

# FTA betrayal

**The majority decision of the Labor Party caucus last Tuesday to vote its support for the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is a tragic day for the ALP and for Australian working people and their families. In a feeble face-saving exercise, Labor has made its support conditional on two amendments to the enabling legislation.**

The two proposed amendments on existing media content rules and bogus patenting claims by pharmaceutical corporations would have no impact on the agreement itself. Latham stressed that he agreed with the contents of the FTA.

It is a huge personal victory for Howard over Latham. It is a huge betrayal. The truth of the FTA was staring the ALP leaders in the face. The Senate Committee was always a charade behind which Latham was hiding – hiding his support for the FTA until he could use the Senate Inquiry findings as a cover for capitulation.

This is not to overlook the sell-out by the Liberal-National Party Coalition which once again demonstrated its cynical and cowardly subservience to the political and economic interests of the US Government and corporations by negotiating this unequal agreement.

Mark Latham, who earlier in the year said that the ALP would not support the FTA, has now ignominiously capitulated to the pressure exerted by Howard personally and by big business interests which also support the agreement.

By handing Howard a big victory the ALP leadership has, almost certainly, undermined the possibility of defeating the Howard Government in the coming elections. It will demoralise many Labor voters who hoped that a Latham leadership would lead to a revitalisation of the Labor Party.

This is a definitive decision which will determine many other issues in the future. Having capitulated on this issue the ALP will capitulate on other similarly important issues in the future. By endorsing the FTA the Labor Party has created a situation that will prevent it from implementing those policies that contradict the FTA should an ALP Government be elected. The FTA will override Australian legis-

lation that differs from the terms of the agreement.

Australia will become even less independent than it is now. It will be possible for the US to impose enormous economic and political pressure on any and every Australian Government in the future. It will chain future governments and future generations as never before. It is not merely a trade agreement. It is an investment agreement, removing restrictions on the takeover of the Australian economy by US corporations. It will have serious consequences for the environment, on our cultural development, on health and education, on every aspect of life.

It is an agreement that nothing short of a revolution is going to unravel.

Rather than giving priority to the interests of Australia's working people, the ALP caucus majority has demonstrated that it gives top priority to the American alliance and the interests of the corporations that will benefit from the deal.

In their report the Labor Party Senators, having recommended acceptance of the FTA, went on to give no less than 42 other recommendations all of which are arguments why the FTA should be rejected or renegotiated. Such a flawed document should never be signed.

## Real alternative needed

By endorsing the FTA, the Labor Party has put itself on the same economic and political course as that of the Liberal Party. What now is the difference?

As its consequences become clear it will bring both Parties into disrepute as never before. In this respect it will further weaken the two-party system and open the door wider to political parties with a real alternative to offer – including the Communist Party of Australia.

The Australian media has done its job to keep the Australian people largely in ignorance of the real terms and significance of the FTA and thereby prevented any mass opposition from developing.

The working people of a number of countries have already expe-

rienced what happens under similar agreements with the US. They have invariably led to massive loss of jobs in manufacturing, increased prices, the loss of sovereignty and independence as the US corporations take over more and more sections of the economy.

This is inherent in the remarks of some State Labor Party premiers such as Peter Beattie who sees an increased flow of US capital to take on "development" in Australia. Working for the Yankee dollar will become more and more of a reality and this will not help the Australian economy but will swell the profits of US corporations.

The Liberal-National Party leaders claim that the FTA will bring huge benefits to the Australian

economy but many other assessments, including those made by US leaders, refute these claims. Howard and others have lied about WMD in Iraq and they are also lying about the benefits of the FTA and the retention of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme in particular. As last Monday's *Four Corners* program revealed, the assault on the PBS is aimed at driving out of the market the manufacturers of much cheaper generic drugs and giving the big and very powerful US pharmaceutical corporations monopoly control.

The US Trade Office proudly declared that the FTA deal with Australia would bring the most "significant immediate reduction of industrial tariffs ever achieved in a

US free trade agreement". It estimates US exports of manufactured goods to Australia will increase by US\$2 billion (A\$2.6b) compared with a corresponding increase of only US\$1.4 billion for Australia. This will increase Australia's trade deficit with the US (already A\$6 billion) and lead to the loss of many thousands of jobs.

While the Parliamentary ALP left voted against endorsement of the FTA it remains shackled by the idea that "unity" must prevail so long as there is a "good debate". Sharan Burrow – an ALP member and President of the ACTU – said that the ACTU would abide by the decision providing there had been a "good debate".

continued page 4



**NSW rent-a-cop**  
- p3

**WA miners fight back**  
- p4

**Profit up in smoke at BHP mine**  
- p5

**Fahrenheit 9/11**  
- p6

**Call for action on Israel's wall**  
- p8

## The Guardian

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### The arrogance of Howard and Downer

The arrogance of John Howard and Alexander Downer knows no bounds! They believe that because they nestle under the umbrella of the US Big Brother, they are free to pull the noses of any and every country whose government does not follow the dictates of the US leaders.

Downer has insultingly likened the Government of the Philippines to a "marshmallow" because it withdrew its forces from Iraq only a short time ahead of schedule. He berated the Spanish Government for the same reason.

Howard has now raised concerns about the security of Australian athletes during the Athens Olympics implying that the Greek authorities are incapable of protecting athletes. His remarks have brought a justifiable protest. Howard's remarks are not only an indication of arrogance but are also intended to pressure the Greek Government to permit armed soldiers from the US, Britain and Australia to be sent to Greece during the Olympics.

Downer has shown the same arrogance when he threatened to call off negotiations with East Timor over the disputed question of the exploitation of the oil and gas fields in the Timor Gap area. He claimed that a possibly more friendly and flexible stand on this question by a future Labor Government made negotiations meaningless.

This was merely an excuse to shelve any further negotiations with the East Timorese Government – a stand that the Howard Government would like to implement. Having seized control of the area, the Australian Government does not wish to negotiate further as Australia's stand would not be supported should the matter come to the relevant international body that administers the law of the seas.

The Australian Government has fully endorsed the Bush Administration's concept of pre-emptive strike and the concept of imperialist world domination. It is enthusiastically playing the role of junior partner but does not even bother to limit its lectures to countries in the Asian Pacific area. Hence Downer's berating of the Spanish Government.

While making claims to be bringing democracy and the rule of law to other countries, the Howard Government refuses to acknowledge or recognise the fact that the majority of the Spanish people in an election voted in a government on the basis of its commitment to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq. The decision of the Government of the Philippines to withdraw its forces from Iraq was also met with enthusiasm among the Filipino people. The withdrawal of Australian troops would also be met with enthusiasm by the Australian people. Before Australian forces were sent to Iraq by the Howard Government public opinion polls showed that a big majority of the Australian people did not support the war but this expression of democratic opinion did not move the Howard Government. So much for their commitment to democracy.

The Howard Government, by slavishly following a policy that serves the interests of the United States, is leading Australia into more and more isolation which will eventually have tragic consequences.

As a result of the Bush-Blair and Howard policies, the world is facing more bombings and insecurity shown by the multiplying incidents in a number of countries. They are not limited to Iraq.

Instead of stability there is instability. Instead of security there is insecurity. Instead of a better life, conditions are getting worse in all the capitalist countries for a majority of the people. Instead of independent governments, the only governments that are acceptable to the US and the Howard Government are those which cravenly follow a subservient line.

Instead of challenging this shortsighted and narrow-minded course the Labor Party leaders are incapable of breaking free from the embrace of Big Brother and limit their criticisms of the Howard Government to secondary issues which never get to the heart of the matter.

This was well illustrated by the remark of Beazley who said that it appeared that the Howard Government was "attempting to provoke the ALP into opposing the Free Trade Agreement". Such a remark only served to demonstrate Beazley's support for the FTA – which will come to be seen as an economic and political disaster for Australia's workers.

#### PRESS FUND

The Guardian adopts an uncompromising attitude towards the US/Australia Free Trade Agreement, which we've opposed with determination from the outset. We're also determined to reach our annual Press Fund target of \$14,000! We are just over half way – less than five months to go. With a big effort it can be done! So we're asking for all the help you can give. If you can possibly make a contribution this week, please send us a cheque, money order, etc. We offer our sincere thanks to those whose generosity this week will help us to reach our target, as follows:

In memory of M Glaros \$165

In memory of K Katzimburis \$27.50

Elke and Mike Ainsworth \$50, B Appleton \$40, Donna \$50, Olga Symon \$5, Larry from Tassie \$100, "Round Figure" \$11.50, CJ & PJ \$12, LK & JK \$100, SA \$7, Ron Gray \$50.

This week's total: \$618. Progressive total: \$7040.

# Asylum seekers cruelly deceived

Peter Mac

**Asylum seekers have been dealt a cruel blow by the Howard Government's recent changes to permanent entry requirements.**

Three weeks ago the Minister for Immigration Amanda Vanstone announced that the 9500 holders of temporary protection visas would henceforth enjoy greatly enhanced opportunities to gain permanent visas. The news caused great rejoicing around the nation's immigration centres that morning.

However, this mood was quickly followed by creeping doubts about the government's real intentions as the hard copy of the Minister's announcement was circularised and scrutinised by the detainees and their advocates. By mid-afternoon the mood had turned to bitter disappointment and disillusion about the government's motives.

For it seems the government was motivated by electoral opportunism and not at all by genuine

changed, not least because of the revelations of the lies about "kids overboard" and the increased scepticism of the concocted "illegal immigrant"/"potential terrorist" line. The government's shabby policy stand has also been undermined by greater contact between recent arrivals and the Australian community.

#### Hopes short-lived

It is therefore now more expedient for the government to pose in a compassionate role. In this respect the protection visa system was an obvious area where the government believed it could improve its voter approval score.

However, it seems that the coalition leopard could not change its ideological spots. The Minister's declaration revealed that the new regulations would apply to those with Australian spouses, to those sponsored to work here by local firms and to those with highly developed work skills.

the current system, it may even be months before the new measures are introduced.

Temporary protection visas are granted to detainees who have been deemed to be genuine refugees by the Refugees Review Tribunal. Australia is the only country in the world that requires a second stage of approval (for permanent protection visas) before applicants can be released to join the Australian community. The requirement actually violates the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees to which Australia is a signatory.

During a recent visit to South Australia's Baxter Detention Centre, Senator Vanstone acknowledged that some asylum seekers had been detained there for as long as four years. Her statement is technically accurate but, at the same time, misleading as it does not mention that some detainees are moved from one centre to another.

Stateless detainee Peter Qasim, who claims to have come here from Kashmir, has been held in every detention centre in the country. He has now been held in custody for six years. He has been robbed of six of the best years of his life.

The opposition parties represented in the Australian Parliament have all pledged to abolish the temporary protection visa system. However, the Coalition clings to it. To abandon it would be to acknowledge that its introduction was a cruel sham, that it has ruined the lives of thousands of newcomers whose only "offence", for the most part, was to arrive seeking asylum without formal documentation.

The Howard Government has in effect treated the asylum seekers as criminals. Whereas surely it is the government which has committed the horrific crime of imprisoning thousands of desperate people – in many cases for years – for what amounts to electoral opportunism for the Howard Government. ☹

**Australia is the only country in the world that requires a second stage of approval (for permanent protection visas) before applicants can be released to join the Australian community.**

concern for the plight of the asylum seekers. Prior to the last elections the Howard Government very successfully played the redneck card over the Tampa crisis by convincing many voters that the increased number of people seeking to reach Australia from the north in leaky boats constituted a serious threat to the nation's security.

Circumstances have now

In short, the vast majority of the detainees will not meet the new requirements.

Moreover, the addition of these criteria means that the detainees will be subjected to another layer of applications, interviews and interminable delays while their cases are considered. Applications lodged under the new policy will not only take longer to consider than under

## Fire and New Building Appeal \$10,000

Thank you once again to all the comrades and friends of the CPA and *Guardian* readers who have dug deep to contribute to the Fire and New Building Appeal. Preparations for the move are well under way with almost 20 years' worth of Campbell St collection being sorted, sold, or packed up into boxes ready for the Buckingham St relocation. However, with only two weeks left of the appeal we are still \$4365 short of our \$10,000 target. If you have intended to make a contribution but have not gotten around to it: hesitate no longer! All contributions, large or small, are greatly appreciated.

Our sincere thanks this week goes to: Andrew Jackson \$50; Marie Marchant \$100; WA Anon \$50; Hector Kerswell \$500; Fernando Gonçalves \$50; Ron Gray \$100; Bob & Jenny Saltis \$100; Frank Gosden \$50; Anna Pha \$40, SA Anon \$5, Nathan Barnes \$20, Tom Simmons \$100.

Total this week \$1165

Progressive Total \$5635.



### FIRE AND NEW BUILDING APPEAL

I, \_\_\_\_\_

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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.



# NSW corporate rent-a-cop scheme

Bob Briton

The Carr Government dropped a bombshell recently with the announcement that from now on businesses will be able to hire police from the Department as de facto security guards. The restrictions that used to prevent corporations hiring police for these functions were lifted the week before last with the gazetting of amendments to policing laws. The arrangements had been the subject of trials involving several companies over the past two years.

The coup was announced by Police Minister John Watkins who added that the new "income stream" would not be used to cut public funding. The minister was replying to the least significant of the many objections being raised about the cops-for-hire scheme.

Even Opposition police spokesman Peter Debnam from that most notorious mob of privatisers, the Liberal Party, felt obliged to point out the most obvious: "It is effectively privatising public order and further entrenches public order for the rich. This is the police service saying they will work for anybody as long as you send us a proposal, we are available for hire".

The Sydney Markets is to be the first private organisation to hire police to patrol their premises. Mr Watkins insists that there are sufficient safeguards in the system and that an "emergency opt-out" provision applies to the deals.

This means that, should there be a policing emergency elsewhere in the community, police can leave their private patrolling duties. A refund would be sent to the contracting company for the gap in the service.

For the time being, the duties in question are additional ones for the NSW police. There is a danger that the arrangements will have officers working beyond the limits of their already long and anti-social hours. Companies will pay \$81.40 an hour to the Department while officers will receive an average of \$45.10, according to an AAP report.

Another "safeguard" mentioned by Mr Watkins is that the hiring entity "... has to be a company or an organisation and they go through a very tough process". The police will not serve as bouncers at pubs, clubs or casinos. Apparently Commissioner Ken Moroney is to have the final say on applications to hire police officers.

The government has not taken up the more serious objections such as those raised by Peter Debnam and Greens MLC Lee Rhiannon about the privatisation of core police functions.

Ms Rhiannon has protested at the obvious potential for conflicts: "What if the manager of the private company that is paying the police officer breaks the law? A police officer defending a private company's property at times would act differently from a police officer who is acting in the public interest.



"For example at a public protest the police work to maintain order and safety. But if the protest was outside the headquarters of a corporation that used hired police you would have to expect that the public would come off second best".

The Greens MLC insists that the government has not demonstrated any circumstances, such as a crime wave, that would justify the highly irregular private policing scheme.



The move entrenches a "user pays", "fee for service" attitude to policing matters. Once the principle is set down, the requirement for individuals to pay for the police attendance at a robbery or other crime against their property or person becomes the next step on the same path.

The changes also put the police in competition with existing private security companies offer-

ing the same service. This will warm the hearts of those wanting to advance the cause of privatisation underpinning national "competition" policy. Some of these advocates will eventually argue that there is no need for a public institution at all!

The scheme helps break ground for privatisers in other states with regard to their police forces and for the Australian Federal Police. ✪

## Sydney rail service suffers savage cuts

Peter Mac

Sydney commuters have had their weekend rail services cut by 50 percent. The NSW Carr Government has attempted to justify the appalling new timetable with the statement that the drivers freed up from working on the weekend would be transferred to weekday peak-hour services.

It certainly hasn't worked. Train services are still being cancelled, and the overall impact has been a gross reduction in services with no benefit to commuters.

The Minister for Transport

announced that the new timetable would make operating Cityrail services much simpler. The logic of that argument is that if you close the service down altogether it couldn't be simpler to operate!

The NSW Government is now subjecting the rail services to a "vicious circle" of inadequate funding, falling transport revenues and service cuts. Cuts to staff numbers have led to service cancellations, which have forced people to find other means of travel. The general deterioration in services has led to passengers seeking other means of getting to work.

The resultant loss of transport revenues has been compounded by the issue of free tickets as compensation for passenger inconvenience, by the costs of new driver training, and by the increased costs of overtime needed to make up for driver shortages. These extra costs have in turn led to services being cut in order to reduce revenue losses.

### Setting commuters against each other

A recent report on public transport commissioned (and apparently accepted) by the NSW Government

in effect described Sydney ferry services as largely patronised by silver-tails and wealthy tourists. The report implied these passengers would be better able to cope with a massive fare increase, as opposed to rail passengers, or that their services should be completely shut down.

This distorted argument ignored the real need for ordinary Sydneysiders to have access to all parts of the metropolis by cheap and efficient public transport. The ferries are the most efficient and reliable of all the services.

A highly discriminatory aspect of the report was its suggestion that passengers purchasing cheap "seniors" tickets should be restricted to travel outside of peak hours.

These policy recommendations have the effect of setting one group of public transport passengers against another, in order to justify reducing the service as a whole. The tendency is now evident in the policy behind the latest cuts to rail services, which implies that those travelling on the weekends are somehow less worthy of a decent rail service than peak-hour passengers.

### Privatisation on the agenda?

The shortcomings in the Sydney rail service became evident before the 2000 Olympics (during which the trains ran like clockwork thanks to an extra 3000 employees) but reappeared with a vengeance afterwards. The Carr Government proceeded to blame this on a shortage of drivers, and explicitly on the amount of sick leave that drivers were taking and on their lack of willingness to work overtime.

It appears that a number of senior State Rail positions have remained vacant within the last six

months, with other positions filled on a temporary basis only.

The fall in staff numbers, failure to recruit, low morale, and a "vicious circle" of falling revenues and service cuts, have all been hallmarks of government organisations about to be privatised. Add to these factors the current construction of enormously expensive infrastructure intended to facilitate splitting the Sydney rail network up into five separate service lines, and you have a picture of an organisation ripe for privatisation.

### Passengers seething

The deterioration of Sydney's rail service has not been lost on Sydney commuters. One suggested that the best rail service cut would be the job of Transport Minister Michael Costa. Another commented that "A greater gift to the roads lobby could not be imagined. Cutting train services goes against the promotion of public transport by almost every advanced nation in the world".

It may be that transferring the transport load from the rail network to the roads is just what the government intends. It certainly looks that way. However, Carr, Costa and company should recall that in the past Sydney voters have taken a savage revenge on state governments that have cut rail services.

For their part, Sydney commuters should reflect that any move towards privatisation of the rail service would accelerate if the conservative Liberal/National Party coalition was returned to power. Real improvements in public transport, education, health and other government services will only be achieved by looking beyond the "two-party" system to alternative left and progressive candidates. ✪

Pete's Corner



# Solidarity beats back goons

Scabs and private security goons had to sleep rough in the Western Australian outback after attempts to break a picket line were beaten off by solidarity between miners and construction workers.

The high-stakes stand-off is unfolding at Yandi, about 150 kilometres north of Newman in the Pilbara, where miners with BHP contractor Henry Walker Eltin are resisting the imposition of another round of AWAs (non-union contracts), backed by big financial inducements.

Less than a fortnight after BHP was ordered by the Industrial Relations Commission to pay equal wages and conditions to union members, the company has still not abandoned its goal and is re-fighting the issue through its remote-site contractor.

For the first time in WA, miners overwhelmingly rejected AWAs when Henry Walker Eltin put them on the table last month. Only 15 percent of the workforce accepted the carrot of increased earnings.

*"This is a very remote site and we are worried about the safety of our people. We are a long way from anywhere and a long way from anybody."*

A picket line was thrown around the mine and residential camp after workers learned the company was flying in Global Security guards, many with military training, to lock them down.

Henry Walker Eltin moved the workers on AWAs out of the camp the same day, bunking them down at nearby Hammersley Iron, alongside security guards and management contractors.

However, Hammersley construction workers demanded the

removal of "scabs" from their camp and those preparing for the assault on Yandi were eventually turfed out.

The dispute turned nasty the next day when the company's force used vehicles to try and smash its way through the picket of AWU, AMWU and CEPU members.

"It's Patrick's all over again", ACTU organiser Will Tracey reported from the front line. "We've got un-badged goons here in the standard blue overalls. At least two picketers were hit by a car when they first tried to break through.

"This is a very remote site and we are worried about the safety of our people. We are a long way from anywhere and a long way from anybody."

The 14 police had been flown to Yandi from Newman, Karatha and Port Hedland stations.

Some of the tensions were relieved when miners returned to work where they will continue their

*Doesn't matter if they close the final salary scheme to new employees - I'm all right, Jack!*



industrial campaign through regular stop work meetings.

They are demanding pay equity and the right of new starters to decide whether they are employed on AWAs or a collective agreement. The employer insists it will only employ those who accept non-union individual contracts.

"They have tried the old trick of buying people off and it didn't work", Mr Tracey said. "This whole dispute is about the contractor's

refusal to recognise equal pay and freedom of choice. That's all our people are holding out for.

"It is a very important issue for workers everywhere. The people on the job have been fantastic but the company is playing hardball and we need help from the broader union movement."

Miners and supporters held a rally outside Henry Walker Eltin's Perth office last Monday morning. ☘

## James Hardie Industries "misled Supreme Court"

**James Hardie Industries is continuing its push for a statutory scheme that would limit compensation to asbestos victims. Thousands of Australians who are victims of James Hardie asbestos will be denied justice unless the company is forced by law to properly fund their compensation.**

A NSW government inquiry into the cash-strapped trust which the company left behind when it skipped the country and set up its headquarters in the Netherlands three years ago, has been told Hardie chief executive Peter McDonald misled the Australian Stock Exchange.

The trust has at best a \$2 billion shortfall. Hardie claimed in 2001 that the trust was "a fully-funded foundation which provided certainty for both claimants and shareholders".

Australia does not have a legal treaty with the Netherlands that would allow asbestos victims to pursue their rightful compensation.

The inquiry has been told the company also misled the NSW Supreme Court over the trust, called the Medical Research and Compensation Foundation.

The submissions by the prosecuting counsel said that Hardie "treated the plight of James Hardie asbestos victims with disdain" and that the company was "not merely unwilling to use funds to alleviate their plight" but that it "embarked upon a course of doing all it could to ensure" claims by victims "would go unsatisfied".

The Australian Council of Trade Unions has demanded that the Howard Government take urgent action to ensure Hardie assets are available to compensate victims. "James Hardie should not be allowed to escape its moral and legal responsibilities to thousands of Australian victims of asbestos disease", said the peak union body's Secretary, Greg Combet.

The ACTU wants changes to Australia's corporate laws to prevent companies evading their obligations, not only for compensation but for workers' entitlements as well.

The ACTU has called on the Federal Government to:

- Enter into a treaty with the Netherlands that would enable enforcement of Australian civil judgements

- Reach a special arrangement with the Netherlands to ensure the assets of the Netherlands-based James Hardie Industries are available to asbestos victims

- Amend Australian law, retrospectively in the case of James Hardie, to ensure holding companies are liable to the victims of their subsidiaries in the case of personal injury or death and that a corporate group can be treated as a single entity for the purpose of enforcing a judgement

- Reform Australia's corporations law so that the "corporate veil" can no longer be used by companies to avoid their legal liabilities to employees and the community for compensation or workers' entitlements. ☘

## Sydney tunnel death needs investigation

**The Australian Workers' Union (AWU) has announced that all work on the Sydney Cross City Tunnel will be suspended indefinitely following the tragic death of a worker.**

The worker, a member of the AWU, was killed at 5.30pm last Thursday after he was crushed by falling rocks inside the tunnel under East Sydney.

AWU NSW State Secretary Russ Collison said he has had officials on the site talking to all AWU members, as well as talking to the company, the other construction unions and WorkCover about the situation.

"Naturally at this stage we are extremely saddened by the tragic death of our member yesterday, our primary concern at the moment

is for the workers' family and his workmates", Mr. Collison said.

At a mass meeting on Monday 200 AWU members pledged to donate two days' pay to financially assist the worker's widow and two teenage children. The meeting also called on construction firm Baulderstone Hornibrook come forward quickly with the more than \$50,000 in entitlements owed.

Mr Collison said the AWU would now be turning its attention to investigating how this death occurred and said members will not return to the site until a full assessment has been made and all safety orders have been completed.

The union had met with Baulderstone Hornibrook just two days prior to the accident to dis-

cuss a number of safety concerns, including high levels of dust and diesel fumes and a lack of safety handrails.

National Secretary Bill Shorten said the union nationally will be dedicating resources to ensure that safety remains the number one priority for all tunnelling works across the country, but particularly in Sydney.

"Currently there is a tunnelling boom in Sydney and naturally we are concerned that this incident on the Cross City Tunnel could be repeated elsewhere. Baulderstone Hornibrook is a multi-national construction firm and we expect for them to have the best safety standards in the country", Mr. Shorten said. ☘

## FTA betrayal

Continued from page 1

This is a false theory by which the right dominates and regiments those with left positions, behind whatever the right decides. The voice of the left is silenced and stifled. It renders the left weak and ineffective. In the case of the FTA it means "unity" in support of a monumental betrayal that will have devastating consequences for the working people of Australia.

In a statement to *The Guardian*, Communist Party General Secretary Peter Symon said, "The ALP leaders have capitulated to the Howard Government in a betrayal of monumental proportions. It will have very bad and long-term consequences for the working people of Australia. By this act the ALP has given preference to the interests of US corporations and the US alliance rather than to the interests of the

Australian people or the independence of Australia.

"The ALP's capitulation shows once again the need to build alternative left and progressive political organisations in Australia that can implement new policies that serve the interests of working people. The Communist Party will play its part in this process which is now more urgent than ever", said Symon.

Other voices in opposition were those of the Greens, whose leader Bob Brown said that Labor's capitulation to Prime Minister Howard's FTA will demoralise and offend millions of Australian, including Labor voters.

"The Labor Party is allowing itself to be out-manoeuvred politically by Howard rather than standing firm."

The Greens have indicated that they will move stronger amendments than the ones proposed by

Labor but vote against the FTA regardless of the outcome of the amendments.

Australian Democrats spokespersons have also opposed the FTA and will, presumably, vote against its endorsement.

Taking full advantage of the capitulation of ALP leaders, Liberal Senator George Brandis said, "I'd like to congratulate Senator Conroy [right-wing Labor] on his significant victory over the left of his own party".

Doug Cameron national secretary of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, said: "You cannot reconcile the recommendation from the Senate inquiry to accept this agreement and the 42 other recommendations that set about demolishing this agreement. It is an act of political cowardice by the Senate committee and caucus should reject it". ☘

Western Australia

### An Afternoon At The Movies

Join the WA Branch of the Communist Party of Australia to watch an exceptional film of a unique man **Fred Paterson** - a great man of the people, a Rhodes scholar and lawyer, whose parliamentary career was ended by police baton blow during the Queensland Railway strike of 1948.

**Sunday 29 August 3pm  
U24, 257 Balcatta Road, Balcatta**

(Head North up Wanneroo Road, turn left into Balcatta Road. The venue is about 150 metres on the right hand side)

No charge for entry, but a donation would be gratefully received to go towards the CPA head office fire and new building appeal. For more info call: Mick on 0421 205 770 or Vinnie on 0419 812 872. Light refreshment will be available

# Profits go up in smoke at BHP-Billiton mine

## An eyewitness account

At approximately 8.00am on Thursday July 22 a large hydraulic excavator (a Leibherr 996) caught fire at BHP Billiton's Mt Arthur open cut coalmine on the outskirts of Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley, NSW. This machine that caught fire was fairly new, having done only 10,000 hours of work since being commissioned last year. The fire totally gutted the digger to the extent that at this stage it will not be repaired. A replacement could cost nearly \$9 million.

As the emergency was called, the on-shift supervisor took control of proceedings. He directed all available mines rescue trained personnel to make their way to the fire and all water trucks that were close to make their way there as well.

The mine water trucks are fitted with fire fighting equipment i.e., a front mounted monitor that is controlled from inside the truck cabin as well as being plumbed for hand held hoses.

The first truck to attend the fire (A 789 Caterpillar with a 190-ton water tank) could not get close enough to use the monitor effectively because of the position the digger was in so hand held hoses were the only alternative.

The hoses were attached to the water truck and the water was flowing for just a few minutes when a hydraulic hose that feeds the water pump on the truck blew stopping the water flow onto the fire.

This caused enormous panic as the in-pit fitter was called to take the blown hose off and replace it with a spare one, but before this could be done the oil in the hydraulic tank on the truck had to be topped up in order to move the broken down truck out of the way.

The call was made to the pit service truck to come and fill the oil tank straight away. The serviceman, already on his way, arrived a few minutes later but could not get to the broken down truck as his access was blocked by light vehicles. These were the vehicles of onlookers and people from mines rescue who had not been advised to park their cars elsewhere.

The call was made to get the rest of the water truck fleet to the fire as soon as possible as by this time the fire was really taking hold. The other water trucks were parked about 2.5kms away, at the water-truck ready line, fully loaded ready to go if ever needed.

The first two trucks reached (numbers 55 and 57), both old Euclid dumpers that have been converted into water trucks, would not start causing further concern to the fire-fighters. In addition, the tank on 55 was bone dry and 57 was half empty.

The rule in the pit is that when the water trucks were not in use they were to be parked loaded ready to go if needed in an emergency as was the case on Thursday last.

The next truck tried was a Wabco, which did manage to start but could not move as the park brake was locked on due to excessive air leaks. The brakes finally came off after 10 minutes of building up air pressure to release them and the old Wabco was on its way to the fire.

Being an electric drive truck, it was fairly slow getting to the fire and when finally arriving could not get anyway close enough because the ground was too steep for the electric drive.

It took 15 minutes to get water on the fire after the first truck had broken down, giving the fire a big head start. So the person in charge called for backup from the local fire brigade who responded straight away. No problems starting those trucks.

The mine has its own rescue vehicle that can carry 2000 litres of water which was used. It carried an assortment of rescue and recovery equipment - everything needed for an emergency including foam to smother an oil fire. The, the three 20-litre drums were soon used and more drums of foam were needed.

A message was sent to the mine store to have all the drums ready to be picked up as they were needed urgently and a vehicle was on its way to collect them. The storeman replied that they were not in the store and he could not find any. This caused further panic and a frantic search revealed no drums of the urgently needed fire foam for oil in or around the new workshop.

The new rescue shed was checked as well, the searchers coming up empty handed again.

A suggestion that there may be some drums of foam in the old Bayswater rescue shed was made and off the searchers went only to get lost. The driver of the vehicle had never been to the Bayswater shed, he was calling for directions over the 2-way radio.

Finally, getting to the shed, they found the gate locked and no key to get in.

Back to the Mt Arthur store the searchers went to get the key for the old rescue shed. They returned to find 12 old drums of the urgently needed foam. This whole exercise to get the drums to the fire where needed, took more than 30 minutes. It was too late, the fire had really taken hold and could not be effectively fought with the badly organised team in attendance. Luckily no-one was hurt during this fiasco.

The circumstances leading up to this incident are also of considerable concern, as the fire is believed to be due to a blown hose in the engine house squirting oil onto hot components and so causing the oil to ignite. For some time prior to the fire the operators of this machine had reported to the pit production bosses and maintenance people that the oil leaks were getting worse and needed repairing. They were told to keep the machine working, that the leaks would be done at the next service.

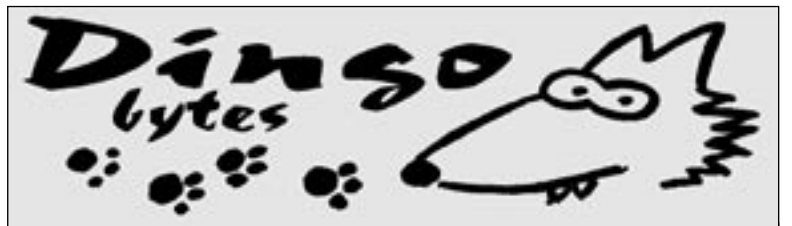
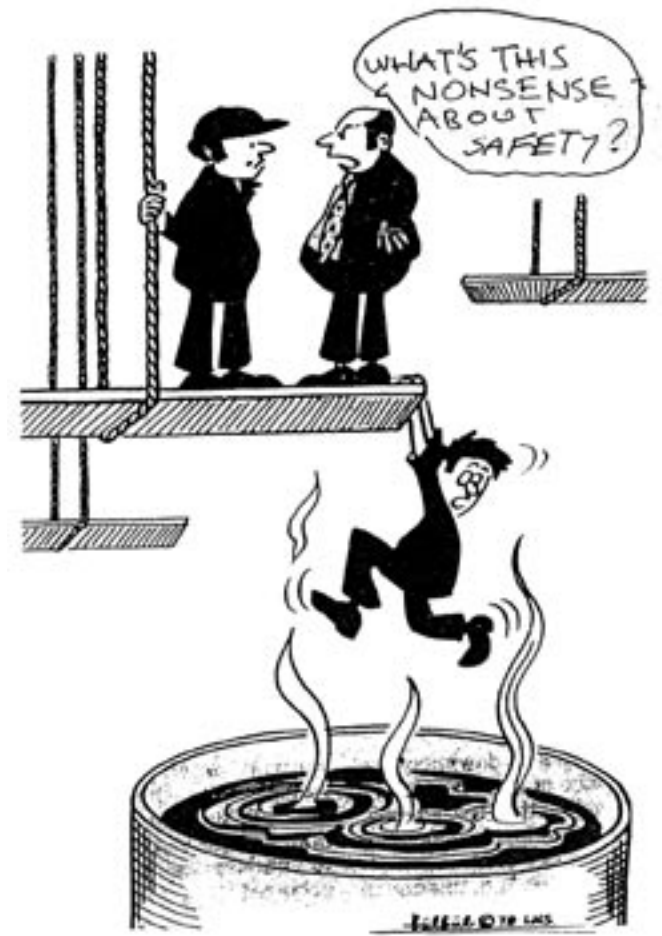
The situation had got that bad that one operator told me that the machine had leaked 450 litres of oil between first lunch break and second lunch break which is 10.30am till 2.30pm - four hours.

All along nothing was done which proves the point that most of the big companies don't care about their employees' safety when it comes to production.

Workers are frightened to say anything to the bosses in relation to safety for fear of being told off, despite the company placing notices on boards relating to on the job safety. We have regular toolbox talks which are mostly about company plans to increase production with little rewards to the worker.

Since the smoke has cleared and the fire gone out it would now seem that the insurance problem must be sorted out as all the parties concerned are pointing the finger at each other. The supplier Leibherr is claiming that BHP-Billiton would not allow them enough time to carry out the repairs the machine was so much in need of, the company saying the machines are to work because of contractual obligations.

The company along with the union, mines rescue people, check inspector and occupational health and safety people are holding top level investigations into the incident and hopefully coming up with a plan so that this kind of situation cannot occur again. As soon as results are available they will be forwarded to *The Guardian*. ☺



Those who insist on the (bourgeois) contention that art cannot impact on politics have had their cosy notion proved false many times over. And most recently had it blown out of the water by Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11*. If any further proof were needed that the movie has got Bush and his warmongering cronies on the run, the banning of the film from military base cinemas by the Australian Defence Force puts that to rest. Of course the Howard Government has ordered the ban, but won't admit it. Said the Defence Department, "It is not appropriate for Defence to be seen to be supporting any film of an overly political nature".

And the Federal Government was behind a censorship sting at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation last week when the Government's hand-picked representatives on the national broadcaster's board refused to make footage of prominent Liberal politicians available to a documentary maker without first obtaining the approval of the politicians. As a custodian of Australian culture and history the ABC's archives should be uncensored and readily available. It is yet another example of the way the Howard Government has tried to white-ant the ABC's independence. Said national support group, Friends of the ABC, "This action will only increase widespread public concern that the ABC board and management are operating with the interests of the Government foremost in mind".

If you have wondered what kind of people inspire the formulation of ALP policies check out the speech their finance man Simon Crean made to the right-wing stink tank, the Sydney Institute. Prattling on about human capital Crean returned to the "reading to children" election ploy. Eyeing ankle biters as a source of profits, he quoted that international organisation so famous for its devotion to the well being of children: "The World Bank gives us five good reasons why we should invest in young children". These five pillars of wisdom include higher economic returns, reduced social costs and increased efficiency of investments.

**CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK:** is the drug company lobby. Two US trade negotiators who helped stitch up the US-Australia FTA have been rewarded with big-time positions in the drug industry. Following his part in the FTA, Ralph Ives was promoted to US assistant trade representative for pharmaceutical policy and this month became a vice-president at AdvaMed which produces half the world's medical technology products. Claude Burcky, an intellectual property trade negotiator on the FTA, is now a director of pharmaceutical corporation Abbott Laboratories. Who said our PBS isn't under threat?

## Hiroshima Day Hiroshima Never Again! Free Iraq and Palestine! March for a Nuclear Free World!

### Brisbane

#### Rally & Candlelight Procession

Friday 6 August 5:00pm - 6:30pm

King George Square

Further info: Phone: 07 3855 9497

Rally for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament

### Adelaide

#### Public Meeting

Sunday 8 August 2.30-4.30pm

Effective Living Centre, Christ Church Uniting

26 King William Road, Wayville

Put pressure on the Federal Government

to ban nuclear weapons

Speakers include Prof Ian Maddocks,

David Palmer and Julia Pitman

Gold coin donation appreciated

### Sydney

#### Candlelight March

Friday 6 August 6pm

Town Hall Square

To Archibald Fountain, Hyde Park

For more info ph: Bronwyn Marks 02 9982 4192

Hiroshima Day Committee

### Melbourne

#### Remember Hiroshima

#### Silent Vigil

Friday 6 August 7.30am - 8.30am

Federation Square

(facing Flinders St)

Bring a candle

Medical Association for Prevention of War

03 8344 1637



# Fahrenheit 9/11 and the ghost of George Orwell

Bob Briton

It is safe to predict that by now many *Guardian* readers will have seen Michael Moore's latest documentary film *Fahrenheit 9/11*. The weekend before last I caught one of the preview sessions at Adelaide's Palace cinema and made up part of the throng queuing in a dim hallway waiting for the 1.40pm session to vacate their seats. When we came out, another long line of people stretched along the wall patiently waiting for us.

I went as part of a group booking for the NOWAR coalition. Animal Liberation also had a group attending the session and I know other progressive organisations like the Australia East Timor Friendship Association had also been fundraising with the aid of this immensely popular film. In more ways than one, *Fahrenheit 9/11* has been good news for the progressive movement.

My personal experience bears out what the mainstream media has been saying. While feature length documentaries in general – offerings like *Supersize Me*, *Fog of War* for example – are doing very well at the box office, *Fahrenheit 9/11* is something else again. It is a phenomenon. Even before its public release, Michael Moore's latest big screen venture had rewritten the ticket sales record for a documentary film in Australia.

In the US, the film has not been out of the news and the opinion columns since the revelations of its problems with Disney's distribution subsidiary Miramax in early May. The documentary has been packing out cinemas in the US, too, but it is the shrill response of the pro-Bush forces that has been most the most notable aspect of the *Fahrenheit 9/11* phenomenon there – at least, that is the impression you get from trawling the media for references.

In Australia, the usual mob of right-wing columnists like Andrew Bolt and Gerard Henderson did their predictable job of attacking the film and anyone prepared to accept its presentation of the facts. In the US, however, the political Right has pulled out all the stops. Moore's previous best selling book *Stupid White Men* now has a right-wing counterpart called *Michael Moore is a Big Fat Stupid White Man*. Singer Linda Ronstadt was recently ejected from the Aladdin casino in Las Vegas after she dedicated a performance

the self-proclaimed defenders of democracy and free speech within it with a major media management challenge. I expect the Right to stay on Moore's case for a long time to come.

## "Left-wing" opposition to Fahrenheit

However, while I was taking my seat at the Palace it was comments of a "left-leaning" commentator that kept creeping into my consciousness. Like many other people I had read US-based journalist Christopher Hitchens' lengthy attack on Michael Moore and his latest "filmic effort". Entitled "Unfahrenheit 9/11 – the lies of Michael Moore", the Hitchens piece set out to show that the film is "a sinister exercise in moral frivolity, crudely disguised as an exercise in seriousness. It is also a spectacle of abject political cowardice masking itself as a demonstration of 'dissenting' bravery."

In the article Hitchens likens Moore to Nazi filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl and adds Soviet film pioneer Sergei Eisenstein for good measure. By the way, very few Hitchens pieces end without a sneering reference to some modern day or historical "Stalinist" personality or "regime".

The articulate, though unrelievedly po-faced Hitchens has been on our TV screens a lot in recent times. He is a "former Trotskyist" (isn't that particular segment of humanity doing well for itself lately?) who has taken on an important role in the promotion of the official line on the so-called War on Terrorism. His comments, coming as they do from a "left-wing" authority, are being used to demonstrate that support for present US foreign policy ought not be restricted to the political right. They are part of an effort to show how the left has got it seriously wrong on issues like Afghanistan and Iraq – how the left's alleged tedious contrariness has turned it into a poorly disguised apologist for totalitarian regimes.

Hitchens is part of the school of journalism that thinks very highly of its own intellectual honesty and claims to be a disciple of George Orwell. This last-mentioned detail should come as no surprise. Orwell was another self-described lefty whose writings about the Spanish Civil War gave the world the version of events in which the bad guys

about the dangers of actually changing society.

At some point, Orwell became an informer for Britain's internal spook agency MI5. In 1949 he provided a list of individuals in the arts field – including Charlie Chaplin, JBPriestley, and the actor Michael Redgrave – to the agency. They were, according to Orwell "crypto-communists, fellow-travellers or inclined that way and should not be trusted as propagandists". Hitchens takes the same attitude to Michael Moore.

Moore's use of quotes from *Nineteen Eighty-Four* towards the end of the film must have infuriated the oh-so-honest Hitchens. Near the close of Hitchens' "debunking" of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, he seeks to restore Orwell to his proper role of chastising critics of capitalist society and imperialism. He cites comments written by Orwell in 1945 to sum up his feelings about Moore:

"But there is a minority of intellectual pacifists, whose real though unacknowledged motive appears to be hatred of western democracy and admiration for totalitarianism. Pacifist propaganda usually boils down to saying that one side is as bad as the other, but if one looks closely at the writing of the younger intellectual pacifists, one finds they do not by any means express impartial disapproval but are directed almost entirely against Britain and the United States..."

Hitchens shares his icon's faith in the supreme civilising influence of the UK and the US, though thankfully without the novelist's offensive homophobia, racism and anti-Semitism. Orwell sought to defend the institutions of these "great democracies" from the threat of communism. Hitchens has taken up this cause and added to it the crusade against the new "threat" posed by "militant Islam".

## George W Bush as victim

Every now and then Hitchens feels the need to touch up his lefty image. He wrote a piece recently about the late Ronald Regan who he describes as being reptilian in his stupidity. However, when it comes to the current US head of state, who is also monumentally stupid, he becomes very protective. This is the starting point for his attack on *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Moore has allegedly misled people into thinking



a Supreme Court largely appointed by Daddy would have anything to do with George Dubya's unexpected success. And to suggest that Bush overdoes the "relaxed and comfortable" approach to his office with extended holidays at a time of national crisis is craven and dishonest, according to Hitchens.

The connection between the bin Laden family and the Bushes through joint interests in the Carlyle Group is "convoluted" to Hitchens, even if it looks pretty direct to the rest of us. It now turns out that permission for the bin Laden family to fly out of the US immediately after the September 11 outrages, while every other civilian aircraft was grounded, was given by Bush's counterterrorism chief Richard

That he should wait until now to make the improbable admission needs no comment, according to Hitchens. What is important is that Michael Moore's analysis is derided.

Moore also gets a bucketing for previously insisting that Osama bin Laden is innocent until proven guilty (outrageous!), while now making much of the Bushes' connections with the al-Qaida leader. In a sneaky slide, Hitchens attacks the offending filmmaker for criticising the invasion of Afghanistan, where the Taliban had harboured bin Laden, and then for suggesting that the US had not committed enough troops in the relevant areas of the country to track him down. The poor old Bush Administration is being put in a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation by those vile members of the smug trendy left. This is given as an example of the bad faith of Michael Moore.

However, the connection made in the film between the invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent deal for a gas pipeline for US transnational Unocal, the links between Afghan PM Hamid Karzai and Unocal are fleetingly alluded to but not answered in Hitchens' hatchet job. He refers to them at a later date but only to say blandly that Afghanistan could use some infrastructure – as if it were being built for the benefit of Afghanistan! Moore's point that a pipeline – and not Osama bin Laden – might be the actual objective of the invasion is left alone. It is interesting to note that Hitchens projects onto Moore the failing of quoting sources out of context and using tight, manipulative editing.

The Hitchens article grinds on like this. Moore is an apologist for Saddam's regime by show-

**"Thank you Michael Moore. Thank you for breaking into the media mainstream with a point of view that more faithfully represents the awful truth of largely unchecked US power."**

of the song *Desperado* to Michael Moore and *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

On both sides of the Pacific the widespread acceptance of the film seems to have spurred the political Right to news heights of intolerance and boorishness. The fact that commercial success has not led Moore to tone down his criticism of the corrupt and extreme Bush Administration is presenting

were not so much the fascists, but those loathsome communists fighting on the Republican side. His take on the presumed inevitable decay of the Russian Revolution, *Animal Farm*, was (quite literally) compulsory reading in schools throughout much of the capitalist world. Trotskyists, lapsed and current, are as one with the capitalist ruling class in all these attitudes

George W Bush became president courtesy of shady electoral practices in the decisive state of Florida during the 2000 Presidential Elections.

Hitchens would have it that only an incurable conspiracy theorist would think that the combination of a card-carrying Republican head of the Florida electoral commission, a brother ensconced as state governor and an adverse decision from

Clark. He made this confession on May 25 of this year. According to Hitchens, Moore should have pulled *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which was due for release in the following few weeks, and gone back to the drawing board.

Clark's admission explains everything! Bush is in the clear! Clark is an impeccable source – he has even criticised aspects of the Administration's "War on Terror".



# George Orwell



ing groups of people smiling at a camera before the shock and awe bombing of Baghdad in March last year. The links between previous US Administrations and Saddam's regime and even with currently serving figures in George Dubya's team are not evidence of cynical exploitation of events then and now but a of a belated and welcome recognition that essentially wholesome powers like the US should move militarily against dictators and not support them. Oh brother! Hitchens has taken up the common stance of totalitarians for the capitalist status quo that maintains that, while imperialism may have sinned in the past, it is acting with selfless detachment in the present.

## Exploiting human suffering?

However, recalling the Hitchens article before the Adelaide preview I was concerned that the film would exploit the suffering and grief of the families of US soldiers killed in Iraq. I share Hitchens' professed distaste for the manipulation of personal tragedy for the purpose of political debate, though I suspect Hitchens' hostility might be selective. I was relieved to discover that the film's recording of Lila Lipscombe's grieving over her son was not in this category. It was distressing viewing but it was sympathetic to her and her shattered faith in the role of the US in world affairs. It did not draw any conclusions for the audience that Lila did not make herself.

Hitchens, on the other hand, would like to stand matters on their head. Moore's documentation of the mother's grief is mocking and dismissive of the sacrifice being made by the service men and women in

Iraq. It is treacherous and callous and unpatriotic to suggest that, if these people had gone to bring freedom to Iraq and neutralise a (non-existent) threat to regional and world security, they died in vain. Shame on you Michael Moore!

This is where the self-righteous Hitchens relies on the short-term memory loss induced by the coverage of current events. In order to keep his credentials as a "left-wing commentator", Hitchens still maintains that the Vietnam War was a bad war. It is safely in the past and, of course, bears no resemblance to the current batch of good wars being waged by the US and its allies. But if it is callous and exploitative to suggest that the lives of the 900 US military personnel might have been wasted in Iraq, what are we to make of the sacrifice of the 57,939 American soldiers who died in Vietnam or the 313,616 who were wounded?

I will have to join the long-ish list of viewers who think that *Fahrenheit 9/11* has faults. To suggest that the US-led Coalition of the Willing is made up only of tiny Pacific island states or cash-strapped eastern European countries is simply not right and has the effect of letting other predator countries like Britain and Australia off the hook. But at the end of the documentary I clapped long and loud along with just about everyone else in the cinema. I think the spontaneous outburst was saying:

"Thank you Michael Moore. Thank you for breaking into the media mainstream with a point of view that more faithfully represents the awful truth of largely unchecked US power. Thank you for getting one back for us in the face of the batteries of out-and-out apologists like Christopher Hitchens." ✪

# 40th Anniversary

## Lies used to escalate war in Viet Nam

Bruce McPhie

**On August 2 and 4, 1964, two American destroyers, the *Maddox* and the *Turner Joy*, claimed to be under "unprovoked" attack by North Viet Nam, while sailing in "international waters".**

On August 5, US carrier-based jets flew 64 bombing sorties against the North in "reprisal" – the first of thousands of such missions over the next nine years, that would eventually hit every road and rail bridge, six industrial cities, 28 of the 30 provincial cities, more than 350 hospitals, 3000 schools, 1000 churches or temples, and 4000 of the 5788 villages in the North.

While the US bombed the North, President Johnson (Democrat) spoke live over all three US television networks, rallying public opinion with talk of "... open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America".

The American press published lurid reports inspired by Pentagon officials. *Life* had the American ships "under continuous torpedo attack". *Newsweek* concluded, "It was time for American might to strike back."

On August 7, an indignant Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, giving the President the power to "take all necessary measures" to "repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression". It was passed almost unanimously – by the House (416-0) and Senate (88-2).

Later that day, Morse, one of the two dissenting Senators, correctly predicted: "history will record that we have made a great mistake ... We are in effect giving the President ... war making powers in the absence of a declaration of war".

When he heard Congress had passed the Resolution, Johnson joked that the wording "was like

Grandma's nightshirt – it covers everything".

The Resolution empowered Johnson to deploy regular American troops in Viet Nam. There were already nearly 20,000 US soldiers in Viet Nam, officially described as "military advisers" – but they were increasingly dying, and actually engaged in direct active combat.

(Earlier, President JFK had unequivocally lied when he publicly denied this fact.)

### "Proof package"

Subsequent research, and the leaking of top-secret official documents known as the "Pentagon Papers" proved that the first "attack" actually took place while the *USS Maddox* was in Vietnamese territorial waters assisting a covert commando raid. Furthermore, the *Maddox* fired first! America suffered no casualties, and negligible damage. The second "attack", which the US actively tried to provoke,

an opportunity, lies and fabricated "proof", to put it to Congress.

Daniel Ellsberg, a Pentagon analyst working for US Defence Secretary Robert S McNamara, later turned against the war and leaked the official "Pentagon Papers", which were first published in the *New York Times* on June 13, 1971.

Daniel Ellsberg: "Very few Americans would ever come to realise that ... even at the time, the statement that it was a clear attack to which we were justified in responding to so fast, was a lie".

"Johnson wanted to underline by bombs, by a little killing, the threats that he was already making to Hanoi. At the same time, he didn't want to reveal the threats, which did indeed foreshadow an endless war of enormous proportions."

"So Tonkin Gulf seemed to give him the perfect opportunity to carry out a little bombing while not suggesting that it was part of a larger programme of bombing – which it was." (www.ellsberg.net)

**"So Tonkin Gulf seemed to give him the perfect opportunity to carry out a little bombing while not suggesting that it was part of a larger programme of bombing – which it was."**

simply never took place at all. US pilot eyewitnesses were pressured to change their stories to provide Johnson's "proof package".

The Johnson administration had in fact drafted the Resolution well before, and had already selected 94 bombing targets in the north by early June. They just needed

The attacks in America on September 11, 2001, were also described as an "opportunity" by those now pursuing the so-called "war on terror". President Bush misled Congress into supporting war in Iraq, using lies, fabricated evidence, and the fear of an imminent threat. ✪



A 1967 caricature of Johnson



# Call for UN action on wall

Mark Alberg

**Palestinians are calling for swift action by the United Nations to enforce the July 9 ruling by the World Court that Israel's apartheid-like "separation wall" along the West Bank is illegal and should be torn down. The UN General Assembly's overwhelming vote in support of the court's decision on July 20 has only strengthened the Palestinians' resolve.**

Citing relevant international and human rights law – including the Right to Self Determination, the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – the International Court of Justice voted 14-1 that "construction of the wall and its associated regime are contrary to international law".

The Court said Israel should immediately cease all construction on the concrete and barbed-wire wall and dismantle segments already built. It further called on Israel to pay reparations for the damage done to Palestinians who have been displaced or harmed by

its construction. The only dissenting vote was from US judge Thomas Buergenthal.

The verdict was hailed by a wide spectrum of Palestinian leaders and civic groups, and by Israeli peace forces. Ahmed Qurei, the Palestinian Prime Minister, called the decision historic, and Saeb Erekat, Minister for Negotiations, urged swift UN action to implement the non-binding advisory decision.

The Israeli Government of Ariel Sharon said it would disregard the ruling, saying the court had no jurisdiction or authority to rule on the question. In contrast, the Jewish peace group Gush Shalom placed newspaper ads that said, "Three cheers for the judges".

It hailed both the World Court decision and the earlier decision by Israel's Supreme Court that the wall, at least in some places, violates the law and imposes unnecessary suffering on the Palestinian people.

The Communist Party of Israel (CPI) said the World Court's recommendations "are an important contribution to the public struggle against the construction of the wall and the continuing occupation, and



The true purpose of the wall is to continue the occupation of Palestinian land

for the achievement of a just and stable peace which is the real guarantee of security."

It said that the true purpose of the wall was not to enhance Israel's security, but to continue the occupation of Palestinian land, to perpetuate the settlements in the West Bank, and to prevent a viable Palestinian state.

Responding to the Israeli Government's "arrogant dismissal" of the UN court's findings, the CPI said such a stance may lead to the international isolation of Israel and to the imposition of sanctions such as those imposed on South Africa during the apartheid regime. It called for the immediate dismantling of the wall and of all settlements in the occupied territories.

Meanwhile, as Palestinians sought to enforce the verdict against the apartheid wall, a serious political

crisis erupted within the Palestinian Authority (PA). In the wake of a series of kidnappings, including of several Palestinian security officials and four French citizens in Gaza (later released), Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat declared a state of emergency in Gaza.

Prime Minister Qurei submitted his resignation, citing the lawlessness and saying he had insufficient authority to implement reforms, as did a number of other prominent officials.

As of July 20, Qurei was persuaded to stay on. Arafat's appointment of his nephew, Mousa Arafat, to a top security post was met with fierce opposition by resistance groups, including his own Fatah faction. He ultimately stepped back from the appointment by placing another official above him.

The persistent suffering of the

Palestinian people in Gaza – stemming from Israeli border closings, massive unemployment, and constant raids by Israeli occupation forces – has torn at the very fabric of society and worked to undermine Palestinian institutions, including the Palestinian Authority.

Danny Rubinstein, a columnist for the Israeli paper *Haaretz*, said, "Israel has done everything to bring about the collapse of the PA". He said the Israelis have also "cultivated Palestinian corruption", rewarding corrupt senior Palestinian officials while simultaneously creating severe hardship among the general Palestinian public.

He added that such moves have undermined Palestinian rule and ushered in a period of chaos, the outcome of which remains unpredictable.

*People's Weekly World* ☪

## GI Rights Hotline answers soldiers' calls

Denise Winebrenner Edwards

**The reality of war has the phones ringing. As the death toll of US forces since the start of the war rose to 900 this week, and the Bush administration's rationale for war lies shredded by the truth, military personnel have been contacting a loosely-knit network of dozens of conscientious objectors (CO) groups, known as the GI Rights Hotline, to find a way off the front lines.**

"We get thousands of calls per month", soft-spoken hotline volunteer Bill Galvin told the *People's Weekly World*. "The sharp spike began about two weeks before the invasion of Iraq and has only increased. We have had to bring on new counsellors to meet the volume", he said.

"Mostly, callers are soldiers who have been part of or witnessed something repulsive in either Afghanistan or Iraq. Most have served their tour and received orders to return. Many say that they would rather go to jail than go back to Iraq", he said.

Military personnel in their late teens and early 20s, first-term enlistees, are the largest group calling the hotline. But career GIs and officers also call. "In 2003, we had a cadet from West Point call", Galvin said.

In the early '70s Galvin was a CO during the Vietnam War and never looked back. His 30 years of experience honestly and successfully counselling military personnel on their rights, including CO status, brings a ring of balance and confidence.

The estimated 200,000 young people who join a branch of the military each year are less about flag waving and more about food, rent and college tuition. This volunteer army has been called the "poverty draft".

Recent stories of two working-class women, one African American and one white, offer a glimpse of economic reality. Shoshana Johnson from Midland, Texas, and Jessica Lynch, from Palestine, West Virginia, were part of a March 23, 2003, ambush in Iraq which took the life of Lori Piestewa, the first Native American Indian woman killed in military service to the United States. Johnson and Lynch joined the Army looking for a future, for a job.

"Young people join today for money for college or their community offers no opportunities", Galvin said.

Canada is not the alternative it was during the Vietnam era, Galvin emphasised. "If you get caught with 'illegal' status, you are handed over directly to US officials", he said. Currently, two soldiers are seeking asylum in Canada.

In Boston, Charlie Richardson, of Military Families Speak Out, demands that loved ones be taken out of harm's way – now. Richardson, whose son is a Marine, although not currently stationed in Iraq, was not surprised by the US Senate report, released July 9, which said Bush's justification for war was a lie.

"We were saying that all along", he told the *World* by phone.

And to those who say, "We created this mess, we have to clean it up", Richardson replies: "Occupation is the problem, not the solution. Military occupation does not stabilise Iraq nor strengthen the country. We need to get our troops out and send in resources to rebuild. We will keep speaking out until it's over. Really over."

Galvin and Richardson know war up close and personal. It is not an applause line, nor cheap rhetoric. To these men, it is real.

*People's Weekly World* ☪

## Miami TV invites terrorists to talk openly about planned attacks on Cuba and Venezuela

**Cuban television broadcast remarkable segments of a one-hour program shown on Miami TV Channel 41, in which known paramilitaries from the Florida-based Commandos F4 organisation openly spoke of their preparation for an armed attack against Cuba.**

In moments of near-hysteria, the leader of Commandos F4, Rodolfo Frometa, said that his organisation has people inside and outside Cuba ready to carry out armed acts against the Cuban Government. Dressed in fatigues, as were the others of his organisation present in the studio, Frometa said that his group trained with AK47 semi-automatic weapons – arms, he said, that were legally obtained in the United States although he admitted he had no paperwork to prove it.

The Miami program was hosted by Oscar Asa, the nephew of former Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. Batista was responsible for the murder of thousands of Cubans until he was forced out by revolutionary forces in 1959. Asa seemed to enjoy posing provocative questions relating to assassination in what critics on Cuba's nightly televised Round Table classed as openly violating US federal law.

It is illegal in the US to defend terrorist actions on TV. The promotion of the assassination of another nation's leader is also illegal under

the US Neutrality Act. Nonetheless, these men were able to openly sit in a studio dressed for war and happily discuss the different armaments they were using to train paramilitaries to attack Cuba. And they were allowed to get away with it. There couldn't be better proof of the US Government's complicity with such would-be terrorists.

Adding weight to recent accusations made by Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, former Venezuelan army captain Eduardo Garcia was also present in full uniform to discuss the help Commandos F4 were giving in his efforts to bring down Chavez by force. Chavez has fre-

quently charged that Miami Cuban-American terrorist organisations are involved with Venezuelans seeking to assassinate him.

The host of the Cuban program, Randy Alonso, simply asked viewers to form their own conclusions after seeing such an astonishing program, commenting that the message that Frometa gave was clear: his paramilitary organisation was ready and trained – it just needed the money. And, said Alonso, the money is there – \$36 million recently earmarked by the US Government to support such groups.

*Communist Party of Canada* ☪

Perth

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# 9/11 questions refuse to go away

Susan Webb

**USA: The final report of the bipartisan national 9/11 commission is unlikely to stamp out questions about the Bush Administration's handling of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, its war on Iraq, or its overall foreign policy.**

Rather than folding up shop after issuing their report, allowing these issues to fade from the public's eye, as Bush may have hoped, commission members announced they would spend the summer lobbying for their recommendations. Senate hearings are in the works.

Republicans clearly hope to pin the blame for the administration's 9/11 and Iraq failures on "faulty intelligence", and divert attention to the commission's recommendations for restructuring the intelligence agencies. But those proposals themselves raise troubling questions. And the report, cautious as it is, raises other issues that can cause problems for the Bush Administration as it heads into the heat of the presidential election campaign.

The report calls for establish-

ment of a cabinet-level National Intelligence Director (NID), located in the office of the President, who would oversee the CIA, FBI and all other intelligence bodies. In addition, the report proposes the creation of a National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC), also in the President's office, which would direct intelligence gathering and operations both inside and outside the US.

## Despite efforts to spread blame equally between the Clinton and Bush administrations, the report paints a harsh picture of Bush's lack of interest in the flood of attack warnings in the summer of 2001.

Investigative reporter Robert Dreyfuss calls these "Big-Brother-like" measures. He points out that "the NCTC-NID combination would concentrate the power to carry out domestic spying in an all-powerful nexus, located where? In the White House".

Warning against blurring the lines between domestic and for-

eign intelligence, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said bringing "the CIA's culture of covert, subversive operations" into the domestic arena would mean "a further weakening of civil liberties protections".

The Bush Administration's manipulation of intelligence to sell the Iraq war has sparked concerns about separating intelligence gathering from political pressure. But these proposals go in the opposite direction. An "intelligence director sitting in the White House would be in the hip pocket of the president", ACLU Executive Director Anthony Romero said.

More profoundly, as former Clinton Labor Secretary Robert Reich comments, "Let's not fool ourselves into thinking that better intelligence is a substitute for better policy".

In a slap at the Bush Administration's unilateralist militarism, and indirectly suggesting that the US invasion of Iraq has damaged efforts to curb terrorism, the commission calls for a "balanced" preventative strategy "that

is as much, or more, political as it is military". Further, the report says the US "should offer an example of moral leadership ... committed to treat people humanely [and] abide by the rule of law".

Although Dick Cheney continues to claim otherwise, the commission also reaffirms its conclusion that there is no evidence of collaboration between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida.

In a section given scant attention by the commercial media, the report traces the emergence of Bin Laden and al Qaeda to the US-sponsored war that ousted the Soviet-backed secular/democratic Afghan government in 1988.

The report says that war "gave Islamist extremists a rallying point and training field". Bin Laden, with

access to his family's huge fortune, became known "as a person who generously helped fund the anti-Soviet jihad", the report says.

"Bin Laden understood ... the extent to which the continuation and eventual success of the jihad in Afghanistan depended on an increasingly complex, almost worldwide organisation", the report continues.

He and associates "established what they called a base or foundation (al-Qaida) as a potential general headquarters" for this. "The international environment for bin Laden's efforts was ideal. Saudi Arabia and the United States supplied billions of dollars worth of secret assistance to rebel groups in Afghanistan fighting the Soviet occupation".

The report claims that bin Laden and associates received "little or no" assistance from the US "because they had their own sources of support." But the point is clear: the roots of al-Qaida lie in the US Government's covert anti-Soviet "jihad".

Despite efforts to spread blame equally between the Clinton and Bush administrations, the report paints a harsh picture of Bush's lack of interest in the flood of attack warnings in the summer of 2001.

"Most of the intelligence community recognised ... that the number and severity of threat reports were unprecedented. Many officials told us that they knew something terrible was planned, and they were desperate to stop it", the commission says.

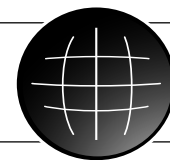
A briefing Bush received on August 6, 2001, titled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike US", referred to "patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks, including recent surveillance of federal buildings in New York". It mentioned a call received in May by the US Embassy in the United Arab Emirates "saying that a group of bin Laden supporters was in the US planning attacks with explosives".

The 9/11 report says Bush "did not recall discussing the August 6 report with the Attorney General or whether Rice had done so." The commission "found no indication of any further discussion before September 11 among the President and his top advisers of the possibility of a threat of an al-Qaida attack in the United States".

*People's Weekly World* ☪



The Government hoped to pin the blame on "faulty intelligence"



## Global briefs

**JAPAN:** The organising committee for the 2004 World Conference against A & H-Bombs called on peace and progressive organisations to send representatives to the conference. The Conference is an historic opportunity to move towards the abolition of nuclear weapons and prepare for the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki next year. Among the participants in this year's conference are government officials from Egypt, Malaysia, and Mexico which take part in the New Agenda Coalition and/or the Non-Aligned Movement. The NAM has called for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The officials will join with representatives of the world's anti-nuclear NGOs and nuclear weapons test victims organisations to discuss ways to eliminate nuclear weapons. Christopher G Weeramantory, former vice president of the International Court of Justice, has declared that the use of nuclear weapons is illegal.

**USA:** US Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson urged Secretary of State Colin Powell to make an official request that the United Nations provide observers for the November 2 elections in the United States to "ensure free and fair elections". Thirteen Democratic Congress members, led by Johnson, (Representative from Texas), sent a letter on July 8 to UN General Secretary Kofi Annan requesting the presence of UN representatives in every county during the voting process and any subsequent recount. The UN was quick to knock back the request, saying it would be "intervention in a country's sovereignty" if it were not made by the US Government. A Florida Democrat Corrine Brown announced that the Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe has confirmed that it will be present in the United States - specifically in Florida - on Election Day. However, state election authorities in Florida have already announced that such observers would not be allowed access to the voting process and that they would have to remain more than 50 feet (15.2 metres) from the polling.

**RUSSIA:** President Putin of Russia issued a stern warning to the West not to get in the way of Russia and the Ukraine forging closer ties. The Russian and Ukrainian Presidents met in Yalta where a range of issues was discussed. Presidential elections are due on October 31. President Kuchma is eager to get as much support as possible from Russia as he attempts to put his choice, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych, in a position to win the presidency. There are ten candidates in the race to succeed Kuchma. Among the favourites is Kuchma's bitter opponent, the pro-western Viktor Yushchenko. Another strong candidate is Communist Party leader Petro Symonenko. Kuchma's team, as well as a number of Russian political consultants operating in the Ukraine in the run-up to the vote, are placing their bets on Yanukovych. The polls show all three with significant support and the election too close to call.

## India

### Massive victory for Left Front in Tripura polls

**Left Front has won a massive victory in Tripura state's three-tier Panchayat (village committees) polls. The Left Front unites the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Communist Party of India, Forward Bloc and Revolutionary Socialist Party. Out of the 513 village Panchayats in the state, results for 502 had come in by the time of filing of this report. Of these, the LF had won a majority in 468, conceding 28 to the Congress, while there was a tie in the remaining six.**

Out of the total of 299 Panchayat Samity seats, results for 270 have been declared so far, with the Left Front bagging 258 and the Congress 12.

Results for 74 out of the total

82 Zilla Parishad seats have been declared. Of these, 73 have gone in favour of the Left Front while the Congress had to remain content with one.

The number of seats won by the Left Front this time is more than that in the 1999 polls in all tiers. It has attained a majority in 95 percent of the Gram Panchayats, and also retained all the Panchayat Samities and Zila Parishads in the state.

The surging support for the Left Front in rural Tripura is further testified by the sizeable number of seats wrested by the Left Front from the Congress in this election.

In a statement issued on July 22, the Tripura Left Front committee congratulated the rural people of the state for giving a massive victory

for the Left Front candidates in all tiers of the Panchayat election.

The statement said through this poll verdict, the people of Tripura have proclaimed their desire to struggle for maintaining peace and democracy and for carrying forward the process of progress of the state.

Highly valuing the increased faith and trust reposed in it, the Left Front assured the people that, with a still greater sense of responsibility, it would advance their struggle for a better life. The Left Front also extended cooperation to all the Panchayat bodies, irrespective of party affiliations, in their drive to make them more accessible to the people and to maintain peace and harmony in rural areas.

*India News Network* ☪

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

## Who owns the sod?

The article "Who Owns the Sod?" (Guardian 14-07-04) shows clearly that it is very difficult, but not impossible, to find out who owned and owns land in Britain.

It would be useful to do the same research in relation to Australia.

That should not be difficult. Maybe someone has already done it?

In a footnote to *Capital*, Marx referred to pioneer work done on the subject in Britain: Our Old Nobility by "Noblesse Oblige" – who turned out to be one of those conscientious members of the protestant lower clergy such as feature in the novels of Trollope – also in TV versions.

And a rather unsavory business it was; theft and brute force are recorded. Riches garnered in the countryside could provide a basis for moving into trade and manufacture and becoming "legit", just as the Russian mafia-capitalists of the '90s are trying to become the "legit" capitalists of this decade, with mixed fortunes.

Conservative economists

such as Malthus (a parson to the employees of the drug-pushing East India Company) and Nassau Senior advised their young charges that they "should never enquire into the origins" of capital. As well they might.

S Cooper  
Annandale, NSW

## Trading with the PBS

Tim Wilson, of the APEC Study Centre whose chair is all the way with the FTA aficionado Alan Oxley, accuses left-wing doctors of ignoring positive effects of the Australia-US free trade agreement on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). (*Australian*, letters, 28-07-04)

There are several points he fails to mention. This is the first international trade agreement in which a nation's pharmaceutical scheme is specifically included.

Any changes or policy decisions to the PBS have in the past been determined under Australian guidelines with the welfare of the people at heart.

Now if the FTA with the US is ratified, the PBS will be in a trade agreement with the nation with the most inefficient and inequitable pharmaceutical system of wealthy nations. This is where 40 per cent of people can't afford access to medicines and many have to go to Canada or Mexico to get them.

The principles in the FTA are vastly different from those of the PBS. The emphasis is on rewarding

innovation with no mention of universal access to medicines. These are the principles under which any dispute would be determined.

If the US is not happy with the way things are going – that the independent review process is not keeping to the obligations of the agreement – the dispute may end up before a trade settlement panel of three international trade experts. The panel can order that a law be changed or compensation paid.

The panel's ruling is binding. Wilson also ignores the affects on the PBS of changes to patent regulations within the agreement. This has been estimated to be of considerable cost to the PBS and state public hospitals.

The US believes this is the first step in opening up the PBS. Another condition of the FTA is the setting up of a Medicines Working Group with the US to discuss policy and progress of the agreement.

What does Australia have to gain from the US in these policy areas? Surely, Australians should be able to determine how to improve transparency and the workings of the PBS without the influence of a trade agreement with the US.

Tracy Schrader  
Doctors Reform Society  
Annerley, Qld

## The terrible price

I am deeply indebted to The Guardian (14-07-04) for the article "The Terrible Price" and to Tom Gill for translating it from French

to English and express thanks to the author.

It affirms the opinions I have had on the matter – that it was the loss of the most experienced, dedicated members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that led to it being weakened. There may have been millions more joining the party but they lacked in experience and knowledge, and had nobody from whom to learn.

And among those millions there would have been innumerable opportunists and self-servers whose only interest was for themselves.

Open slaughter for the pro capitalists with a gift of the gab – and Gorbachev certainly fit that

– note his payoff with a position on the lucrative speaking circuit in America.

This article should supply answers to Bob Saltis in his letter in the same edition.

There is one point in his letter with which I would take issue – the pessimism over the value of the struggle because of human weakness. Bob! Bob! That's what the struggle is all about. You are never going to create the perfect human being. But because you lose a skirmish or even a battle does not mean you have lost the war.

Fight on!

B Appleton  
Woy Woy, NSW

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## Culture & Life

by  
Rob Gowland

### Soviet-class films a thing of the past

One of the undoubted glories and enduring successes of the socialist system is the high standard of universal education it attains. Today, of course, the inhabitants of former socialist countries are beginning to realise that while capitalism enables a minority of the population to own more than one car, it has no use for a high-quality universal education system.

In March, the British Communist newspaper *Morning Star* ran an interview with the Russian film director Karen Shakhnazarov, a former Soviet director nowadays the President of Mosfilm Studios in Moscow, Europe's largest film studios. The interview had first appeared in *RIA-Novosti*.

Discussing the quality of the films produced today in Russia, Shakhnazarov observed: "The quality of the film industry is determined by the cultural level of its audience, which was undoubtedly higher in Soviet times".

In Shakhnazarov's opinion, the decline in the country's cultural level is "directly linked" to education, "which was much better 12 to 15 years ago" (i.e. before the overthrow of socialism in the USSR).

"I used to be a teacher", Shakhnazarov told the interviewer, "and can say that some entrants of the director faculty [of the national film school] have never read Mikhail Bulgakov's works.

"A director should be well educated. Today's youth read very little.

"People are brought up on advertising and film clichés ... They

have forgotten how to think and cannot create anything serious.

"In Soviet times, there was not such an information flood from the West as we have now.

"However, we saw all the best films of the world film industry. Now some people do not even know who Fellini is."

Shakhnazarov could have added that there is already a rather clandestine movement among young people who are now reading and discussing among themselves classical Russian literature.

Unfortunately, Shakhnazarov identifies no political or economic forces behind his comments of the present situation. He gives no indication of being aware that they are part of a deliberate process designed to reduce the territory of the former Soviet Union to cultural, educational, economic and political backwardness.

The best he can do is glib generalisations ("globalisation is a steamroller that is crushing and eliminating individuality") or to throw his hands up in despair: "I think that Russia now is rated far behind the West and seems to borrow its worst features".

Or else he lapses into the kind of mystic nonsense that we thought had gone out forever with the Revolution: "The Russian soul is sleeping, but will hopefully wake up some day". But will it be a right-wing nationalist or a socialist awakening?

Karen Shakhnazarov does not seem to recognise that capitalism is engaged in a very serious economic war against Russia, a war of conquest and colonisation. The low cultural level that Shakhnazarov bemoans is a by-product of that economic, cultural and political war.

As we have discussed before in this column, the ruling class does not want ordinary people to become adept at analysing current events and the nature of the world they live in. Such knowledge could be dangerous, causing people in capitalist

countries to feel that they were not getting their just share of the riches produced by their own labour.

This in turn could lead to social disturbances and even, heaven forefend, demands for changes in the social and economic system!

In countries that were formerly socialist, it could lead to serious questioning of the wisdom and desirability of abandoning socialism, of abandoning public ownership, of abandoning private ownership, of relinquishing full employment, free health care, free universal education and guaranteed housing at extremely low rents.

No, the capitalist class is not going to facilitate that sort of thing. They much prefer the people to be kept distracted, to be flooded with superficiality and immersed in trivia.

This is what comes with the



"flood of information from the West" which Shakhnazarov notes, for all its quantity, does not enhance the Russian people's cultural level at all.

Capitalism's propaganda line is to denigrate the achievements of socialism, or at least to depoliticise them.

Shakhnazarov does add a grudging acknowledgement of the achievements of socialism without mentioning it as such: "Soviet times saw some colossal achievements..."

Such "colossal" achievements that capitalism cannot simply discard them as worthless. Instead, it cleverly allows them to be absorbed as "nostalgia", shorn of their political significance.

Thus the Russian army retains its Soviet emblems and banners, and Shakhnazarov's studio, Mosfilm, still uses as its trademark and logo,

seen at the beginning of all its films, a rotating model of Vera Mukhina's famous sculpture of the *Worker and Collective Farm Woman*. The tune of the Soviet national anthem is still retained as the present anthem.

Holding aloft a hammer and a sickle respectively, these two monumental figures still stand at the entrance to the permanent Exhibition of Economic Achievement in Moscow which is now a business centre.

The West's continuing cultural war on the former Soviet Union has been quite successful, as Shakhnazarov's assorted complaints indicate. As he himself, says: "in creative terms, Soviet-class feature films are not produced in Russia today". But will he become a campaigner to restore the former glory of the Soviet film industry? That is the question. ☸





Sun August 8 ~  
~ Sat August 14

The ABC's home of right-wing religious bigotry *Compass* (ABC 10.15pm Sunday) this week features Julia Black's documentary on abortion, *My Foetus*. As though having an abortion was not already an emotionally traumatic experience, Black follows the lead of the Right to Life lobby and tries to make viewers confront what she calls the "reality" of abortion.

In other words, just as the Right to Lifers do, she shows us images of an abortion procedure at four weeks of pregnancy, an inspection of aborted foetal remains of a seven-week pregnancy and images of a ten, 11 and 21 week aborted foetus.

What has given Black's film, made for Britain's Channel Four, such a high profile is that Black has impeccable *pro-choice* credentials: her father set up the charity Marie Stopes International - Britain's largest abortion provider outside the NHS and one of the world's largest reproductive health organisations. She herself had an abortion at the age of 21.

Small wonder that reactionaries are hailing the film as a blockbuster, a powerhouse blow against the Godless abortionists. And small wonder that it is being screened on *Compass*.

As long as there are people opposed to a woman's right to control her own reproduction, this kind of propaganda will no doubt be assured of a market on video.

Skilfully, the film affects not to be overtly anti-abortion. "Having looked at the facts, uncomfortable as they are, you have to make up

your own mind as to which life takes priority.

"That decision is a moral one, that only you can make", says Black. But her film is intended to ensure that you make the Right choice.

More right wing propaganda is on display in *The Forbidden Team* (SBS 7.30pm Monday), ostensibly a film about a football match.

The match in question however was an "international" between Greenland and Tibet. Tibet? A ha!

Tibet is not a separate country, it is part of China; how can it play an international match against another country? And why would people in Europe go to the trouble of organising such a non-event?

If you said they would do it in order to open yet another front in the Cold War against China you would be spot on. The match was organised by some anti-Communist Danes and equally anti-Communist Tibetan exiles.

The latter, as far as SBS is concerned, appear to represent the whole population of Tibet. SBS' notes for the program tell us that "Sonam, captain of the team, ... represents the new generation of Tibetans. A generation that has grown up outside of Tibet and is used to the western lifestyle".

There is a new generation of Tibetans, but they live in Tibet, have abolished slavery, do not live under the thumb of the priesthood anymore and are forging a new life style as part of China.

The attempt to set up a bogus "Tibetan national football team" comprised of exiles is just another illustration that when it comes to anti-Communist provocations, the bourgeoisie never misses a chance.

Got a few million lying around that you want to invest? Try the art market.

You don't need to know anything about art or even to like it. All you need is a broker to point you in the direction of some artists whose work will go up in value, for no discernible reason, within a relatively short space of time.

Its practitioners euphemistically call it "investing", but it's really



Look hard enough and you will find one (*The Big Picture: Britain's X-Files*)

speculation. They are gambling on the price going up so they can sell at a profit.

There are now so many people desperate to find something that will provide a profit on their "investment" without them having to actually work, that art auctions in Australia have more than doubled their annual sales in five years. New buyers are flocking to the market like never before.

But if you don't have the dosh to actually bid for some "art", then presumably the next best thing is to make a television program about it, or even a four-part series, like *Art House*, screening on *Reality Bites* (ABC 8.00pm Tuesdays).

Here we meet some of the "key players" as we follow the struggle for market supremacy between international auction house Christie's and "brash newcomer on the block" Deutscher-Menzies, in the lead-up to the August 2003 auctions.

The Australian-owned Deutscher-Menzies was set up in 1998 by former art dealer Chris Deutscher and "local racing identity" Rod Menzies.

Oh Boy! - a former art dealer and a "local racing identity" - impressive, I am sure.

The program tackles the big questions I know you are all ask-

ing: Can the market sustain three big auction houses (there's also Sotheby's)? When will the bubble burst?

And how will the Australian owned Deutscher-Menzies go against international giant Christie's? And does anyone who isn't a bludger actually care? (Oh, sorry, they are all genuine art lovers.)

Have you noticed that sightings of UFOs have dropped away to virtually nil? At one time, in the '60s, they were numbered in the hundreds annually.

I have a book by an Australian "Ufologist" who never went anywhere (even to mow the lawn) without a pair of binoculars around his neck so that he could snatch them up and observe any passing UFO, an occurrence that he assured us happened a lot.

The passing of the UFO phenomenon coincides with the "ending" of the Cold War and the "watch the skies" paranoia that was fostered by it. *Britain's X-Files*, screening on *The Big Picture* (ABC 8:30pm Wednesday), show that this paranoia also infected the military brass, who were afraid the UFOs might be some secret new type of Soviet plane.

The British Government set up

an official working party that investigated, in great secrecy, any and every reported UFO "encounter". Although they could not always satisfactorily explain every reported sighting, they never found any evidence of aliens either.

Over the years, as science fiction matured and sci-fi movies became more sophisticated, UFO design also changed, from cigar-shaped spaceships to "saucers". The US army spent seven years and who knows how much money trying to make a saucer of its own, not because the design had any merit - it didn't - but simply because it was the shape of UFOs.

The program reveals that Price Phillip was a convinced UFO watcher. There is a delightful recreation of an interview his equerry had on behalf of his boss with an alleged "alien" in a darkened room.

A rather scornful academic has the temerity to suggest that the incident was a sting operation by the Intelligence services to see if Phillip's staff would give an "alien" (or a Soviet agent posing as one) any significant information.

One social historian sums up the paranoia of the period: everyone was out looking for UFOs [and] if you go looking for them you are going to see them. ☺

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Jenny Haines, former Gen Sec NSW Nurses' Assoc

August 20

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# Fraud & racial segregation in the land of the free

According to a new study by experts at the University of Minnesota and Northwestern, the exclusion of more than 1.4 million African-American ex-convicts from the US electoral process is deliberately racist and stems directly from segregationist laws established during the 19th century. And it is Florida that holds first place among the states that most cruelly applies such discriminatory procedures.

In the country that proclaims itself to be such a model of democracy, more than 1.7 million citizens do not have the right to vote because of having a "criminal record". Of that number, a large majority is Black, a social group that tends to vote mostly for the Democratic Party.

The state of Florida, strategic for Republican President George W Bush's re-election, and governed by his brother, is "distinguished" by the fact that 600,000 of its citizens are deprived of the right to vote, a national record.

Governor Jeb Bush himself controls the electoral system, via Secretary of State Glenda Hood, a personal friend of Cuban-American Mel Martínez, former federal secretary of housing and a well-known accomplice of Miami's Cuban-American mafia.

According to the study by a group of researchers into the US election system, Florida, Georgia, Texas, Virginia and Kentucky are among the states where the last Senate elections were the most hard-fought (like the presidential elections in 2000) and won by Republicans, to a great extent thanks to the laws excluding ex-convicts

study, commented on the web site [Bef.com](http://Bef.com).

During the second half of the 19th century, many US states refused to comply with the Fifth Amendment, which guarantees Black people the right to vote. These states applied a number of laws and regulations with the aim of minimising the African-American vote under the pretext of a supposed "threat of Black domination", Uggen explained.

The spirit of that refusal to grant the descendants of slaves their elemental rights is present in every regulation that blocks access to basic democracy for that important minority. Little has changed in that sphere in many former slave states and other countries that the United States invaded to teach its concept of democracy.

Thirteen percent of all Black men in the United States are deprived of their right to vote. More than 245,000 women are in the same situation.

In six of the states that withhold such an important right via racist laws – Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, Virginia, and Iowa – one out of every four people of African origin is deprived of his or her right to vote.

Only the states of Maine, Massachusetts, Utah and Vermont allow inmates to participate in elections while serving a prison term.

Internationally, the norm is for people convicted of crimes to automatically recover all of their civic rights upon completing their prison sentences.

In Florida, ex-convicts who wish to have their full rights restored have

account of having been wrongfully excluded.

With four months to go before the November presidential elections, 8000 persons who have solicited that right have yet to be attended to, according to Bush's own services.

The election for the next US president could be decided in Florida by a very narrow margin of votes, according to all observers.

Last month, Bush's officials announced that they had discovered 47,000 people registered to vote who "could be" ex-convicts, and the governor ordered their exclusion, a process so absurd and arbitrary that the state's senior elections official, Ed Kast, resigned.

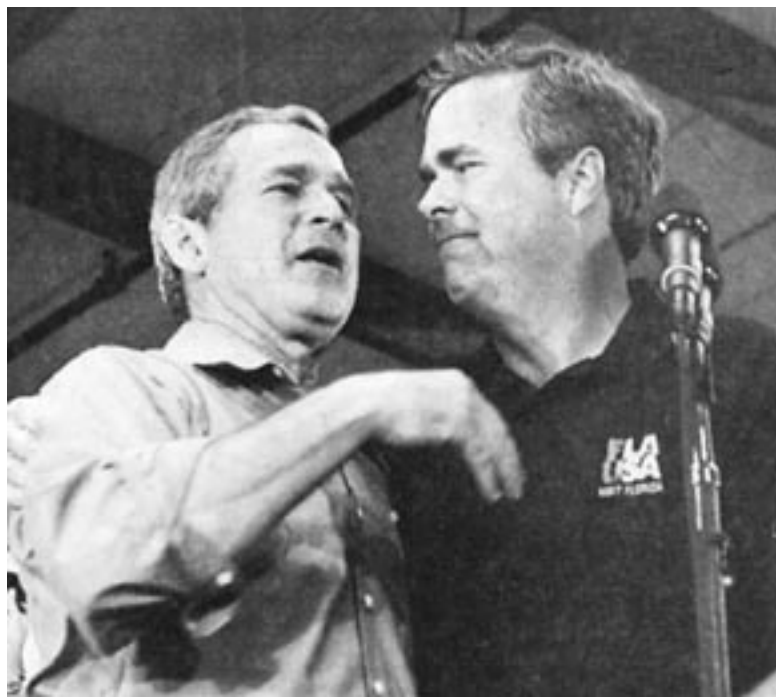
Because it is a secret, in line with a Florida law approved by the Republicans shortly after George W Bush robbed the "election," the list of those 47,000 "excludables" cannot be consulted by the population like any other electoral roll, in what is doubtless a case unique in the world.

The state recently consented to hand over a copy of the list to the American Civil Liberties Union, the country's most important civil rights group, after it was recognised as the legal advisor to the Green Party.

## Dodgy voting system

In addition to this scandalous situation, Florida continues to lack a trustworthy voting system. All indications are that the next elections will produce situations as absurd as those seen in 2000, in Miami-Dade and Broward.

The computerisation of the voting system is taking place in the midst of that crisis. A report



Swindling the voters – George and Jeb

authorise the purchase of the printing accessories needed for such a process.

The racist exclusion of voters with criminal records, the manipulation of secret lists and – according to some observers – the probable conclusion of the upcoming elections in another confusing situation propitious for fraud, is convenient for a Republican Party that openly allies itself with the Cuban-American mafia.

The dubious past of Jeb Bush – who was an associate of well-known dissolute characters in his financial adventures – would allow him to easily orient himself in that giant swindling operation.

Upon his arrival in Florida from Texas, Jeb Bush was hired by Armando Codina, a businessman at that time a member of the executive council of the terrorist Cuban-American National Foundation. Via a complacent millionaire friend, they obtained \$4.56 million in loans from the Broward Federal Savings & Loan Association in Sunrise, Florida to buy a building in Miami.

When they couldn't repay the loan, they managed to get the federal regulators to reduce the building's value to \$505,000, and then repaid that amount, kept the building and sued the former administrators of Broward Federal Savings & Loan Association, which was bankrupt.

Jeb was also associated with Leonel Martínez, a well-known drug trafficker who smuggled more than 1500 kilograms of cocaine into Miami between 1985 and 1986. When he was arrested in 1989 and then convicted, federal prosecutors had in their hands an eloquent photograph of Jeb shaking hands with Martínez, but refused to hand it over to the press.

Meanwhile, Martínez had contributed, with a number of cheques,

to the so-called Fund for the Future of America, headed up by Vice President George Bush (Sr) and later, by his presidential campaign.

## Jeb's dubious business partners

Another one of Jeb Bush's dubious business partners who won't cost him exclusion from the voter rolls is Mario Castellón, an extreme-right wing Guatemalan businessman who introduced himself to a leader of the Nicaraguan *Contras* to provide "medial services" to mercenaries via the illegal network overseen by Oliver North, Donald Gregg and narco-terrorist Félix Rodríguez.

Jeb also linked up with "Manny" Diaz, whose business buddies include Charles Keating Jr, convicted of having cheated dozens of investors in Lincoln Savings & Loan of a record \$6 billion.

He also had an extensive relationship with Miguel Recarey, another "successful" Cuban-American, who diverted a large amount of a federal subsidy destined for public health services in Miami. Likewise, through his firm, International Medial Centers (IMC), he organised hospital services for the Nicaraguan *Contra* mercenaries, a specialty of then-Vice President George Bush.

Simultaneously, Jeb received \$75,000 from IMC as its real estate agent to find a new headquarters site for Recarey, which he never did.

Recarey now appears on the FBI's most-wanted list.

And Jeb Bush, who has overlooked his own past, is the man who is deciding who may or may not vote in the state where in 2000 the US dream of democracy was violated in the most spectacular way ever witnessed.

Granma ☺

## Thirteen percent of all Black men in the United States are deprived of their right to vote.

from voting.

The study, titled "Felon Voting Rights and the Disenfranchisement of African Americans", complements a previous study, "Ballot Manipulation and the Menace of Negro Domination", a joint project between the University of Minnesota and Northwestern.

### Excluded from voting

"African Americans are a significant part of the excluded population", Christopher Uggen, a sociologist at the University of Minnesota and co-author of the

study, commented on the web site [Bef.com](http://Bef.com). In the case of serious crimes, they must somehow be called and present themselves in person in a special hearing presided over by Governor Jeb Bush, an extremely humiliating, medieval process in which they have to beg the governor to restore their rights.

In 2003, some 21,000 former convicts recovered their rights after civil rights organisations intervened and demonstrated the vast number of people who were unable to participate in the 2000 elections on

by a Miami-Dade official has just revealed that the Votronic brand voting machines, used in Miami-Dade and Broward counties, present a "serious defect".

According to that expert, those apparatuses cause votes to be lost and for entire machines to disappear during the final voting audit.

Lacking a mechanism for printing on paper, the Votronic machines, which are banned in California, do not allow voting results to be checked in a detailed manner. Florida Secretary of State Glenda Hood had repeatedly failed to



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