sending out GST invoices from Abbotsford, Sydney, he said, it hadn't held an ABN number since July, last year.

Mr Tritton said the bodgegy addresses and false invoicing highlighted the need for companies, like Valley Girl, to sign the retailers' "code of conduct" to not sell goods made by ruthlessly exploited outworkers.



The TCFUA asked Valley Girl, boasting 74 retail outlets, for a meeting about the issues exposed by Stephanelle's documentation. However, a Valley Girl official said its CEO was "too busy".

The union made it clear that the vandalism incident would not

put TCFUA officials off the trail of companies exploiting outworkers or using sweatshops.

"We are not going to be intimidated", David Tritton said. "These checks will continue until companies face up to their legal and moral responsibilities." ✪

Win for collective bargaining

BHP's Pilbara union-busting campaign has been dealt a body blow with big wage increases bringing 400 union members onto equal terms with workmates who signed AWAs, the federal government's individual contracts.

ACTU organiser Will Tracey called the second arbitrated award settlement "huge", revealing it had eliminated the \$10,000 to \$20,000-a-year differentials BHP had used to try to convert the whole Pilbara workforce onto individual agreements.

The settlement, handed down by the three-man WA Industrial Relations Commission full bench, followed the mining giant's refusal to negotiate with unions. It provided union members with 12 percent increases, and flowed on all other benefits applying to non-unionists.

Mr Tracey said that the decision brought wage increases for unionised iron ore workers to 32 percent since July 2002. Over that time, their super entitlements have risen from eight percent of earnings to 15.75 percent.

Perhaps, more importantly, the Commission signalled its frustration with BHP's continuing resistance to collective bargaining.

It left the expiry date open, suggesting it could further increase award rates if BHP ups the ante by bouncing up the earnings of AWA employees, and expressed "concerns" over the prospect of award workers receiving inferior treatment.

"The bench has formally recognised the concept of equal pay for equal work", Mr Tracey noted. "It has flowed on all benefits, equalised pay rates and called on the company to return to the bargaining table."

"Effectively, it means that BHP's strategy to break the unions has failed.

"We call on the Big Australian to start behaving like an Australian and accept the umpire's decision. That would mean sitting down and negotiating a collective agreement with workers' representatives."

The federal government saw mineral developments in the Pilbara as an opportunity to advance its non-union agenda. BHP picked up the ball in 1999 and offered massive differentials in wages and conditions to anyone who would walk away from the unions and sign an AWA.

Unions bled members until the ACTU dispatched its representative to the region to co-ordinate fight-back activities by the unions in the industry, the AMWU, AWU, CEPU, CFMEU and TWU.

Membership stabilised at about 40 percent two years ago, and has grown slightly since.

Last week the five Pilbara unions agreed to further formalise their alliance by combining resources as the Pilbara Mineworkers Union (PMU).

Mr Tracey said the Commission determination had been the first "big victory" for the PMU, coming one day after its establishment.

He said formal recognition for the PMU showed state and federal unions were prepared to listen to the voices of Pilbara members.

"Joining together is our way of building our union and regaining our strength on the job", he said. "It is an endorsement of our campaigning to date and proof that unions are hearing local workers on the best way forward for this region."

BHP Billiton sought to play down the significance of the united front, last week. An unnamed spokesman told the media the PMU would have little impact.

"We are just bemused by it", he said. ✪

Uni management: five-star Scrooges

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has labelled as hypocrisy Wollongong University management's praise of staff for the high standard of their work while at the same balking at an acceptable pay deal. University of Wollongong staff have gained the recognition of a five-star rating in the Good Universities Guide. The current pay offer from management would leave staff with a deal well below those concluded or being offered at other universities around the country.

"It seems the university is happy to accept accolades for the quality of its research and teaching, but this clearly fails to translate to its treatment of staff, who are themselves the researchers and teachers", said Kim Draisma, President of the

NTEU Wollongong Branch, which represents academic and general staff at the University.

"The university has told us all along that it intends for Wollongong staff to be 'middle of the pack' on pay and conditions when compared to other universities. However, despite us being shown to be considerably ahead of the pack on our research, the university is only prepared to make a pay offer that leaves us amongst the lowest paid university staff in the country."

The NTEU points out that in order to maintain such high standards and to continue to attract and retain quality staff, management has to ensure pay and conditions for its academic and general staff are comparable with the rest of the sector.

"The union congratulates our

fellow staff for their efforts in achieving this rating", said Ms Draisma. "We also give a commitment to our members that given their achievement we will not let university management short change staff and the Illawarra community when it comes to maintaining the excellence of the institution."

The announcement of the university's award came at the end of a week in which staff vented their frustration in a series of stopwork meetings set to coincide with graduation ceremonies being held on the campus.

Staff held peaceful assemblies outside the graduations and distributed information detailing the pay dispute to graduates, parents and other members of the community. ✪

Reject the FTA

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Who will the ALP listen to?

"It will come down to who the ALP listens to – its members and supporters, the community and union members, workers and small business, economists and academics – or will they listen to the commentaries in the Murdoch press?"

"Comrades – there is no doubt that our members and the community would be better off with a Federal Labor Government in power, and the coming election is a very important one for our members.

"To all those in the [Labor] Party who think that the politics of the US alliance means we have to vote for the Free Trade Agreement let me say this – we won't lose this election if we demand that the agreement be renegotiated."

"We will lose this election if we fail, once again, to send a message to the Australian public and our supporters that the Labor Party stands up for something different to the Liberals."

The Communist Party of Australia has consistently opposed and exposed the FTA. Similar agreements made by the US with other countries have all proved

disastrous for the working people of those countries.

Time is very short

Time is very short to make a difference and persuade the ALP and the Australian Democrats that they must vote the FTA down in the Senate. The FTA will almost certainly be voted on in August. Your protest must not be left to the time of the Federal elections. It may already have become law by then and will be almost impossible to revoke.

Write, phone or email your Federal Senators NOW. ✪

Reith clone continues war on workers

Anna Pha

Former Workplace Relations Minister Peter Reith launched a massive offensive against trade unions and workers undermining trade union rights and workers' wages and conditions. His most recent replacement, Kevin Andrews is set to make even more far-reaching changes in this Government's war on workers' rights. He is telling business groups that the government has "only just begun" to deregulate the Australian labour market.

Reith stripped awards back to "20 allowable matters"; imposed heavy restrictions on the right to strike; promoted non-union individual work contracts (Australian Workplace Agreements) and non-union enterprise agreements; strengthened the Trades Practices Act; introduced a range of savage penal provisions; and removed many other trade union rights.

Although Reith did weaken the compulsory nature of the conciliation and arbitration system and its centralisation, he did leave in place the basic legislative and structural framework which has provided trade unions with official recognition and certain rights over the past century.

The Australian Financial Review reports that the Howard Government plans to "completely remake workplace relations with a national system that bypasses the unions and state industrial commissions".

At present the Workplace Relations Act, which formally recognises a role for trade unions in labour-capital relations, relies on the dispute resolution powers in the Constitution to regulate industrial relations.

Over the years a system of centralised legally binding and enforceable (federal) awards has grown up, governing wages and working conditions to be provided by employers in specific industries or occupations in more than one State.

Alongside the federal system, state systems have also evolved. These have tended to be broader in coverage, picking up workers in particular trades or occupations who are not covered by the federal system.

The system is complex, and in itself there is nothing wrong with simplifying it, or having a single national one. The key question is what type of system is to be set down and what protection and rights does it offer workers and trade unions.

Andrews is seeking to legislate using its powers under another section of the Constitution relating to corporations – enabling the government to exclude trade unions from the equation.

The new legislation would cover most workers, the only workers left out would be employed in small unincorporated concerns, which could remain in the state system if one still existed. At present Victoria does not have a state system – it was dismantled by former Liberal Premier Kennett.

Unions shut out

The use of corporations law would completely transform the legislative basis of relations between workers and employers.

Under corporations law a mineworker would sign a contract with an employer – in just the same way as two companies would sign a contract for business. Trade unions would be shut out of the relationship as far as the law is concerned. At best a trade union might be able to assist – as could a lawyer – in a court of law or in signing the employment contract as an agent.

Such contracts would most likely be secret – "commercial in confidence" – just as there are provisions now protecting secrecy clauses in AWAs.

In practice, individual workers do not have the same powers as employers. That is why they form trade unions. It is their unity which gives them strength to stand up to bosses and fight for their rights.

Individual workers do not have the financial means to fight bosses in courts of law – this can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. The likes of Rio Tinto can pursue cases to higher courts when they lose or even defy court decisions that go against them.

Any form of solidarity action taken by workers would be illegal under the Trades Practices Act if Andrews gets his way. Solidarity action could involve workers in one workplace supporting workers in another workplace on a different enterprise agreement. It could also be illegal for workers within the same workplace on individual contracts to take action to protect a victimised trade union activist or in defence of a worker sacked for refusing to use unsafe machinery.

Attempts to recruit members, mount pickets, or take action against an employer where it affects another corporation would be construed as "restricting trade" and subject to massive fines and damages payments. With the exten-



sive use of contractors and subbies it would have virtually any industrial action deemed to be a secondary boycott (affecting another employer).

Combining (such as in a trade union) to fight for a wage rise or for uniform wages for a group of workers in a workplace would be treated as collusion and price fixing under an amended Trades Practices Act. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission could be called in and heavy penalties applied.

The report of the Cole Commission into the Building and Construction Industry makes a number of recommendations for the application of such measures in the industry. It provides a model for Andrews to eventually apply to all areas of work.

As Andrews suggests, the Howard Government had "only just begun" its offensive to rid workplaces of trade unions.

The Democrats, under the right-wing, anti-union Andrew Murray have indicated their support for Andrews' plans.

The Labor Party has put forward a strategy based on the recognition of trade unions, a strengthening of the powers of the Workplace Relations Commission and abolition of AWAs. But, so far it has not agreed to abolish non-union enterprise agreements. Rather it is pursuing equity between workers covered by different types of contracts or agreements in a workplace.

The most important task facing trade unions is to defeat the Howard Government in the forthcoming elections and to see to it that as progressive and pro-worker government as possible is elected. ✪



The fear campaign being conducted by the NSW Government has been stepped up a notch. People who enter Sydney's Centennial, Moore and Queens Parks are to be subjected to new police powers. Under legislation tabled by the Carr Government, park rangers will be able to randomly search bags, picnic baskets, the contents of drink containers etc of those using the public parks. You can refuse, but you'll be hit with a \$175 fine. Rangers don't even have to suspect there's any criminal activity taking place. The Moore Park Trust, which is responsible for the parks, and the former Sydney Showground now occupied by Fox Studios, claims that rangers "are not going to go up to an ordinary person and say "What's in your bag?" But that's exactly what the legislation allows them to do! And to show how democratic it all is, the public's opportunity to comment on the proposed laws ended on July 28.

The privateers are coming out of the woodwork in every area of public life. As a parting shot, the outgoing dean of education at Melbourne University has called on the Brack's Government to form partnerships with business to reconstruct the state's public school infrastructure. Citing the increasingly inequitable and under-funded schools system in Britain and the US as shining examples, Professor Brian Caldwell says the way to replace older buildings in the system is to have the private sector construct new ones and lease them back to the government. This, claims Caldwell, will also remedy the teacher shortage in public schools. It's no surprise that Caldwell is described as "an internationally recognised expert on devolving responsibility and authority to schools" – more double talk for privatisation.

When Federal Environment Minister David Kemp announced last month that he was retiring, his Liberal Party cronies waxed lyrical about his "contribution to the nation". But those in the know see him and his government in a somewhat different light. The Greens listed some of the ecologically disastrous actions under Kemp's tenure. They include: record levels of export woodchipping from Tasmanian forests; record levels of greenhouse gas emissions; approval of a dam on Queensland's Burnett River that flooded the habitat of at least five rare and endangered species; failure to list Cape York for world heritage listing; repeated approval for projects which threaten flora and fauna. Said Greens Senator Bob Brown, "This Government is the worst environmental performer in modern history".

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is new Telstra chairman Don McGauchie. This parasite's elevation by the Howard Government is a pathetic ploy to calm anger in rural Australia over the Government's plan to privatise the remainder of Telstra. McGauchie is a former National Farmers' Federation head who illegally trained scabs in Dubai to replace maritime workers in the government's attempt to destroy the Maritime Union. He's also on the board of Hardie Industries, which is currently trying to screw asbestos victims out of their compensation.

Safety Net scam

The Howard Government has sent a clear message to doctors who are considering rorting the new Medicare Safety Net: "Go for it!"

Health Minister Tony Abbott has admitted there is little he can do to stop doctors wildly increasing fees to patients knowing that Medicare will now foot 80 per cent of the bill.

He has simply stated that it would be "against the spirit" of the Safety Net legislation.

Now it has been revealed Mr Abbott's department has issued a script for call centre staff at the Health Insurance Commission which clearly encourages doctors to go for broke.

The 12-page question and answer style document contains the following insights:

"There is no policy preventing doctors from increasing their fees and, if they do, this is a matter between the doctor and the patient."

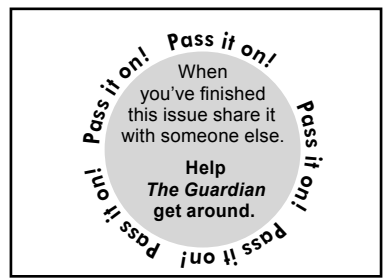
Question: "Because there is an additional [Medicare] benefit ... wouldn't this encourage increased fees?"

Answer: "The Australian Government does not have any power to say what a doctor charges a patient for a service provided. If there is an increase in charges, this matter should be taken up by the patient with the doctor."

The document then goes on to detail – offering specific examples

– of how doctors can rort Medicare and the new Safety Net to the fullest.

The Federal Government has refused to release figures it has received on how increased doctors' fees have resulted in a cost blowout to Medicare since the introduction of the Safety Net. ✪



The drive for raw profits

Norman Markowitz

Karl Marx once wrote that the United States had a relatively "pure" form of capitalism where the capitalists faced the workers directly, with no aristocracies, pre-capitalist classes, or non-capitalist ideological survivals to get in the way – just the raw drive for profits.

Wars and war-profiteering are great illustrations of Marx's point.

War profiteering has a long history in the US, with some famous names attached. In the Civil War, which really was on one level a war for freedom against slavery, industrial capitalists like Jay Gould profited from war spending and war contracts and, if they had to, bought \$300 exemptions from the draft.

Cornelius Vanderbilt took his black-sheep son William into the family business when William, who had a farm on Staten Island, proved his worth by selling hay to Union Army cavalry troops at inflated prices.

In the Civil War, tainted meat and other products sold by contractors in an unregulated economy spread disease and death. In the Spanish-American War in Cuba in 1898, where US battle casualties were minimal, historians estimate that more soldiers died as a result

of contaminated foodstuffs than in combat.

Companies like DuPont in World War I and General Motors and Ford in World War II (when the modern military-industrial complex was born) greatly increased their wealth through government contracts, and had their executives serve on wartime planning boards as "dollar-a-year men".

But, unlike today, they did not have one of their former chief executives as vice president of the United States. Also, they had to face a large tax increase and government protection for unionised workers in both World Wars as a trade off for their increased profits.

Earlier, even Andrew Mellon, treasury secretary under Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover in the 1920s and a minor big-business folk hero, had to resign his post during the early Depression so that his Pittsburgh banking empire could receive loans from the government's Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

Mellon is no role model for Vice President Dick Cheney, former Halliburton CEO, who shamelessly rolls on with and for the company, channelling multibillion-dollar super-profitable federal contracts its way without competitive bidding, even as the press reports corruption in

Halliburton-supervised food sales to the US military.

In a way, Cheney is closer to former General Motors President Charles E Wilson, who proclaimed, "What's good for General Motors is good for the country". But even Wilson had to break his direct GM connections when he became Secretary of Defense, and a number of minor Defense Department officials with connections to firms selling clothing and other supplies were later forced to resign their positions under a cloud of suspicion.

Crisis and wars

Another point made by Karl Marx was that as a system goes into crisis, its contradictions become more and more apparent to the masses of people. Today Americans are both seeing and feeling those contradictions.

This administration is fighting a 19th century imperial war with 21st century weapons in Iraq. It has turned loose a legion of "private contractors" to get rich there even if many of their employees get killed in the process. It has permitted these companies in many instances to bring in their own private security forces, even though that may conflict with US military strategy and tactics.

Since the Bush administration's interest is in making sure that the

hundreds of billions in profits go to the industrial side of the military-industrial complex, to Halliburton especially, it is treating US soldiers the way big employers do non-union workers.

It is taking National Guard forces and reserves out of their domestic jobs where they are needed and sending them with virtually no training to occupy a foreign country. As the disaster in Iraq deepens, the attitude of Halliburton and Bush's other big-business supporters towards this administration reminds me of gangster Hyman Roth's comment about the Batista regime in Cuba in the film *The Godfather Part II*: "We have here what we have been always looking for: a government that we can really work with".

Today, more than 150 years after Karl Marx saw the US as representing a "pure form" of capitalism, the Bush administration is providing the world with a textbook example of "state monopoly capitalism", with no apologies for the open connections between high government officials and a firm like Halliburton, with its multibillion-dollar Pentagon contracts.

Fortunately we have the power in the coming election to defeat the Bush administration and war profiteers like Halliburton.

People's Weekly World ☛



On The Olympic Games Communiqué from the CP of Greece

It is only a few weeks to the official opening of the Olympic Games in Greece.

The New Democracy and PASOK [social democrat] party propaganda is already limited to finishing the Olympic works on time, in order to disorient the people and to focus their attention on Greece's "consistency" in achieving the so-called "national goal".

They have a "gentlemen's agreement" not to refer to issues such as: the astronomical cost of these works, the cost overruns, the dozens of dead and injured workers, restriction of the people's labour and democratic rights, the environmental damage, the intensified, restrictive and repressive measures and the surveillance measures under the Euro-Atlantic "security" umbrella.

They used the undertaking and preparation, they will utilise the hosting of the Olympic Games and the exploitation of the athletic facilities after the Games are over to promote their own policy, i.e. defending big capital's profits and other vested interests which take precedence over the collective interests of the working people.

In the name of the Olympic Games, a spirit of self-satisfaction and national arrogance is being cultivated in relation to whitewashing and accepting the policy that is being implemented, and to the sharper anti-popular offensive that will come when the Olympic Games are over.

Today there is an obvious lack of any measures to ensure the healthy organisation and growth of sport, to develop and support mass popular athletics for all, and to support our athletes.

Everything operates within the logic of window-dressing, commercialisation, personal promotion, and patronage.

The many-tentacled mechanisms that prevail internationally, and are controlled by the multinationals, guide and set their seal on sports in Greece, too.

They divert sport from its social mission; they transform it into a commodity; they dictate structures and functions, thus making athletes and fans alike grist for the mill of their advertising campaign, their profits and other ambitions.

Plans are being made to sell off or hand over projects and facilities to capital for exploitation. The organisation personnel, coaches, trainers and people in other special fields have an expiry date, at the end of the Olympic Games.

The so-called "national goal" is becoming a "national noose" for the environment and the working people's labour rights.

A great deal of open space is being destroyed, covered with concrete to be handed over for exploitation to private interests. Air, water, beaches, and green space have all become commodities that only a few will be able to afford.

The preparations for the Games became the focal point around which the working people's labour relations were further disorganised. Phenomena such as: violations of collective contracts and of working hours, uninsured and unpaid labour, part-time employment, the intensification of labour, and the rental of workers have been widespread. In addition, the total lack of hygiene and safety measures in the work-

place have resulted in dozens of dead and injured workers.

These disruptions are the basis for stepping up the anti-labour policy in all fields after the Olympic Games, when the machinery of "social consensus" and labour peace will be used again to this end, guided by the political voice of big capital.

The "security" of the Games has been incorporated into the US and EU "anti-terrorist" policy. It is an enormously expensive secret service operation (CIA, Mossad, Intelligence Service) associated with powerful states.

Surveillance

Surveillance of people's movements and conversations, and the filming of every event will all provide basic data that will be gathered by ultramodern technical means and supplemented by the police and military forces operating in every area in which the Games are held.

Fear is being cultivated in order to make people accept and justify the involvement of NATO, the imperialist organisation that terrorises the peoples.

Now the government has confirmed the plan for the measures and equipment (e.g. cameras, etc.) to remain and to be used appropriately after the Games. Not to improve traffic supposedly, but to further limit action by the working people, to monitor and conduct personal surveillance of demonstrators fighting for jobs, peace, and against anti-popular choices; it will also be used to frighten the people, whose interests are in total opposition to the policy of the US, the EU and NATO.





nes ece (KKE)

The "purging" of the city of undesirable people is going ahead rapidly. Ghettos and camps are planned for migrants and narcotics users without any measure to ensure rudimentary humane treatment.

Every sign will be "purged", even with political content, because the sponsors, their posters and their advertisements are sovereign.

The city will be "dressed" in banners about the Games and the sponsors to look beautiful and to hide the enormous problems of unemployment, inflation, and the circumvention of labour relations and democratic rights. And above all to hide claims and demands, with their banners, posters and slogans. For the working class, the broad strata of the people and for the economy of the country in general, the social and financial effects of the Games will be enormous.

Works and services required by the working people are being subjugated to the Games and to multinational profits. In the name of expediting the works, regulations have been pushed through to circumvent regular procedures in order to serve big capital, leading to inertia, minimal accountability, and enormous cost overruns.

According to some estimates, the astronomical cost will exceed 3.5 trillion drachmas (A\$17.5 billion), an onerous debt that will take decades for our people to pay.

Already, the great cost is being used to prepare the Greek people mentally for a new austerity policy, for new cutbacks in social rights, health, education, and welfare, for new restrictions on labour rights, wages, and social security which, in addition to the rise in unemploy-

ment, will hit the working people. And on the other side, the policy of selling off projects and facilities to big capital to increase its profits will continue.

In the final analysis, such will be the Olympic Games in today's new world order, and they could hardly be otherwise.

The KKE believes that the only way to deal with the problems and to limit the adverse effects of the policy implemented by PASOK with the consent of New Democracy that the ND continues with the consent of PASOK, and by EU and US policy, is:

- To bring more people into the struggle and for the labour movement and the popular movement more generally to step up their efforts.
- To thwart every effort to violate labour, democratic, and trade union rights and popular freedoms, and fight to expand them.
- To ensure that all cameras and surveillance systems are removed.
- To stop the destruction of the environment.
- To develop mass popular sport.

To ensure that the facilities and works be given to the people and not to capital.

• For a new quality of life for the working people.

The only way is for the working class to fight together with the popular strata for a radically different policy, for power to the people, that will address and solve problems based on the needs of the working class and the popular strata.

Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of Greece, Athens,
07-07-04 ☉

South Africa Capitalism has failed the country

Statement by Zwelinzima Vavi, General Secretary, Council of South African Trade Unions

Let me start by wishing Madiba (Nelson Mandela) many more years of health and social activism. He has made huge contributions to the liberation of workers, all our people and indeed humanity as a whole. He has been an activist since before most of us were born.

He has given consistent support to the trade union movement, and kept the issues of our people – for jobs, higher pay, decent working conditions – at the core of our struggle. Last week, (mid-July) the General Secretary of the SACP (South African Communist Party) Blade Nzimande, made an important speech that the media largely ignored.

"Capitalism and the free market", he said, "have done nothing for South Africa in the last ten years of democracy. They have failed our democracy dismally." He pointed to massive retrenchments, "despite the fact that the capitalist class has made huge profits over these last ten years".

He noted that productivity is at record highs, while strike days are far down compared to the years before 1994. Nonetheless, employers have continued their huge assault on the working class.

Blade concluded that, "It is for these reasons that socialism is the only alternative". I could not agree more. Progress in the past ten years has resulted almost only from efforts by the state, communities and people's organisations. The economic rulers of our country have barred broader access to the wealth and power under their control.

Our economy is dominated by the private sector. It accounts for 75 percent of investment, 80 percent of output, 86 percent of employment and about 80 percent of income. It has abused this position of dominance to ask continually for more concessions from the state, workers and society. It has become a bottomless pit.

Big business looks after big business

Despite increases in profits, despite industrial peace after 1994, despite government's efforts to hold down taxes, the budget and inflation, big business has not played ball.

Instead of rewarding government for delivering the policies they demanded, they have maintained a long investment strike. Yet investment is critical for job creation and growth. In the early 1980s, at the height of apartheid, private companies invested 15.5 percent of the GDP; now they invest only 11 percent. Some of our biggest companies, which were founded on our workers' blood and sweat, have moved their headquarters and much of their business overseas.

The roll call of shame includes Old Mutual, Anglo American, SAB, and Liberty Life. Capital has grown formal jobs by only about one percent a year in the past five



Almost half South African's live below the poverty line

years – far slower than the growth in the population. No wonder, then, that unemployment is now over 40 percent.

Casualisation and outsourcing are undoubtedly on the rise. Employed workers face lower real pay and efforts to cut benefits. Particularly workers outside of unions have faced a continual decline in pay and conditions.

Meanwhile, top bosses have embraced the bonus system that grants them millions every year. Sizwe Nxasana, the head of Telkom, got 11 million Rand (A \$2.5 million) last year. That much money would save the jobs of around a third of the workers the company now plans to retrench.

Jacko Maree, Stanbic's chief executive, was getting R9.5 million a year two years ago. Some of their pals earn even more.

In the real world, where our members have to live, two out of five workers earned under R1000 (A\$250) a month in September 2003. Another quarter earned between R1000 and R2500. Unemployment and poverty wages combined to reduce labour's total share of income to its lowest since 1981, at 57 percent of the GDP, while the share of profits soared.

Poverty and unemployment

The poverty and inequalities shaped by the barbarous form of capitalism called apartheid remain with us. Almost exactly half of our people live below the poverty line. Some 56 percent of Africans earn less than the poverty line, but only seven percent of whites.

Just last week, the Commission for Employment Equity released a report indicating that the number of black people and women in professional jobs in big companies actually fell between 2000 and 2002. In other senior management jobs, the report says progress toward equity has been at "a snail's pace". Last week, we also got a bombshell from Telkom, which plans to retrench 1,400 workers. That adds to the 25,000 jobs they have gotten rid of since 1997. Meanwhile, they are boasting record profits.

Whilst all this is happening, news headlines are filled by stories of "black economic empowerment"

involving the transfer of shares in big companies to a few lucky black faces, often former struggle heroes. These billions are just a small slice of what white capital has in its possession.

And they are hardly being used to empower the poor and unemployed. No wonder there is increasing restlessness amongst workers and the unemployed. Despite our political and social freedoms, most people face economic oppression very like that of the past.

They are poor; their children go hungry and jobless. And then people who should know better stigmatise them as "unemployable". Yet a black woman with a university degree is still half as likely to earn over R8000 a month as a white man with matriculation.

Workers fought the apartheid system. Now capital has snatched victory out of the jaws of defeat. In economic terms it has become the major beneficiary of our struggle, while workers are the main casualties.

What more evidence is needed to support Blade's point that capitalist policies and methods are failing the nation? Business tells us all the time that there is no choice: the market dictates its decisions. To be competitive, they say, they must fire workers and close down local operations.

But these are mere excuses. Within the capitalist system, countries have succeeded only where capital has understood the need to protect social coherence and sustainability, rather than fighting narrowly for itself.

Even in South Africa, we have seen some captains of industry who want to negotiate sustainable solutions. They recognise that only broader benefits for all our people can lead to long-run prosperity. That is why we saw some progress at the Growth and Development Summit (GDS).

But much of business ignores or undermines these efforts. Too often we have seen companies proclaim the GDS while they continue to retrench, outsource, casualise and reduce benefits for workers. They virtually ignore their obligations around skills development and employment equity.

This can't go on forever. There is an alternative! ☉

Servant of Washington heads OAS

Percy Godoy

The recent election of Miguel Angel Rodríguez Echeverría, former president of Costa Rica (1998-2002), as the incoming secretary of the Organisation of American States (OAS) within the framework of the 34th General Assembly of that body, leaves no doubt as to the potential new dangers for Cuba. For decades Costa Rica has played a role in the anti-Cuba campaign implemented by US Governments and aimed at isolating Cuba on an international scale.

Rodríguez' proven opposition to the Cuban Revolution makes him a docile pawn for engaging in such a questionable role.

Since his ascent to the presidency in Costa Rica in 1998, Rodríguez has unconditionally lent himself to any attempt to attack Cuba,

borrowing the political discourse used by the principal enemies of the Revolution. On more than one occasion, he has employed the hackneyed and false arguments of an alleged lack of democracy on the island and flimsy charges of human rights violations on the part of the Cuban Government.

The new secretary general of the OAS wasted no time, announcing that Cuba's readmission into the OAS will depend on whether democratic changes are carried out on the island. This move, by a politician linked to the Social Christian Unity Party and who supported campaigns in favour of internal counter-revolution on the island, come as no surprise to Cuba. Cuba has been excluded from the OAS since 1962 for supporting liberation movements throughout the continent.

Cuba, of course, has not needed

this servile organisation for more than 40 years and has withstood the constant accusations that have come from it. The announcement of the Rodríguez appointment caused hysterical revelry amongst representatives of Miami's counter-revolutionary mafia.

One of their spokesmen, Ricardo Bofill, referred to discussions in their frequent meetings with the new head, telling the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) magazine *Cuban Contact*: "Most especially, during these talks, Miguel Angel Rodríguez has assured us that, from his position within the OAS, he will devote tremendous efforts to promoting specific solidarity projects within the hemisphere for movements representing independent civilian society, human rights, civic resistance to oppression and other demonstrations of Cuban dissidence."

Rodríguez' support for representatives of the Cuban counter-revolution is nothing new. In January 1999, he was visited in San José by representatives from CANF who suggested that he stage a publicity show during the 9th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in Havana in November of that year.

Without any objection, this individual joined this campaign along with Arnaldo Alemán, former Nicaraguan President, and Carlos Menem, then President of the Argentine Republic, in order to sabotage the event.

Rodríguez wanted to force the revolutionary authorities to afford an unacceptable amount of space to the Cuban counter-revolution, openly and intolerably interfering in the island's internal affairs. Following the dignified refusal of the Cuban Government, he and Washington's other puppets (and buddies of the Miami mafia) refused to attend the Summit.

Attempt to isolate Cuba

In the same way, during his presidency Rodríguez used his country's government to push forward the ideological anti-Cuba campaign aimed at isolating the island at international level. During the Human Rights Commission sessions in Geneva, he was the most docile and servile pawn that Washington ever employed.

His interest in ingratiating himself with the ultra-right mafia



in Miami over the issue of Cuba has not waned since his presidency came to an end. In July 2003, he took part in a seminar entitled "Towards Democracy in Cuba", held in Madrid at the official request of José María Aznar and his Analysis and Social Studies Foundation.

On that occasion, he met up with Washington's servants within the European Union – namely Aznar himself, Foreign Minister Ana Palacios and the Spanish Popular Party, as well as the famous anti-communist, Vaclav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic, in a sordid encounter with other ultra-conservatives such as the shady Dutch NGO, Pax Christi.

They spent their time looking for ways of "designing" democratic change in Cuba and subsidising the destabilising activities of the tiny counter-revolutionary groups on the island.

Rodríguez stated on that occasion: "The Cuban people are not alone and cannot be left as such to face oppression". Behind the scenes, he received congratulations from the sinister Otto Reich,

who was in Madrid at that time to deliver Bush's directions to his puppets.

Some months earlier, on January 29, 2003, Rodríguez also took part in the Madrid Forum 2003: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba and Venezuela, an event attended by representatives of the Cuban counter-revolution. This was another occasion on which the newly-appointed general secretary of the OAS launched unfounded attacks on Cuba.

Currently resident in the United States, Rodríguez knew then that the way to the post of OAS general secretary was clear after this sanctification by Washington. For this reason, he hastily declared: "This support helps to ensure that my candidature is one of consensus, of obtaining support from the whole of the Americas in order to work to strengthen the Organisation of American States".

However, the Cuban people are ready to confront this new manoeuvre. Their slogan from the 1960s remains valid: "With or without the OAS, we will win the fight". *Granma* ☪

Blair's anti-social behaviour "solution"

British Prime Minister Tony Blair last week launched the Government's new five-year plan to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour, declaring an end to the "1960s liberal consensus on crime".

The plan will involve increased use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), more tagging of repeat offenders, more community support officers on the streets and more powers for the police to impose on-the-spot fines for drunk and disorderly behaviour.

He also included the speedier deportation of asylum seekers who fail to win their applications to settle in Britain.

ASBOs have been tested in 12 designated areas with mixed results. They enable courts to ban offenders – mainly youngsters – from certain areas, impose curfews and so on.

Blair's attack on the liberalism of the 1960s is outrageous, cheap and dishonest opportunism.

It is not liberal attitudes that have led to a growth in youth crime.

The public spending cuts of the Thatcher years are far more to blame, along with the praise of greed and contempt for community values.

In London, where the Inner London Education Authority used to provide a lot more than just schooling: subsidised holidays, supervised play schemes, adventure playgrounds and so on – that is all now just a fond memory.

Working class parents are now forced to work longer and longer hours to cover rising housing costs, debts and so on – leaving their children less supervised.

When society as a whole gives the needs of youngsters very little time and attention bad behaviour becomes inevitable. The youngsters become bored and some are tempted by drug pushers.

In some areas up to 90 per cent of criminal cases being processed by magistrates' courts are drug related. Yet there is so little help available for youngsters who want to give up drugs.

Most schemes have waiting lists months long.

There are no quick fixes. Blair once promised to be tough of crime and on the causes of crime. Someone should remind him that keeping the first part of that pledge is useless without even addressing the second part.

New Worker (abridged) ☪



Blair's attack on liberalism is dishonest

Arrest of racist thugs follows TV exposure

West Yorkshire police last week arrested five men on a range of charges, including possession of firearms following a BBC documentary program, *The Secret Agent*, shown the previous Thursday.

The programme was the result of a journalist infiltrating the West Yorkshire British National Party (BNP) and covertly filming the aspects of their activities that they hide from the public.

The BNP leadership recently has tried to distance itself from its reputation as an organisation of dangerous racist thugs and petty criminals.

Instead it tries to portray itself as a respectable political party and the only one to care about the rights of white people.

But journalist Jason Gwynne revealed that behind the scenes

nothing has changed.

The documentary was set up after BNP member Andy Sykes quickly became disillusioned with the party and approached the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight*.

Staff at *Searchlight* persuaded him to stay in place temporarily as a mole, and help introduce and guide Jason Gwynne as he worked on his exposure.

Gwynne was able to film one BNP member boasting of his assault on an Asian man during a Bradford race riot that left the victim unconscious.

Another BNP member spoke of his dreams of mass murdering Muslims with a machine gun as they left the mosque on Fridays. Others spoke of plans to set fire to a Trade Union Congress (TUC) van full of anti-racist leaflets.

BNP leader Nick Griffin was

filmed making inflammatory and distorted remarks about Islam as a religion.

In a subsequent TV interview after the showing of the documentary, Griffin apologised for the remarks of some of his members and said they had since been expelled from the BNP. But he did not withdraw his remarks about Islam.

Former *Searchlight* editor Gerry Gable told the *New Worker*: "The arrests following the showing of the film are a clear indication of just how dangerous the BNP are".

TUC North East welcomed the screening of the documentary. Regional secretary Kevin Rowan said: "I believe this is proof beyond any doubt that the BNP is a racist party, a party built upon violence and incitement of race hate."

New Worker, paper of New Communist Party of Britain ☪

Children tortured in US detention in Iraq

The people of the US have only recently been allowed access to 106 previously classified annexes to the *Taguba Report* into the prisoner abuse at the now notorious Abu Ghraib prison. The documents back up the worst suspicions raised by the sickening images made public earlier this year. According to media reports, Brig. Gen Janis Karpinski – who has been singled out as the major scapegoat for the outrages – is hopeful that the truth about just how high up the chain of command the sanction for criminal abuse originated will come out at the trials of the accused soldiers.

As bitter as these revelations and developments are, it appears that the US public is set to be rocked by revelations that over 100 children currently captive in US detention centres in Iraq (including at Abu Ghraib) have been tortured and humiliated. William Rivers Pitt of *The New York Times* recently lifted the lid on the story after the International Red Cross (IRC) released details of the detention of children.

“Between January and May of this year, we’ve registered 107 children during 19 visits in 6 different detention locations”, said IRC rep-

resentative Florian Westphal in their report. The report gathered eyewitness accounts like those of Staff Sergeant Samuel Provance who saw a 16-year-old girl interrogated. Military police only halted their interrogation after the girl was half undressed. A 16-year-old boy was soaked with water, driven around in the cold, smeared with mud and then brought before his distraught

The US media has been slow to take up the story.

father, who was also a prisoner.

Seymour Hersh of the *New Yorker* magazine recently spoke at a convention of the American Civil Liberties Union. He has seen pictures and videotapes of abuse not yet shown in the US media. “The boys were sodomised with the cameras rolling, and the worst part is the soundtrack, of the boys shrieking... And this is your government at war.”

Mr Hersh points out that photo-

graphic and videotape evidence is currently in the hands of *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post*, the US Congress and the White House. However, the US media has been slow to take up the story. While numerous international outlets like the German magazine *Report Mainz* have carried extensive coverage, the American press (with only a few notable exceptions) appears to be offering the US Administration a breather on the issue of torture in Iraq.

“Where is the American news media? Where are the pictures? Who is responsible for this abomination? Torturing children in the name of freedom? Is this what we have become?” William Rivers Pitt has raised some important and uncomfortable questions for the minds of Bush, Rumsfeld & Co.

The same journalist has highlighted a statistic in the Red Cross report of last May. It turns out that between 70 and 90 per cent of Iraqis being detained have been arrested “by mistake”. The people, including children, being tortured in the most perverse manner imaginable in US detention centres are in most cases “innocent” of charges of violating the victor’s justice. ✪



Cuban 5 send July 26 greetings

Alicia Jrapko and Bill Hackwell are activists from the US-based National Committee to Free the Cuban Five. They recently visited one of the Cuban intelligence officers imprisoned in the US for the “crime” of infiltrating Miami-based organisations like Alpha 66, Omega 7, Brothers to the Rescue, and Cuban American National Foundation. These groups have a long record of organising terror campaigns in Cuba and against progressive Cubans in the US. Rather than being thanked for their efforts in combating terrorism by the US Administration, since 1998 the Five have been serving sentences from 15 years to two life sentences! An international campaign has grown up around demands for their immediate release. Alicia and Jack made the following report of their visit to Gerardo Hernandez:

On Friday July 16, once again, we had the honour of visiting Gerardo Hernandez in the maximum-security federal prison in Lumpoc. As has been the case in previous visits we found Gerardo full of strength and optimism about the future of the struggle to free the five.

It is always remarkable to us that Gerardo enters the room with such positive energy. Despite the fact that we are the ones who have freedom of movement and association, he is the one who transmits the certainty that the struggle of the international solidarity movement and the support of the Cuban people

will ultimately be victorious in the case of the Five. In our conversations with Gerardo this certainty is never in doubt.

Our six-hour visit always goes by as if it is just one full minute. We are always caught by surprise when the guards holler that visitation time is over.

At the end of the visit, Gerardo asked us to send a special message to the Cuban people on behalf of the Five Cuban heroes. The purpose of the message was to commemorate the 51st anniversary of the attack on the Moncada Barracks. It was directed to his resilient and determined countrymen.

“To all of the Cuban People I send you a warm revolutionary embrace from Antonio, Rene, Fernando, Ramon and myself on one of our most important anniversaries, July 26.

“The attack on the Moncada 51 years ago was the opening salvo of the revolutionary process that survives and flourishes to this day. Perhaps at no other time has July 26 meant more to us.

“The tightening of the blockade by the recent new measures and the slanders that we, the Cuban people, have had to endure, only makes this date a time for us to renew our determination to remain free. I can say for myself and my four brothers that we have never been prouder to be Cuban than we are today.

“From these prison cells you should always know that when we see you standing up strong we are standing right along with you.”
“Hasta La Victoria Siempre.” ✪

South Africa fuel workers strike

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) has warned employers in the fuel and motor retail industry that any further resistance to its demands for 10-12 per cent wage increases will spark a “potentially more destructive” nation-wide strike than the mild one conducted last week.

The union last week gave the employers’ two organisations, representing the two industries, a week to respond favourably or else.

In a memorandum presented by hundreds of union members, mostly petrol attendants, to the representatives of the Fuel Retailers Association (FRA) and Retail Motor Industry (RMI) NUMSA said the organisations’ “no wage offer” stance will seriously contribute to workers’ misery and grinding poverty.

Union leader Mtutuzeli Tom said the behaviour of the employers was parochial and insensitive to the collective bargaining arrangements made recently. “The employers’ organisations have failed to

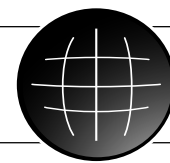
discharge duties in a responsible manner to ensure fair and proper bargaining practices. We believe that the current reasoning of the FRA and RMI on wage demands is completely flawed, ineffective, mendacious and highly artificial.”

He added that the employers’ response to its demand was “disgusting and stinking”.

“Wages in the industry are a national disgrace. The minimum wages applied in the industry have not been a useful anti-poverty tool but solidly reinforce poverty and under-consumption in the industry.”

“It is amazing that workers in the industry are still paid apartheid wages based on the area where they are working, not on the work they are performing.”

NUMSA said recently that other demands tabled by the union include an increase of 20 percent on night shift allowance and 10 percent on the afternoon shift. The union is also demanding that employers organise free transportation for all workers knocking off after 4am. ✪



Global briefs

USA: Members of the 15th Pastors for Peace/US Cuba Friendship Caravan encountered serious problems upon their return to the United States on July 19. Following their 10-day program in Cuba, the 120 members flew to Tampico, Mexico and made their way to the US-Mexico border. Next day the caravan crossed from Mexico to the United States in Texas. More than 100 Customs agents were waiting for them. They were stopped and their luggage meticulously searched. All Cuban-made products – including gifts given to them by Cuban friends, books and music CDs – were confiscated by US Customs officials. After being held up for more than four hours on the US-Mexico border, the members of the Pastors for Peace Caravan were allowed to enter the US – threatened with further prosecution for violating US laws prohibiting travel to Cuba without special Treasury Department licences.

BRITAIN: The number of homeless families in Britain is about to hit 100,000 – more than double the figure when the Labour came to power in 1997, according to the homeless charity Shelter. People who live on the streets are not included in the figures.

USA: Citigroup, the world’s biggest financial services company, said second-quarter profit fell 73 per cent to a near six-year low after setting aside almost \$5 billion for legal costs relating to its role in corporate scandals, including WorldCom and Enron.

UN: The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution demanding that Israel comply with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) “advisory opinion” and pull down its apartheid wall in the occupied West Bank. The resolution was supported by 150 states, including all the 25 members of the European Union. US and Israel could only muster six votes, including themselves, against – the four others being Australia and three small Pacific islands (Palau, Marshall Islands and Micronesia). Ten countries abstained and a further 25 were absent when the vote was taken. The passing of the resolution, moved by Jordan on behalf of the Arab Group at the UN, is a major diplomatic victory for the Palestinians.

VATICAN: A 69-page papal instruction issued by the Vatican 42 years ago has revealed a culture of secret transfers of abusive priests to new posts. US lawyers who deal with sex abuse by Catholic priests want to launch an action to sue the Vatican, although they believe their chances of success are low.

USA: Public Citizen reports that the presidential campaigns of George W Bush and John Kerry have raised an unprecedented \$414 million during the primary season, relying to a significant extent on the efforts of more than 1000 corporate executives, lawyers, lobbyists and other wealthy special interests who have maximised their political influence by bundling a large number of individual contributions.

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
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Surry Hills NSW 2010

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They'll resort to anything

Isn't it interesting that our "values" driven Government is sending the message to the public that we now do not have to take responsibility for anything? Invade and occupy a country based on false pretences (let alone lies)? No worries. And don't be surprised if the looming federal election is postponed because of a "terrorist incident".

Howard and his crew are increasingly nervous about the elections. The numbers are not looking good.

In the US there has been a proposal by the newly created US Election Assistance Commission that Congress authorise a postponement of the election there, scheduled for November, "in the event of a terrorist attack".

Now, if they continue to follow the script, we should expect that idea to be floated here as well. And in Britain. After all, Bush, Blair and Howard all came up with the same lies about weapons in Iraq so they could invade. Then magically

spewed out the same arguments and denials when it became clear they had lied.

And isn't it curious how the governments here, and in the USA and Britain have managed to get the same outcome from inquiries into why they went to war on Iraq?

The Flood inquiry here in Australia has found that the intelligence on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was "thin, ambiguous and incomplete". But no one is to take the blame. In fact this Government never takes responsibility for anything that happens – it's always someone else's fault.

Or in this case, no individual or individuals are to be named. Just like the whitewashes in Britain and the US. And there are two Flood reports, one that is to be made public, and one that is to remain secret! That's a double coat of whitewash.

All three rogue governments are on thin ice with the public. In the US and Britain, where voting is not compulsory, disillusionment with the whole stinking mess may see a small voter turnout that might or might not play into the hands of Bush and Blair.

We know how low Howard will stoop. Will we have a "terrorist incident"? That too might work against him (remember Spain).

Whatever transpires, a good rule of thumb with this lot is – keep in mind that they will resort to anything!

Nathan Barnes
Queensland

Beazley's record speaks for itself

What is so great about Kim Beazley being reappointed to the inner cabinet of the opposition? I, like millions of Australians, can hardly wait for the elections to get rid of the hated Howard Government. Can the memories of the Australian people be so short to be enthusiastic about Kim Beazley?

Kim or "Bomber" Beazley during his former tenure in office created the "biggest" peacetime budget for the Australian military – \$25 billion.

He committed Australian forces to a war, the Iran-Iraq war to clear mines. This war was sponsored and promoted by the US to get Saddam to fight the Mullahs of Iraq.

He sent troops out to defend the then US base at Nurrungar against peaceful protesters.

He gained the name of "bomber" by his relentless pursuit of the New Zealand Government to buy the useless to their needs, so-called "Anzac Frigates".

He was the originator of the "Collins Class" submarines project, which was and still is a complete failure.

He is remembered also for his sycophantic speeches about the US.

When will Australia grow up and have an independent and Australian-made foreign policy? Not while we have a false estimation of the Kim Beazley.

Denis Doherty
Glebe, NSW

Why make them suffer more?

Recently I was able to pass good news on to a young mother. Her husband has been recognised as a refugee after being locked in Nauru for three years.

You would think this would be the answer to her dream, but her nightmare still continues. He is not allowed to apply for her to come to Australia because he is on a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV). She has been discovered by the country where she is hiding and

will be deported to Afghanistan in a number of days.

She will be unprotected in a place of devastation and danger.

Her husband was a shopkeeper, hardly a skill which will allow him to apply for a permanent visa under Mr Howard's new "pre-election compassion package" so teasingly dangled in front of TPV holders.

Proven refugees need a safe home. What is the point of making them suffer more? Votes?

Elaine Smith
West Haven, NSW

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Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

The Christian Right and intelligent design

It has been clear for decades that the Christian Right is on the attack. The post-War disenchantment with Churches that had allied themselves with Fascism had been countered by the US-funded establishment of "Christian Democrat" political parties in Europe to counter the "menace of Communism".

Alarmed by progressive developments within the Catholic Church – the spread of Liberation Theology, the Encyclicals of Pope John XXIII (1960s) and the acceptance of the necessity of co-existence on "space-ship Earth" – and by similar moves towards liberal, democratic positions by sections of the Protestant churches (those that became the Uniting Church, in particular) – reaction went on the offensive.

The convenient sudden death of Pope John Paul I in 1978 allowed an extreme reactionary Polish cardinal, Karol Wojtyla to win the election for Pope (with a lot of US help). Equally reactionary fundamentalist Evangelicals were feted by the White House and given well-funded opportunities to propagandise and recruit via every means of mass media, from FM radio stations CB radio to cable television.

Three years later a reactionary politician named Ronald Reagan – a fundamentalist Christian who believed in the imminence of the Second Coming, Armageddon and "The Rapture" – was elevated to the White House.

The Christian Right had secured the most powerful position in the

world for one of its own, who was also the chosen representative of corporate America.

Since then the religious Right, backed by the biggest corporate interests, have been in full attack, even while they were temporarily pushed out of the White House by Clinton. Now, of course, they are back with vengeance.

Literal interpretations of Biblical texts proclaiming Israel as the site of the ultimate battle with Satan underlie their fervid support for Israel. That may sound nutty (and of course it is), but the really scary thing is that it is true.

The Religious Right of the Republican Party in the US and their imitators in the Liberal/National Parties here really do believe such things.

And they want everyone else to believe them too. Hence their promotion of "Christian education" through fundamentalist Evangelical schools.

With their advocacy of "Creationism" and a Medieval belief in the Devil and such "instruments of the Devil" as witches and sorcerers, the "Christian schools" run by the Evangelicals should more properly be called obscurantist schools.

I went to high school with a fundamentalist. Charles and his entire family were members of (if memory serves me right) the Church of the New Jerusalem. "It's quite large in America", he assured us.

I don't know how typical his views were, but he had a deep and abiding hatred and contempt for Darwin and Evolution. The Theory of Relativity also came in for attack as yet another fraud.

Both concepts of course reinforce a scientific, materialist view of the universe, which seems to be their main "sin".

It is as important to capitalism as it is to capitalism's churches that people accept idealist philosophy as the means of comprehending "life, the universe and everything".

Although only materialist phi-



losophy can provide the means of genuinely comprehending these phenomena and enable the human race to truly liberate itself, materialism would also awaken people to the actual role of religion, and the Churches certainly do not want that!

So right-wing governments bend over backwards to accommodate these preachers of ignorance. They even give serious attention to demands for "Creationism" to be taught in public schools as a legitimate alternative to Evolution.

As a system, capitalism uses its plentiful financial resources as well as its well organised media to promote the "anti-evolution" position, sometimes as a pseudo-scientific argument, sometimes as a defence of religion.

And here the Christian Right re-enter the picture, in the form of the Discovery Institute, a Christian

think-tank in Seattle that promotes the "Intelligent Design" (or ID) concept.

This postulates a pseudo scientific position that even allows the partial acceptance of evolution: yes, the world is billions of years old; yes, species may, with time, adapt to suit their environments; but, no, all life did not emerge from some common ancestor or bunch of cells.

Instead, the ID spruikers claim, the biological complexity of the world proves that each separate species is the individual work of an Intelligent Designer, which you must admit is a really cool term for God.

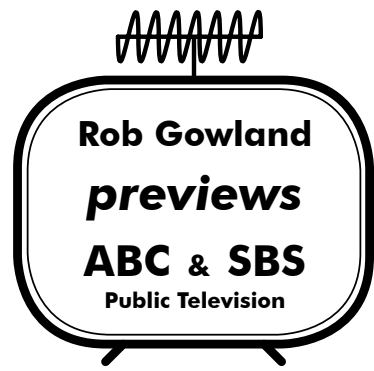
And who are these people who are promoting God the Intelligent Designer? According to an article in *The Spectator* last October, "Most of the Discovery Institute's US\$4 million annual budget comes

from evangelical Christian organisations.

"One important donor is the Ahmanson family, which has a longstanding affiliation to Christian reconstructionism, an extreme faction of the religious Right that wants to replace US democracy with a fundamentalist theocracy".

Meanwhile, a pillar of the God-fearing, capitalist USA will be coming to Australia in 2005 to make converts to evangelical Christianity: Franklin Graham, an "evangelist" like his father Billy Graham (remember him?), attracted attention in 2002 with a public swipe at Islam.

But fundamentalist bigot or not, capitalism will give him plenty of covert – and even overt – support. And why not, like all evangelicals, he certainly supports capitalism. ☺



Sun August 1 ~
~ Sat August 7

Andrew Davies' six-part adaptation of *Pride And Prejudice* returns to the screen this week (ABC 8.30pm Sundays). I have seen this series about six times now and although its virtues survive its flaws do not diminish.

It remains a very stylish and technically accomplished production: settings, costumes and locations are excellent, of a very high standard indeed. But there are deficiencies in the writing, the direction and the acting which mar the production, at times cruelly.

Davies' crass summing up of Jane Austen's original novel as being "about sex and money" points to the source of much of the problem: he simply did not understand the book.

The late 18th century was a time of much intellectual ferment. The Enlightenment and the ideas of the French Revolution strongly influenced the English intelligentsia.

Austen may have been the daughter of a clergyman, but her works are redolent of the contemporary developments in philosophy and social attitudes. *Pride And Prejudice* has great psychological and social depth.

It is precisely because it is not merely about "sex and money" that the book remains so engaging almost 200 years later.

Davies' failure to deal adequately with Austen's novel underlies two of the other failures: certain of the performances, and the direction.

Mr Collins is clearly portrayed by Austen as a fool, and an embarrassingly pompous one at that. In

this production, David Bamber plays him as a cunning sycophant. He may be foolish but he is no fool.

The performance that is totally out of whack, however, is that of Alison Steadman as Mrs Bennet, the heroine's mother. Austen makes it clear (indeed, explicit) that Mrs Bennet is an empty-headed ninny.

Steadman plays her as a shrew, a nagging, tantrum-throwing, vicious-minded shrew. Austen has Mr Bennet, who married a pretty face only to discover there was no intellect behind it, trying to derive pleasure from laughing at his wife's stupidities, and encouraging his older daughters to do the same.

There is little for him to laugh at in Alison Steadman's interpretation. In fact, her performance is so misjudged that the series' makers were obliged to drop the delightful but significant scene near the end where Elizabeth tells her mother the shocking news of her engagement to Darcy, because there is no way the characterisation built up by Ms Steadman could have played the scene successfully.

As for the direction, why on earth do they have Elizabeth constantly go running about pointlessly, as though she is training for the Longbourne to Meryton marathon? Is it meant to show her frustration with her straitlaced life? Her tomboyish nature? Her goofy running style?

There is no running in the book and a well brought up young woman of 20 would simply not have done it.

Austen makes us party to Elizabeth's thoughts. In the previous TV series, Elizabeth voiced her thoughts in a voice-over that, naturally, only the audience hears. In this production she actually speaks her thoughts aloud, a clumsy arrangement that defies common sense.

All in all, this remains a gorgeously filmed, beautifully costumed and staged production which is worth watching despite Alison Steadman's gross misreading of Mrs Bennet. But read the book for the real experience.

Despite the best efforts of Britain and the US (with the eager help of the Howard



Colin Firth gets a wardrobe adjustment on the set (*Pride and Prejudice*)

Government) to destroy Zimbabwe's economy and blatantly interfere in its elections, the government of ZANU-PF and Robert Mugabe has survived.

Imperialism does not easily give up, however, when there is profit at stake, and efforts to undermine the Zimbabwe Government and bring about its overthrow continue. The propaganda war against the country is unceasing.

Cutting Edge: Secrets of the Camps (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday) purports to be "a groundbreaking investigation by the BBC's Africa correspondent, Hilary Andersson who has uncovered the horrifying background to the creation of Robert Mugabe's feared youth militia.

"In their training camps the Zimbabwean government is subjecting thousands of innocent youths to rape, brainwashing and brutality. It is all part of a process designed to mould youths loyal to Robert Mugabe and his ZANU party."

Yep, that's how left wingers build political movements all right. It would make you laugh if this

stuff wasn't so unrelenting, and so sinister. The message put out with the publicity for this program is a blatant call for imperialist intervention: "The testimonies in *Secrets Of The Camps* are evidence of massive human rights violations that put Robert Mugabe's administration in violation of international law".

With oil, gold and diamonds at stake, imperialism is looking for excuses for "humanitarian intervention" to "restore democracy and the rule of law". Like in Iraq.

Quest For The Lost Pharaoh, screening on The Big Picture (ABC 8.30pm Wednesday), is an account of the discovery (with attendant camera crew) of the tomb of a sixth dynasty Egyptian priest, described in a cartouche as "close friend of the Pharaoh".

The unearthing of the modest tomb, with its burial chamber some 25 feet under the ground, is fascinating to watch, as the French archeological team read the hieroglyphs on the walls and door lintels to discover just who it is they are digging up.

The French crew were looking for evidence of the "lost" Sixth dynasty pharaoh Ouserkare. Four of the six pharaohs of that dynasty have never been found.

The priest whose tomb they uncover may well have worked for Ouserkare, but all sections of stone bearing the name of the priest's pharaoh had been removed in antiquity, presumably to obliterate his record.

The program has some clever computer graphics, at one point explosively reconstructing a temple around the archeologist as he walks through the barely discernible ruins. On the other hand, the program was made for US cable outfit the Discovery Channel, so it is forever striving for dramatic effect, which after a short while does become tiresome.

It is as though they believe their audience to be oafs, incapable of taking an interest in a serious, factual subject unless it is jazzed up with ominous music and announcements of either imminent momentous discoveries or grave danger. ☹

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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)

August 13

Restoring the Health System: What must be done

Prof John Dwyer, Chair Australian Health Care Reform Alliance
Dr Con Costa, National President Doctors Reform Society
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Nanotechnology – Part 2

Private profit vs public good

Nanotechnology refers to a spectrum of technologies involving the manipulation of matter at the scale of atoms and molecules – the nanoscale (one billionth of a metre). Already there are products on our shelves and under development using this technology. Governments are only just beginning to consider the possible dangers and other ramifications as private corporations take the running on it. Part 1 of this two-part series (Guardian 21-07-04) looked at some of the uses of nanotechnology and potential dangers, including occupational health and safety issues. This week its potential impact on food, agriculture and the issues arising from corporate for-profit development and patenting of methods and products are discussed.

Though it has escaped public notice, the food and agriculture sector is among the most intensely researched areas of nano-scale science. These applications will extend the reach of industrial agriculture and alter the way our food is grown and produced, processed, packaged and even eaten.

According to Helmut Kaiser Consultancy, some 200 transnational food companies are currently investing in nanotech and are on their way to commercialising products. The list includes many of the world's largest companies, such as: Ajinomoto, Campbell Soup, ConAgra, General Mills, HJHeinz, Kraft Foods, McCain Foods, Nestlé, PepsiCo, Sara Lee and Unilever.

The following examples offer a preview of the projects being carried out:

Nanoseeds: In Thailand, scientists at Chiang Mai University's nuclear physics laboratory have rearranged the DNA of rice by drilling a nano-sized hole through the rice cell's wall and membrane and inserting a nitrogen atom. So far, they have been able to change the colour of the grain from purple to green.

Nanoparticle pesticides: Monsanto, Syngenta and BASF are developing pesticides enclosed in nanocapsules or made up of nanoparticles. The pesticides can be more easily taken up by plants if they are in nanoparticle form; they can also be programmed to be "time-released".

Nano Chicken Feed: With funding from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Clemson University researchers are feeding bioactive polystyrene nanoparticles that bind with bacteria to chickens as an alternative to chemical antibiotics in industrial chicken production.

Nano Ponds: One of the USA's biggest farmed fish companies, Clear Spring Trout, is adding nanoparticle vaccines to trout ponds, where they are taken up by fish.

Little Brother: The US

Department of Agriculture is pursuing a project to cover farmers' fields and herds with small wireless sensors to replace farm labour and expertise with a ubiquitous surveillance system.

Nano foods: Kraft, Nestlé, Unilever and others are employing nanotech to change the structure of food – creating "interactive" drinks containing nanocapsules that can change colour and flavour (Kraft) and spreads and ice creams with nanoparticle emulsions (Unilever, Nestlé) to improve texture. Others are inventing small nanocapsules that will smuggle nutrients and flavours into the body (what one company calls "nanocuticals").

Nano packaging: BASF, Kraft and others are developing new nanomaterials that extend food shelf life and signal when a food spoils by changing colour.

Issues to be addressed

The first intergovernmental meeting on nanotechnology held in Washington (June 17-18) tackled issues associated with nanotech research and development (R&D). According to their program they met in four groups on: "the environment", "human health and safety", "socio-economic and ethical issues" and "nanotechnology in developing countries".

While the June meeting included discussion of broad societal issues, many critical areas urgently require more thorough examination and specific action. These include:

Privatisation and patenting of life

The world's largest companies across all industry sectors are investing in nanotech R&D – from military, mining and manufacturing to energy and electronics, to pharmaceuticals, food processing and chemicals.

Society and governments must be prepared to address the implications of corporate technology cartels that could gain unprecedented control over converging technologies and their products.

In the US and many OECD nations, intellectual property laws evolved rapidly over the past quarter century to allow for the patenting of all life forms – plants, animals, micro organisms and human DNA – to allow for the effective privatisation of the fundamental building blocks of matter.

With the rise of nano-scale technologies, will we see the same kinds of sweeping patent claims on products and processes related to molecular level manufacturing? Nanotechnology offers new opportunities for monopoly control, not just over life forms but also over the building blocks of the entire natural world.

A recent front-page article in the Wall St. Journal reports on the



"intensifying race" to file nanotech patent applications, citing one patent attorney who is experiencing déjà vu: "It's like biotech on steroids", Charles Wieland told the Wall St. Journal.

In the US alone, nanotech patents awarded annually have tripled since 1996. Companies like California-based NanoSys have neither products nor profits, but with a portfolio of over 200 nanotech patents, the company expects its initial public offering to fetch over \$500 million from the sale of shares.

The intergovernmental meeting in Washington focused primarily on the need to facilitate intellectual property as a means of promoting nanotech, rather than on preventing abuses of exclusive monopoly patents or protecting the interests of developing nations.

As things stand in the present unregulated and profiteering environment, the huge potential of nanotechnology will be locked up in privately owned patents and decisions based on profit-making rather than for the benefit of humanity.

Impact immense

Consideration, if any, of the impact of this technology on the environment, health and welfare of people, on workers, or economic, social and other conditions will be pushed aside. The problems associated with genetically modified seeds are a small taste of what lies ahead without strict regulations and controls in place.

Nano-scale technologies could change the way we manufacture goods, produce food, energy and medicine and who knows what uses it could be put to by the military, police and intelligence agencies. Third World countries would be on the receiving end of untested products but denied the rights to the new technology.

As nanotechnology combines with other powerful technologies such as biotechnology and informa-

tion technologies important ethical, social, legal and other questions arise.

Military uses

Experts predict that nanotechnology will change the way wars are fought more than the invention of gunpowder did. Precise and sophisticated molecular-level manipulations will produce stronger, lighter materials, more precise and pervasive sensors and faster, smaller and more energy-efficient computers.

DuPont, a founding partner of the Institute for Soldier Nanotechnologies in the US, predicts that some of the materials being developed for soldiers will be available on the commercial market first.

In addition to these dual-purpose products, nanotech, and its use with biotech, will lead to the development of chemical and biological weapons that are more invasive, harder to detect and virtually impossible to combat.

There is even talk of its use in the cognitive sciences to produce soldiers with "enhanced" bodies and brains.

Regardless of how much of this is pure speculation, there are serious issues to be addressed and little time to do it as the technology is already in use.

The new battleground

Those promoting nanotechnology pride themselves on having learned the lessons of biotechnology, insisting that they will not repeat the mistakes associated with the introduction of genetically modified crops. Based on current trends, it looks like they are en route to an even more disastrous launch.

Thanks to government myopia, for example, the UN biosafety protocol for GM crops came into force eight years after crops were in the field. Unless action is taken now, it looks as though we will be breath-

ing, wearing and eating the products of nanotechnology, including nanobiotechnology, well before any safeguards are put in place.

The government representatives who met earlier this month are planning to convene again, possibly before the end of 2004. Before they do they must consider the political realities.

ETC* says that future intergovernmental discussions must be inclusive, transparent and take place under the auspices of the United Nations. A meeting of technical experts from 26 countries is not adequate to address the interests of all countries – whether engaged in or affected by nanotech activities.

Although governments in Washington did place the problem/potential for the third world or "global South" on their agenda, only the "Big South" – Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa – attended.

In addition to the pressing need to regulate nanoparticles, governments – separately and collectively – need to evaluate, monitor and regulate the impact of nanotech on the socio-economic conditions, human rights (especially marginalised people, including the disabled), and on defence and trade.

"By the time governments get around to recognising the need for a broad societal discussion, it means they're already in the position of playing catch-up, clean-up – or worse, cover-up", warned Silvia Ribeiro of ETC Group's Mexico office.

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.

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