

## In Venezuela, a victory for working people

As *The Guardian* goes to press, final results in the referendum to decide the future of the presidency of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela were not available. However, figures released by the National Elections Council (NCE) – with nearly 95 per cent of the national vote counted – showed that support for Chávez stood at a resounding 58.95 percent (4,991,483 votes).

The failure of the old privileged elites and their US backers to unseat the President and to derail the Bolivarian Revolution's vast project in participatory democracy represents a major victory for the people of Venezuela. It is also a victory for the peoples of Latin America and the world over in their struggle against US domination and the policies of the big corporations and oil companies.

The attempt by counter-revolutionary forces to oust Chávez with a recall vote, a mechanism inserted in the 1999 Constitution by the President himself, has collapsed. This latest attempt to turn back the clock of history follows the failure of a military coup in April 2002 and an extremely costly, boss-led strike in the vital oil industry later that year.

Sunday's poll was a credit to the level of political maturity reached by the Venezuelan people in recent years.

In 1998 Chávez was swept to power with 3.67 million votes (56.2 percent). In 2000 he received 3.75 million votes (59.7 percent) and in last Sunday's referendum his vote soared to about 5 million (58.95 percent of those voting).

Addressing thousands of supporters after the results were announced, Chávez said that the Venezuelan people had given a definitive "NO" to a return to the past when unscrupulous politicians earned the country a ranking as one of the world's most corrupt. He said

the referendum process was "profoundly democratic" and called for "national reconciliation". He said his government was the only one to have brought stability to Venezuela.

On polling day supporters of the President were asked not to bring propaganda to the polling stations and not to wear the red of the "Chavistas". The request was complied with. Nearly all the polling stations were set up early in the morning and ready in good time.

Former Venezuelan President Betancourt commented favourably on the huge turnout at the poll. So did Hugo Chávez: "Ten years ago, Venezuelans used to go to the beach, they used to go shopping or rest, most people did not vote because they had lost their sense of democracy, it was a democracy without the people".

Since Chávez' landslide election victory in 1998, the people of Venezuela have regained their sense of involvement. In the weeks leading up to the vote, the streets ran with the sounds of the chant "no volverán" (they will not return) in reference to the bad old days of corporate rule.

The Chávez government has handed significant political power back to the people and invested heavily in education and health programs from the proceeds of the country's rich oil industry, something that no other Venezuelan Government has done. This is why the working people, farmers and the poor who live in shanty towns have rallied behind Chávez in massive numbers.

Former US President Jimmy Carter went to Venezuela to observe the latest poll. He had previously taken his Carter Center staff to monitor 50 different electoral processes. In Venezuela he found something new and moving. "I have never seen such massive participation", he said. ☺



A solidarity action with the Venezuelan people last week outside the US embassy in Sydney

Photo: Anna Pha

## Dead man walking

**Prime Minister John Howard has now been shown irrefutably to have lied to the Australian people. Last week's statement by former defence advisor Mike Scrafton that he told Howard asylum seekers had not thrown children off their boat into the sea just prior to the federal election in 2001, confirms what many people have come to suspect – that Howard and his Government are inveterate deceivers and liars.**

Though he had been told the truth, Howard ignored it and used the incident to demonise asylum seekers and run a campaign to pull votes based on suspicion and fear of refugees. In doing so he lied

to the Australian people, an act that even under the Westminster system so heralded by Howard himself, requires him to tender his resignation.

Mike Scrafton says in his statement that before the 2001 election he told Howard the evidence "certainly didn't support the proposition" that asylum seekers threw children off the refugee boat (which was actually sinking), that photographs used by the Government as evidence were "definitely of the sinking of the refugee boat ... not of children being thrown into the water", and "that no one in Defence that I dealt with on the matter still

believed any children were thrown overboard".

Howard and his ministers nonetheless continued to claim the incident took place, and in fact are still doing so today.

Though Howard is unlikely to step down, this latest revelation, added to the weight of other public deceptions such as the reasons for going to war against Iraq, should be more electoral baggage than he and his government can bear. He has already indicated an election will not be called until the latest possible time, in November. But he is now, as the saying goes, a dead man walking and deserves nothing less than to be booted out by voters. ☺

**The working people, farmers and the poor who live in shanty towns have rallied behind Chávez in massive numbers.**

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# The Guardian

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## “Wrong and dangerous”

The recent statement by 43 of the most senior former military chiefs and diplomats reflects widespread opposition and rejection of the Howard Government's foreign policy. In their strongly worded statement, the 43 eminent Australians reject the Government's decision to invade Iraq on “false assumptions” and its use of “deception”. It says that governments “must give priority to truth” and that “Australians must be able to believe they are being told the truth by our leaders”. The statement notes that “the international prestige of the United States and its Presidency has fallen precipitously over the last two years” and, because of Australia's “unquestioning support of the Bush Administration's policy, Australia has also been adversely affected”.

The outcome of the US, British and Australian invasion of Iraq has been “destructive”, especially for Iraq, and the “international system has been subjected to enormous pressure”. The 43 eminent persons call for “genuine partnership” with the United States “and not just a rubber stamp for policies decided in Washington”.

This echoes the public perception that the Howard Government is a trained monkey of the Bush administration, aping every single nuance of US policy. The signatories see a need for “more carefully balanced policies”, and for them to be applied to our relations with the nations of Asia and the South-West Pacific, “especially at the United Nations”. The statement declares that “it is wrong and dangerous for our elected representatives to mislead the Australian people ... if Australia is to be trusted by others”.

Howard and Downer immediately dismissed the statement as coming from “former” service personnel and diplomats suggesting that their age rendered their opinions out of date and not relevant to the post-September 11 (2001) world situation.

Former chief of the Defence Forces, General Peter Gration was then stirred into action by the Government's arrogance, saying that “it was not right for the government to blame mistakes ... on intelligence failures. This was a policy failure”, he said. General Gration dismissed the claim by Howard and Downer that the statement was only the views of “former” military men and diplomats. “I can tell you that [a] number of serving officers do share these concerns, and serving diplomats too.” Indicating that it was not just a question of the deception relating to the Iraq war, the General said, “Demonstrably, over the last year or two, truth in government has been less than it should be”.

Discontent with the present Liberal Party leadership is not confined to foreign relations. In the same week as the statement was issued, the Valder campaign was launched to unseat John Howard in his electorate. John Valder has impeccable conservative credentials as a former president of the Liberal Party and stockbroker and chairman of the Sydney Stock Exchange. He is fed up with the “grubby” Howard Government. His concerns include its demonising of refugees, university funding, Tampa, kids overboard, Guantanamo Bay, the move towards autocratic leadership and the threat to democratic principles.

There are a host of other issues and lies told that could be added to that list, such as Medicare, Australian sovereignty, union bashing and, most recently, the blatant lies on the merits of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

Opposition to Howard within military, diplomatic, business and intellectual circles is widespread and will not go away quickly. There are deep divisions within the ruling class. The Howard Government, having mounted the tiger of military aggression, cannot climb down. It will have to be thrown out.

The Labor Party is not without sin, either. Instead of opposing the Iraq war and the FTA on principle it has shilly-shallied on these vital issues. It went along with the lies told on the Tampa affair when Kim Beazley was leader. By voting for the FTA Labor will become equally culpable as jobs are lost, US Mickey Mouse culture takes over, the US drug companies insist on their “intellectual property rights” and the many other negatives of the FTA become apparent.

It is past time for real alternative political leaders to come forward – the sort of leaders just given a resounding vote of confidence by the working people and the poor in Venezuela.

### PRESS FUND

This week your *Guardian* has articles on more than twenty different subjects, including the Free Trade Agreement and the James Hardie compensation scam. Our paper is not as large as the mass media dailies and we do not have the many corporate ads that generate their profits, but we do carry the news the will not publish, and have more insightful coverage. And even more importantly, we are on the side of the working class. Now isn't that worth supporting? You can help us by sending in a contribution. Our grateful thanks go to the following for their generous contributions this week:

MH \$20, Ron Reed \$400, J R \$100.

This week's total: \$520 Progressive total: \$7900

# Bill Witley 1927-2004

William Morton Witley was born on August 26, 1927 at Millthorpe near Orange.

His father was a farmer and then a railway worker, and his mother was a schoolteacher and former Dux of Fort Street Girls High School. Bill's life ended on August 5 as a result of asbestos-related mesothelioma.

Bill trained with the Cadets during World War II but the war ended before he could be called up.

He began his working life in 1947 as a shunter on the NSW Railways, based in Broken Hill and working throughout the Western Districts of NSW. He was radicalised by the 1949 coal strike.

The following year, 1950, he got a job in the Broken Hill mines and joined the Communist Party because he was “fed up” with the Labor Party after it supported the jailing of Miners Federation leaders.

Bill visited Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China in 1955, at a time when Australians were severely discouraged from so doing, and were spied upon by their Government when they did. (His NSW Police Special Branch file attests to that – it was active right up until 1994!)

Along with his good mate and mentor Bill Flynn, Bill Witley fought the entrenched power of the ALP's right wing on the Barrier Industrial Council and was the last Communist Party Councillor elected in Broken Hill.

Bill was a long term member of the Broken Hill Field Naturalists Society and an early and strong advocate for conservation issues.

In 1975 he moved to the Illawarra and began his life as a coalminer at Coalcliff, north of Wollongong. He quickly became



involved with the local union and went on to become Lodge President and was elected to the Southern District Board of Management.

In 1982, he was at the head of the hundreds of miners and steelworkers from the Illawarra who stormed old parliament house in Canberra.

His retirement from the coal industry in August 1987 only meant one thing for Bill – more time to spend on industrial and community campaigns.

In 1988 he stood on an Independent Green Bans ticket with well known unionist and environmentalist Jack Munday for the NSW Upper House.

In retirement he also served as the CFMEU Mining and Energy Division's National Returning Officer.

For the past few years, Bill was Secretary of the NSW Retired Mineworkers Association and at the time of his death Secretary of the NSW Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association, in which he played a leading role in the campaign to protect Medicare.

On April 2 this year he issued a press release on behalf of the Pensioners and Superannuants Association, entitled: “Luna Park Smiles Again – but half a million

Australians still waiting to get their teeth fixed”.

A month later he was diagnosed with mesothelioma.

Towards the end of July, Bill was awarded Life Membership by the NSW South Coast Labour Council, in recognition of his long involvement in significant industrial and political campaigns in the Illawarra.

Greens Member Michael Organ, addressing Parliament, said, “Bill's philosophy could best be summed up in the words: ‘If you don't fight, you lose’”.

“I visited Bill at his home – a little cottage in amongst the bush on the side of the Illawarra Escarpment at Wombarra – on Friday, 30 July, a week before his death.

“He took me aside – we slowly shuffled outside together – and he told me how the frogs had returned to the little creek which runs by his house.

“He told me to keep fighting – for Medicare, for the poor, and for those who need help.

“He was lobbying me to the last, just as he had done when he was in this place last December as representative of pensioners and superannuants across the nation.

“Bill was a warrior, a fighter, a great bloke.” ☼

### Ron Gray

*The Guardian* regrets to inform readers of the sad death of Ron Gray in Adelaide on Friday August 13. There will be an obituary in the next issue of *The Guardian*.

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

With another wonderful week of generous contributions, we are now in striking distance of our \$10,000 target. With just over \$1,700 to go it will only take another 17 contributors sending in \$100 each to achieve our target and we are very confident that our Appeal will be over-fulfilled.

Arrangements for moving are well in hand and this should be completed by the end of August. Please note the change of address which will be effective from August 30 is 74 Buckingham Street, Surry Hills. Phone (02) 9699 8844. Fax (02) 9699 9833.

Our warmest thanks to this week's contributors:

In memory of Nadia \$50

S Moutsos \$100; DT \$10; CPA Blacktown Branch \$290; Jim Robson \$100; Cathy Picone \$50; MH \$50; V Abeysekera \$30; M Costello (Britain) \$130; Ian Macaulay \$50; Paula Bloch \$40; Michael Newman \$100; Ron Reed \$200; ERN \$100; MP Moore \$20; Larry Gowland \$100; Rex \$10; P Flintoft \$50; M Lean \$50; Alan & Wafa Maarbani \$100; Christine Murray \$5; Donna McLaren \$25.

Total this week \$1660 Progressive Total \$8322.

### FIRE AND NEW BUILDING APPEAL

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

of (address) \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

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

# Govt remains unperturbed by Hicks/Habib abuse

Bob Briton

**A small but significant stream of detainees – alleged “illegal combatants” – continues to leave the US concentration camp at Guantanamo Bay. Five French captives were sent back home late last month where they are being held and interrogated by French authorities. Five British detainees have been repatriated to the UK where they have all been released.**

However, Australians David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib remain in US custody where they have been since their capture in late 2001. Unlike their British and French counterparts, Australian authorities have not succeeded in securing the release of their citizens from their US Coalition partners. In fact,

ing him, Australian officials including ASIO agents had given him a “hard time”.

Australian authorities have also ignored the very detailed allegations contained in a 115-page dossier prepared by three Britons recently released from Guantanamo.

Ruhel Ahmed, Asif Iqbal and Shafiq Rasul paint a very disturbing picture of the camp. Aside from the allegations of beatings, other abuse is claimed to include forcing prisoners to strip and watch videos of inmates sodomising each other. Guards would allegedly throw prisoners’ Korans down the toilet and force them to shave as a sign of a break with their Muslim faith. Snakes and scorpions are said to be common in the cells at the camp.

Asif Iqbal says he recalls David Hicks and his especially rough treat-

with Mamdouh Habib: “Habib was in a catastrophic state, mental and physical. As a result of his having been tortured in Egypt [see Gareth Smith’s article on the US practice of “rendition” of detainees to countries for interrogation under torture in *The Guardian* of July 14] ... he used to bleed from his nose, mouth and ears when he was asleep. He got no medical attention for this.”

The dossier maintains that Habib, too, was urged to co-operate in return for medical attention.

In spite of what the world now knows about the sickening depravity that was carried on at Baghdad’s Abu Ghraib prison, Australia’s Foreign Minister has dismissed the claims out of hand. He says that the three witnesses are not “independent” and that, if any investigation were to be undertaken, he would be happy for the US authorities to do it. He added that the Australian Consul in Washington had visited Hicks and Habib on a number of occasions and that he had not reported anything untoward.

Mr Downer and his colleagues have shrugged off protests from the Federal Opposition, the detainees’ lawyers and even Liberal backbencher Peter King. Mr Downer’s party colleague struck a blow for decency by calling for an independent investigation of the claims or for there to be at least one Australian military representative on any US team inquiring into them.

Meanwhile, David Hicks has just passed another birthday in captivity without trial. He is due to face a military tribunal later this month charged with attempted murder, conspiracy and aiding the enemy. His lawyers are engaged in a frantic exercise to catch up with the US military authorities who have had over two and a half years to cook up a case to bring before their own kangaroo court.

US military authorities have set Hicks’ charges down for a preliminary hearing on August 25 and want to begin the trial on September 28. His lawyers complain that this will not allow sufficient time to prepare the defence and want the proceedings to start on January 10 instead.

**Mrs Habib passed on Mamdouh’s claims that he had been tortured and that, rather than assisting him, Australian officials including ASIO agents had given him a “hard time”.**

Government spokespersons including the PM, the Foreign Minister and the Attorney General have expressed no interest in having the pair returned or any reservations about the dubious legal process they are about to face before a US military tribunal.

Neither has their satisfaction been shaken by persistent reports of abuse and even torture of the prisoners now held at Guantanamo. They have ignored Maha Habib’s account of a telephone conversation with her husband Mamdouh last week. This was the first such contact allowed between the couple in the whole two and a half years Mr Habib has been detained. Mrs Habib passed on Mamdouh’s claims that he had been tortured and that, rather than assist-

ment by the Guantanamo guards: “He told us he had endured an experience ... where he had been interrogated by Americans and hooded and beaten. He used to get interrogated every two to three days, sometimes every day. He was told that if he didn’t co-operate, he would never go home. We ... had the impression he was being forced to make admissions.”

The trio also claim that Hicks required urgent medical attention to a hernia and that camp authorities would only provide the attention if he co-operated. It is alleged that Hicks was moved from block to block within the US base to keep him disoriented.

The three former detainees also give an account of their meeting



It appears that, after imprisoning the “illegal combatants” for nearly three years without any charge, the US military is now in a hurry to dispense “justice” to the detainees.

Last month, along with the other 593 other Guantanamo detainees, Mamdouh Habib presumably would

have been told of his legal rights for the first time since his capture in Pakistan in 2001. He will be given the right to appeal his “illegal combatant” status through the military and civil systems even though his matter has already been set down for hearing in a military tribunal. ✪

## Carr sends disabled to “the Dark Ages”

**The NSW Government has announced sweeping cutbacks to the support program provided to young adults with disabilities who want opportunities for adult training, learning and support. The changes are overwhelmingly negative for individuals and their families, support group Family Advocacy describing the changes as a “regressive decision”.**

The support program – called Post School Options when it was first introduced in 1993 – was designed to provide training in essential life skills, provide greater access to the community and, where possible, help participants find work.

It was re-named Adult Training, Learning and Support (ATLAS) in 1999 when a cap of two years was placed on those entering the program.

Now, under the amendments proposed by the Carr Government, ATLAS participants will next year be divided into two categories: the first tier will see less disabled members go on a two-year transition-to-work program; the second tier will force the more severely disabled into a long-term community participation scheme.

Service providers will be funded \$15,699 per person per year, for a maximum of two years, for the disabled deemed capable of employment.

Those going into the second-tier community scheme will have their yearly funding cut by more than half, from \$19,500 to \$9000. This will force participants, who are aged from 18 to their mid-30s, out of

self-help services: their attendance at such services will drop from four and five days a week to one or two.

Challenge, Armidale, a disability support service in the state’s New England district, said that agencies would have no choice but to reduce hours if they are to maintain high standards of care as the measly \$9000 will only allow service provider organisations to “feed, wipe bottoms and put people in front of the TV”. Challenge spokesperson Kevin Mead described the Government’s move as “back to the Dark Ages”.

Against all logic the Government says the cuts will improve the service. Disabilities Minister Carmel Tebbutt cites what she claims is the program’s low success rate in moving the disabled into employment, saying the changes will “provide a much better outcome”.

But the Government is feeling the heat already. Protest rallies were held around the state last week and the community backlash has forced it to back off from its original plan to include all disabled people in the system, now exempting those who entered before 1999.

Family Advocacy’s Judy Ellis called the cuts “probably the worst decision the State Government has made for a long time in disabilities”.

Describing the program as “one of the greatest initiatives” for people with disabilities, Ms Ellis said that with “one fell swoop we’re back to the days when people were just minded” instead of providing them with skills and dignity to become participants in the wider community. “I am so angry”, she said. ✪

Pete’s Corner



# Hardie's repentance won't wash

Andrew Jackson

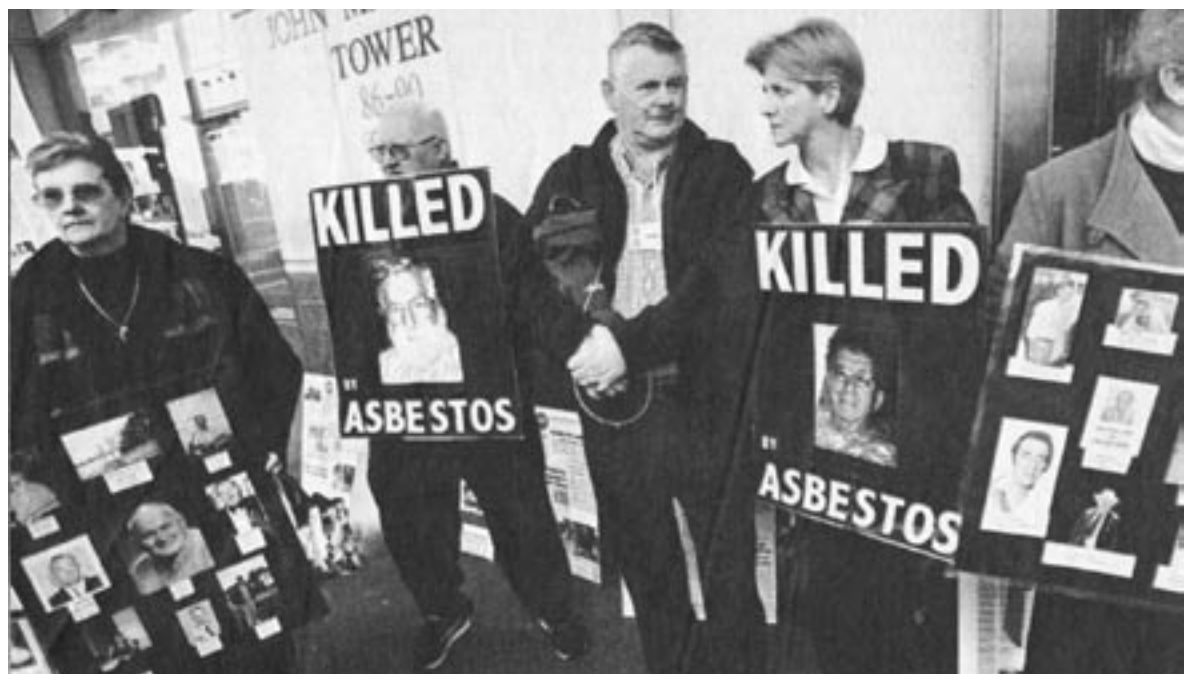
**In an important back-down during the Jackson Inquiry last week, James Hardie acknowledged its obligations in relation to the future compensation of asbestos victims. But Hardie's newly-found repentance doesn't wash with unions and asbestos victims. If anything the company's latest tactic is evidence that it has finally been pinned down for its attempt to skip out on paying compensation to victims of its asbestos products.**

The NSW Branch of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union has warned that the company wants too many concessions as part of the statutory deal, including immunity from civil and criminal charges.

The union's state Secretary Andrew Ferguson called for the continuation of consumer, worker and local council boycotts of Hardie building products. "The union suspects the company may seek to negotiate immunity as part of a settlement and we see no merit in that", said Mr Ferguson.

"The inconvenience of prosecution of these company officers is nothing compared to the suffering they have caused to victims of James Hardie products."

The peak trade union body, the ACTU also called for the prosecution of those in the company who have been found to have broken the law. "Where there has been wrongdoing in the restructurings that have taken place then that should be punished by law", said ACTU Secretary



Greg Combet.

While acknowledging that the Hardie admission was an important breakthrough, Mr Combet said the concessions by the company still do not go far enough.

The ACTU has called for negotiations between unions, asbestos support groups, the under-funded trust Hardie left behind – the Medical Research and Compensation Foundation – and James Hardie, to

find a solution to the mess created by James Hardie when it restructured its operations.

A NSW Special Commission of Inquiry has heard extensive evidence that James Hardie reorganised its operations and took assets overseas in an attempt to escape its compensation obligations to Australian victims of James Hardie asbestos products.

Mr Combet said that the company had indicated that it was now prepared to compensate all victims of its asbestos products into the future, but that it was still seeking a statutory compensation scheme which would limit the levels of compensation available.

"The recognition that all victims must be compensated is important, but the unions and asbestos support groups do not want limits placed on the levels of compensation available – people dying from these products are

entitled to full compensation under the current arrangements.

"What needs to happen now is discussion between the relevant parties which tests the company's commitment and identifies a way forward.

"The Medical Research and Compensation Foundation and ourselves have already outlined ways in which the current arrangements for compensating victims can be streamlined. We do not believe there is a case for statutory change which limits the level of compensation."

So far almost 3000 Australians have come forward to claim compensation for illnesses related to exposure to James Hardie's asbestos products.

An estimated 8000 further casualties are expected to fall victim during the next 40 years.

The final report of the Inquiry is due for release in mid-September. ☘

## Support NSW cleaners

**NSW cleaners – members of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU) – are furious that a Labor Government is putting their job security at risk. Cleaners who work in local schools, on TAFE campuses, in police stations and MPs' electorate offices are campaigning to stop the Carr Government introducing its 2005 plans which attack nearly 7000 low-wage workers' jobs.**

What the cleaners want:

- An offer of employment from all new incoming contractors (as happened in the last two contracts)
- Maintenance of their hours of work. This should be possible given

that the government says it is happy with the cleaning standard and does not see much opportunity for reduction of hours

- No subcontracting, which LHMU members rightly fear will lead to cleaners being ripped off. Subcontracting has never previously been allowed

- Maintenance of worksites in the contract so that job security is not undermined by Departments opting out

- Contracts let to be of a reasonable size so that the companies involved have proper systems in place, i.e. payroll, injury prevention, training, OH&S etc.

As it currently stands, when the

contract changes in 2005 there will be no way to ensure job security.

Union members are concerned decisions will be made on discriminatory and prejudicial grounds. Incoming contractors will favour younger cleaners, cleaners who have never been injured and cleaners who have good English language skills.

The new contract will not commence until October 2005. However, the critical decisions are being made now.

### Parents won't volunteer

NSW public school parents are telling Premier Bob Carr he should not expect them to volunteer and help out in the cleaning of local schools if the State Government goes ahead with a plan to cut back cleaning contracts in 2005.

In an opinion poll just completed, 88 percent of already over-stretched parents said it was unreasonable to ask them to help clean their children's schools.

"Imagine it", said Annie Owens, NSW LHMU Cleaners Union Secretary, "a parent rushes home from work, has dinner, drops the kids off at footy training and then goes in to wash the windows in the kid's classroom."

"No wonder people think it is unreasonable, the community is already complaining about the unfair work-life balance they are trying to maintain – now Bob Carr's Government wants to pile on more demands."

### E-mail protest

The LHMU has launched a protest e-mail campaign to give the community an opportunity to voice their discontent about these cleaning contract proposals directly to the Premier, the responsible Minister, John Della Bosca and the Education Minister and Deputy Premier, Dr Refshauge at NSW Parliament House, Macquarie St, Sydney or go to the union's website: [www.lhmu.org.au](http://www.lhmu.org.au) ☘

## Miners welcome Gretley convictions

**The miners union, the CFMEU, has welcomed the convictions of the companies and individuals responsible for events that led to the tragic deaths of four coal mineworkers at the Gretley Colliery, in NSW's Hunter Valley, on November 14, 1996.**

Mining Division General President Tony Maher described the convictions as "historic and long overdue".

"It is the first time in the 200-year history of the NSW coal industry that anyone has been convicted for the loss of life despite more than 3000 miners being killed in the State's coal mines, some in the biggest disasters in the history of Australia".

At the time of the disaster, Gretley was operated by Newcastle Wallsend and Oakbridge (now owned by Xstrata). Along with a number of individuals, the companies were charged with 52 safety breaches that led to the deaths of Edward Batterham, 48; John Hunter, 36; Mark Kaiser, 30; and Damon Murray, 19; who were killed when they struck an old working at the colliery which unleashed a wall of

water that engulfed them.

Newcastle Wallsend and Oakbridge, along with the former mine manager, the manager at the time of the disaster and a surveyor, were convicted of 32 breaches of the State's Occupational Health and Safety Act. Sentences will be handed down at a later date.

Tony Maher welcomed the convictions as "a great relief for the families of the four miners who have had to endure a protracted seven-and-a-half year ordeal in their search for justice".

He said that the convictions should serve as a warning to all mining companies and individuals responsible for health and safety in the coal industry that they will now be held to account.

"For far too long companies and management have literally gotten away with murder. Today's convictions show that will no longer be the case. Companies and management will be held to account for the health and safety of their employees and our union will continue to vigorously pursue those who endanger workers' lives", Mr Maher warned. ☘

## Bank staff defiant

**Commonwealth Bank staff defied employer intimidation and went ahead with a protest against planned service cuts outside a meeting where their bosses announced a \$2.57 billion profit. The move to silence the workers followed revelations senior management had categorised staff as "nerds" or "turds".**

The references appeared in an internal e-mail circulated to branch managers, which said the nerds "have no life" while turds were good for nothing but "flushing".

According to staff, morale is being torpedoed by management's refusal to listen to proposals for improved workplaces and better service.

"People are feeling insecure about their jobs [and] can't access resources to improve customer service", said Sharron Caddie, from the Finance Sector Union (FSU). "CBA says one thing and does the opposite."

"People are now very disillusioned with this organisation and the way it has flatly ignored their efforts. They are going public and asking customers to support their ideas for a better bank."

Staff planning to take protected action against the bank received

a letter from David Marshall, an executive general manager.

The letter reminded staff of the "good faith owed to the bank in your capacity as an employee" and told them that they were not allowed to speak to the media or even identify themselves as Commonwealth Bank employees.

Despite the letter staff rallied in Martin Place to oppose moves to slash over 4000 jobs and services to the public.

The bank is planning cuts to 3700 support staff and 600 positions in lending. These cuts are expected to impact heavily on rural and regional customers as the bank moves to "rationalise" its business lending services.

The FSU (Commonwealth Bank Officers Section) has begun a public campaign to improve service at the bank, launching a petition calling on the bank to lift its game.

"The CBA was indeed once the People's Bank", recalled Peter Presdee, Secretary of the FSU Commonwealth Bank Officers Section. "We will not rest until staff and customers are once again treated in a manner that was essential to the culture of the People's Bank." ☘

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**.

**Sunday 29 August 3pm**

**U24, 257 Balcatta Road, Balcatta**

For more info call: Mick on 0421 205 770 or Vinnie on 0419 812 872

Light refreshment will be available

# Black Friday as Senate passes FTA

Bob Briton

For those who are superstitious it would have been important to note that August 13 was a Black Friday. As Greens Senator Bob Brown pointed out, this time it truly was an inauspicious day for the country. "What a black day for democracy this is, what a black day for Australia's sovereignty this is", he said.

On that day the Senate – the upper house of what passes for our highest "democratic" institution – passed enabling legislation for the Australia/US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by a margin of 51 to 10. In spite of widespread opposition among the Australian people, despite the already known grave consequences for people dependent for their livelihoods on threatened industries and despite the conflicting stories from official sources about the alleged "benefits" of the pact, the major parties in Australian politics co-operated to usher in a perilous new era in the relationship with the US.

The end game of the "debate" between the parliamentary Coalition and Labor parties was symbolic of the FTA's whole shameful gestation. Before the Parliament dispersed for its last recess, the ALP took the unusual step of voting for the enabling legislation in the House of Representatives while saying that it would wait for the report of a Senate Committee before voting one way or the other in the upper house.

Given that the Committee was dominated by members of the major parties, it was not surprising that the panel determined that the FTA was, indeed, in the "national interest". The report did, however, prick the

venting the early introduction of cheaper generic medicines onto the market and onto the PBS – the so-called "ever-greening" of patents by corporations with lots of money to spend in the courts.

Howard raised a number of obscure defences against Labor's remaining objection to the enabling legislation – including a claim that the changes would actually weaken Australia's patent laws – before accepting the amendment. After the Black Friday vote in the Senate, Howard was still trying to maintain the fiction of a great "ideological divide" over the issue and that he had accepted the "needless" amendments in the interests of attaining the greater good wrapped up in the FTA: "I want this parliament to understand and the Australian public to understand that, if a difficulty does arise in the future, it will be 100 per cent upon the heads of the Australian Labor Party."

Regrettably there was no such "ideological divide" between Liberal and Labor leaders – both firmly were committed to the FTA all along.

So ended the "troubled" journey of the FTA enabling legislation through the Australian Parliament. It was a triumph of the art of building a public spectacle around a deal already done in secret.

Democrats Senator Aden Ridgeway made the point about the damage to the democratic process and national sovereignty: "I think people ought to understand and be very clear that what we've done is created a situation where public policy would be dealt with in a private rather than a public way. It has made our policies subordinate to the text of the free trade agreement and



## Regrettably there was no such "ideological divide" between Liberal and Labor leaders – both firmly were committed to the FTA all along.

balloon of hype built up by the PM and Trade Minister Mark Vaile with their oft-repeated claims of a \$6 billion boost to the Australian economy and 30,000 new jobs. In the end, the Committee estimated that there would only be \$53 million-worth of dubious benefits to Australia flowing from the FTA.

The final act of the play had Mark Latham apparently holding out for greater guarantees for Australian content on TV and safeguards for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). With the help of the mainstream media, the many other serious objections to the FTA were simply passed over.

It was treated as purely an economic agreement, ignoring the many other far more negative aspects such as the loss of sovereignty, the lifting of restrictions on foreign (US) investment, the impact it will have on education and health services (not just PBS), dangers posed by changes to customs, labelling of GM products and many other areas that could have serious consequences for health and safety and the environment.

The Government quickly accepted the first-mentioned Labor amendment. Howard and Co. then went through the motions of resisting the move to introduce penalties for drug companies lodging bogus patent applications aimed at pre-

venting the early introduction of cheaper generic medicines onto the market and onto the PBS – the so-called "ever-greening" of patents by corporations with lots of money to spend in the courts.

And when the actions of an Australian government (at any level) are not to the liking of those corporations, it will not be the Australian courts and Australian law that settle the matter. The FTA is beyond Australian law, its application and interpretation will be beyond the control of Australia. Australian law must comply with the FTA.

The behaviour of Opposition Leader Mark Latham last week only served to highlight the nature of the sell-out of our already limited sovereignty. Incredibly, Mr Latham admitted that he had discussed the Labor amendments with the US embassy and the US Trade Office and gained US approval before presenting them to Parliament. For his part, the PM has consistently warned that the US must "certify" that Australia's enabling legislation reflects the spirit and the letter of the deal and that the US may simply walk away from it.

When it comes to the FTA with the US, Australia has been put in the same unenviable position that East Timor occupies in its dealings with likes of Alexander Downer – with one very important distinction. While East Timor is standing up to recover control of its oil resources and has a history of struggle for

independence, "our" government has gladly handed over Australia's sovereignty on a platter.

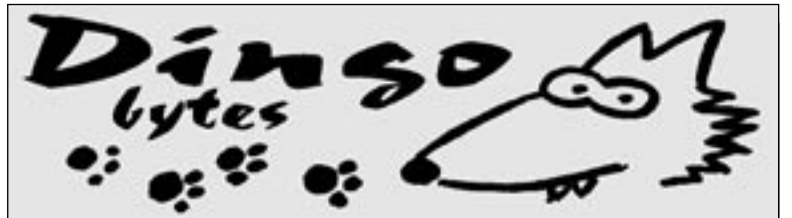
As for the supposedly contentious amendment regarding "dodgy" patent applications, it is unlikely that it will cause too much grief on the US side. The huge and highly profitable pharmaceutical companies will remain well pleased that the FTA still acknowledges "the important role played by innovative pharmaceutical products in delivering high quality health care" and "the importance of R&D in the pharmaceutical industry and of appropriate government support, including through intellectual property protection..." (Annex 2-C)

John Howard is the probably most open and certainly the most important of the Liberal Party advocates of US transnationals in the Australian Parliament and, as such, he squawked the loudest about the Labor gesture, making reference to the interests of the pharmaceutical transnationals. And while the companies represented by the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America would still like to destroy the PBS and remove its appeal as a model for other communities in the US or elsewhere, the amendments should not cause too much grief to those overall plans.

As Mark Davis pointed out in *The Australian Financial Review* last week: "There is a good argument that Labor's penalty regime is only window dressing. Patent lawyers point out that it would be very unlikely that any drug company taking court action to assert its patent rights against a generic competitor would actually fall foul of the new Labor rules."

In the very unlikely event that a US corporation were ever fined under the legislation the possible fine would be peanuts to a big pharmaceutical corporation.

The FTA is now due to come into force on January 1 next year. The real job of safeguarding the sovereignty and achievements of the Australian people will only begin in earnest when the job of building a new people's government is put on the political agenda. It's time to get busy with that end in mind. ☘



Remember when the Government came out and whacked Australian Federal Police Chief Michael Keelty over the head for saying that Australia was under increased danger of a terrorist threat because of its involvement in the war in Iraq? Recently Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer, when asked if he agreed that the war had increased the threat of terrorism conceded, "The war in Iraq has increased resentment towards Australia from terrorists".

In its latest backflip the Labor Party has joined with the government to pass legislation banning gay marriages before a senate inquiry into the legislation is complete. "Labor's back flip on a proper gay marriage inquiry exposes it as a party which cannot be trusted to deliver on its commitments", said the Equal Rights Network.

The ABC is set to be the latest to tune into reality TV. Having cut the majority of its children's educational programs like *Behind the News* at the end of last year, the broadcaster's director of television Sandra Levy has announced the airing of a British reality series "Operatunity." In promoting this piece of British non-reality Ms Levy said, "We need dynamic, inventive arts programming ... The worst thing we can do is bore people away from our channel."

An Egyptian businessman has boasted that he was paid \$85,200 by Australian Olympic Committee Chairman John Coates, to secure the votes of two Kenyan and Ugandan delegates to the International Olympic Committee in the lead up to the Sydney Olympic Games. Despite Coates being cleared by the NSW Government Sheridan Inquiry, the International Olympic Committee said that while the payments were technically within the rules, they were not in the spirit of the Olympic movement. Former NSW Premier John Fahey in commenting on the controversy admitted: "We did push the envelope at times".

**CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK:** This week's Hog award has to go to former Communications Minister Richard Alston who not only left parliament with a hefty pension but has now been hired by high-profile radio network Austero to lobby his former government colleagues on industry reforms. It seems that he has wasted no time with current Communications Minister Helen Coonan who admitted in parliament that Alston had in fact contacted a staffer in her department in asking questions about the Government's latest commercialisation activities.

## Film review

# Tom White

 Directed and produced by Alkinos Tsilimidos

Richard Titelius

**When I first heard about this movie, I thought it would be a low-key, brooding, down-on-your-luck story and would contain little that could be considered uplifting, redeeming or even satirical.**

How wrong I was proved to be! The movie could even be billed as a family movie, as it has some poignant parent/child scenes that many families, but especially adolescents would be able to relate to.

However, first and foremost this movie is a statement about the modern condition of life in a contemporary urban Australian setting – one for the most part that is rendered invisible by mainstream art and culture.

**As cynical as he has become about his own existence, he is still at his core a person who tries to and does do good things.**

Its message is reminiscent of the ideas of 20th century Marxist literary critic Walter Benjamin in one of his *Theses of Modern History* in which he invites us to look in the rear-view mirror as we drive forward into what we believe is a brighter, better and more modern future and see the junk that is piling up skyward behind us. That junk is the detritus of moder-

nity and contains much of what we might call progress.

The movie starts off with Tom White living a life of the white middle-aged professional, who seemingly has it all, an interesting well paying job, a nice house in an exclusive suburban housing estate and a good family, a caring wife and two beautiful children.

But in the grand scheme of things he has only a very tenuous hold on everything which he has and is happening in his life. The stresses and strains of living in this often sterile and contrived existence (which incidentally he helps to create as an architect and urban planner of Clearwater Springs Estate which is being built on top of an old rubbish tip) cause his life

to unravel in an ugly and uncontrolled way.

He gets taken off the urban design project to which he has dedicated himself, causing him to resent his work colleagues. He directs the anger and frustration he is feeling in his life at them in a poignant pub scene. To top it off he goes to the demountable of the project manager of the euphemistically named

Clearwater Springs Estate and trashes the bloke and his office.

He can no longer go back and now physically and metaphorically crosses the river to the other side, leaving his possessions, identity and life on one side as he crosses over to the far shore. He soon loses his money, credit cards, good clothes and the mask of his daily urban civility as he begins to inhabit the strange, unfamiliar subterranean world of the city of Melbourne.

He begins to mix with some of the characters who inhabit this world either full or part time and learn what happens to people whom society rejects, forgets or would like to forget. To the credit of the movie, a large array of people and problems are represented in the story – gays, drug users and pushers, Aboriginal people, criminals, young runaways, mentally ill people and homeless people, including our hero Tom White.

As cynical as he has become about his own existence, he is still at his core a person who tries to and does do good things. The last person he meets in his odyssey is the 14-year-old runaway Jet (outstandingly played by Jarryd Jinks), who awakens Tom to his parental responsibilities, which he has neglected in his absence from his family.

Circumstances in this liaison eventually lead to the unmasking of Tom and to him considering whether he has enough courage to, “end the odyssey and return home”, or stay on the streets, homeless but free.

The film works on many levels and this makes it an engaging examination of modern life – quirky and even funny at times (as good satire

is meant to be), helped along by a good script, directing, cinematography and outstanding performances. They come from some established names in Australian drama such as Colin Friels (who makes the role of Tom his own), Rachel Blake as Tom's wife, Bill Hunter as a grandiose denizen of the night, Angela Punch-McGregor as his wife, and some fresh vibrant talent in Dan Spielman who plays a rent boy with an extreme lifestyle and Jarryd Jinks who plays Jet, a young skateboarder

and artist who is in danger of running off the rails.

One aspect of the movie which I found unsettling, was the amount of times various characters in the movie were throwing back well marked bottles and cans of VB and very little else.

Maybe when you're homeless, depressed or angry at life you don't give a shit what you drink or how much – just so long as it numbs the senses. But escapism is certainly not what this movie is about. ☼



## ANTaR's report card on Indigenous rights\* Howard's shameful record: 1996-2004

**When the Howard Government was elected in 1996, the Reconciliation process was progressing, historic Native Title legislation had been enacted and the Stolen Generations inquiry was under way. The Howard Government's first term was one in which the rights and self-determination of Indigenous people became increasingly undermined.**

On election night 1998, after the outcry over the Government's discriminatory treatment of native title in 1997-98, the Prime Minister promised to make Reconciliation a priority for the Government's second term.

**The new Howard Government triggered an alarmist and divisive debate over the Wik decision and refused to negotiate with Indigenous representatives.**

Instead, public perception is that the Government has pushed reconciliation from the national agenda.

The 2004 Federal budget contained \$87 million in increased funding allocations for Indigenous Affairs, including an extra \$40 million over four years to improve access to primary health care services. However, \$10 million a year is grossly inadequate considering the AMA has recently estimated that

Indigenous health is under-funded by \$425 million a year!

The following provides a summary of some of the main aspects of the Howard Government's record on Indigenous issues over the past eight years:

### Reconciliation

In December 2000 the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) presented its final recommendations to the Government after a decade-long formal process. At Corroboree 2000 and events like the Sydney Harbour Bridge walk and other similar “bridge walks” around Australia, one million Australians

turned out to show their support.

Instead of providing national leadership and adequate support to continue the Reconciliation process, the Howard Government withdrew the Commonwealth from a formal role. Its recent allocation of \$15 million over four years to Reconciliation Australia, a private foundation set up to replace the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, is an inadequate

response to an issue of major national significance.

### The Abolition of ATSIC (& self-determination)

The Howard Government ignored the findings of its own review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and instead announced in April its intention to abolish ATSIC, return all funding and programs to mainstream departments, and to reduce Indigenous involvement to an appointed, advisory body. The move removes independent Indigenous involvement in decision-making affecting their lives – the very basis of self-determination – and breaches Australia's international obligations.

### “Practical reconciliation” & Indigenous disadvantage

With or without an Indigenous elected national body, Commonwealth and State governments will continue to carry heavy responsibilities for service delivery to Indigenous people. It becomes even more important with the Howard Government's insistence on further “mainstreaming” of government services.

In 1996, one of the Howard Government's first actions was to cut funding to Indigenous Affairs by \$470 million. Some of this funding has been restored, but despite

adopting a “practical reconciliation” approach, the Government has failed to make an impact on Indigenous disadvantage.

### Native Title

The Native Title Act 1993 was passed in response to the 1992 High Court Mabo, after extensive negotiation with Indigenous representatives.

The Howard Government came to power in 1996, at the time of the High Court's Wik decision which established that native title could potentially coexist with leaseholders' rights on some leasehold lands, including pastoral lands.

The new Howard Government triggered an alarmist and divisive debate over the Wik decision and refused to negotiate with Indigenous representatives.

The Government instead introduced the 1998 Amendments (based on Howard's 10 Point Plan), significantly increasing the extinguishment of native title and winding back of Indigenous rights applicable under the Native Title Act, while enhancing the rights of other landholders, governments and developers.

### Aboriginal Legal Services

Federal Government plans to “mainstream” Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services by calling for tenders to provide legal

services for Indigenous people, have had to be wound back following serious criticism of the effects of the proposed tender documents. The Government backdown does not end the issue as there is no guarantee that current Indigenous Legal Services will not be disadvantaged or overlooked during the tendering process.

### Stolen Generations

The *Bringing Them Home Report* of 1997 focused national attention on the devastating impact of past government policies to remove Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. In response [among other things] the Howard Government spent an estimated \$11 million to oppose just two “Stolen Generation” cases in the courts (the Gunner-Cubillo and Williams cases) and questioned whether there was a “Stolen Generation”.

### Treaty

The Howard Government has rejected the idea of a treaty or agreements process out of hand and has refused to facilitate community education and measured national debate on the issue.

\*ANTaR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation)  
www.antar.org.au  
Abridged ☼

# The President's mercenary

Jean-Guy Allard

**Juan Zárate, the high-ranking official responsible for dealing with terrorism in the US Treasury Department – the agency that is paralysing the application process for thousands of Cuban-Americans wishing to visit their families in Cuba – is maintaining his long-standing and cordial relationship with the Saudi Government. To such an extent that he organised a press conference on the subject of funding terror on June 2 at the embassy of Saudi Arabia; a country that many people suspect is strongly implicated in financial support for terrorism.**

Zárate is the same individual who recently announced that the Treasury Department's Office for Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) does not have the necessary personnel to process licence applications for the thousands of Cuban-Americans who wish to use their "right" to travel to Cuba, now confined to once every three years.

On June 1, 2004, White House-accredited press correspondents received a strange invitation from the Treasury Department's Public Relations Office. They were invited to the Saudi Arabian Embassy at 11am the following day for a meeting on the subject of "joint efforts with Saudi Arabia in the financial war on terror".

It was announced that Juan Zárate, deputy secretary of the Department, in co-ordination with the US State Department and the Saudi Arabian Government, would speak on those joint efforts and that the discussion would include a briefing with Zárate and officials from the State Department and the Saudi Government.

Cuban-American terrorist groups in South Florida, a top priority task for the administration.

At that time, the High Prince's advisor explained to the press that Princess Haifa bin Faisal's action was the result of "her tremendous generosity". Quite simply that.

However, the British police finally arrested al-Bayoumi in the city of Birmingham and discovered a telephone bill on which calls appeared showing the numbers of two diplomats from the Saudi embassy in Washington.

The FBI was able to establish there were direct links between Omar al-Bayoumi – who was released and is back in Saudi Arabia – the family of Princess Haifa bin Faisal and Osama bin Laden.

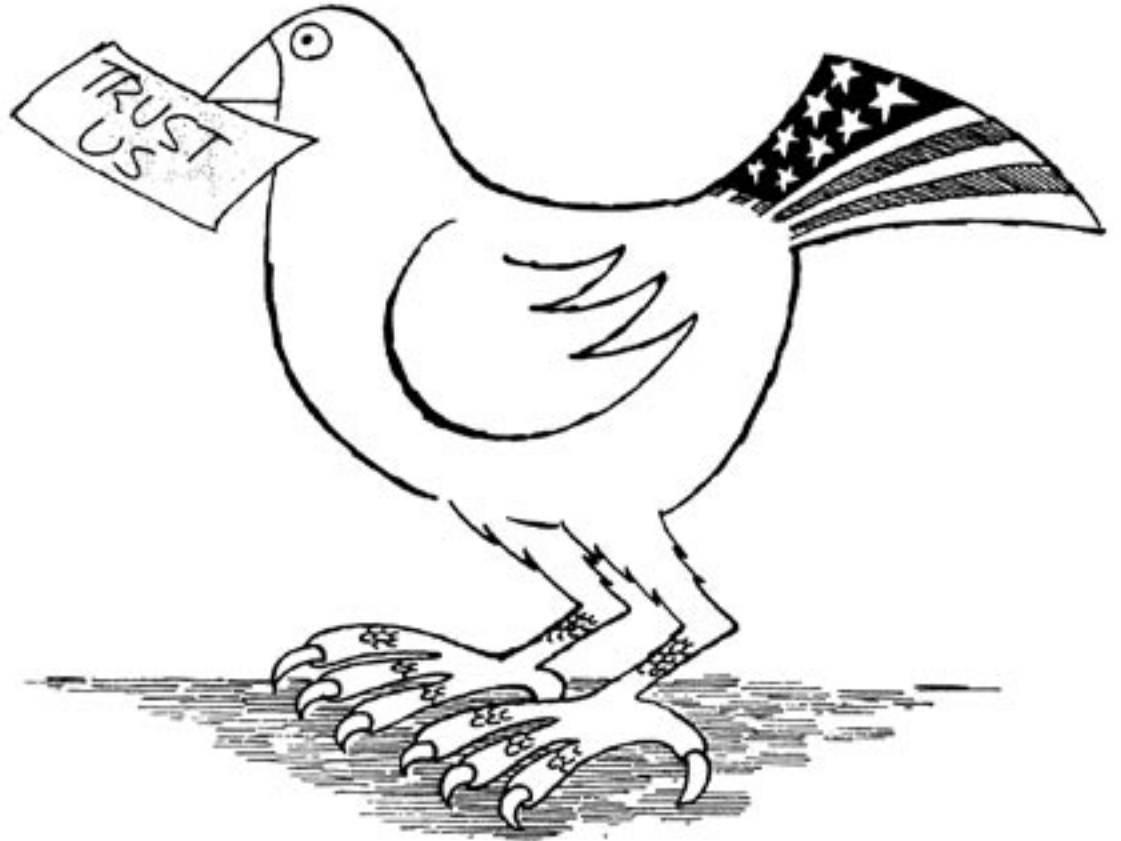
*Newsweek* revealed that according to several Saudis who knew him, al-Bayoumi was a well-known member of the intelligence services in his country.

## Terrorist links

The Saudi monarchy depends on the military and economic power of the United States, but, according to experts, in terms of calming internal opposition they had no other option but to finance the al-Qaida terrorists who attacked the United States.

With the aggressive intolerance with which the Bush Government condemns and even punishes people and nations for maintaining any relations it considers dubious – and even journalists as in the case of al Jazeera – one would expect that Zárate would maintain a certain distance between himself and the Saudi officials, particularly with well-known figures such as al-Jubeir.

But there's more. The FBI has also discovered direct links between various Saudi charitable organisa-



**The Saudi monarchy depends on the military and economic power of the United States, but, according to experts, in terms of calming internal opposition they had no other option but to finance the al-Qaida terrorists who attacked the United States.**

The invitation revealed that in addition to Zárate, the meeting was to include a State Department co-ordinator and no less than His Excellency Adel Al-Jubeir, special foreign policy advisor to His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia.

The head of the Saudi diplomatic representation in Washington is the controversial ambassador, Bandar bin Sultan, who was mentioned by Michael Moore in his documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

An article in *Newsweek* in December 2002 revealed that the diplomat's wife, Princess Haifa bint Faisal, sent cheques worth \$150,000 to the wife of Omar al-Bayoumi, an accomplice of Khalid Almidhar and Nawaf Alhazmi, two of the Saudi terrorists implicated in the events of September 11.

Fifteen of the 19 terrorists in the catastrophic attack were Saudi Arabian citizens. The majority of them lived and trained in Jeb Bush's Florida without the FBI – then under the direction of Héctor Pesquera in Miami – discovering their presence. Pesquera devoted his time to pursuing "Cuban agents" infiltrating

tions and terrorism funding. In particular, it identified the International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO) as a provider of millions of dollars to the al-Qaida terrorist network.

At a press conference in Washington in December 2003, Adel al-Jubeir, advisor to Prince Abdullah and Zárate's privileged interlocutor, affirmed that no such links existed. However, at the June 2 press conference, he said exactly the opposite.

He announced the nationalisation of all charitable organisations within the Wahabi Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] in order to merge them into one, under state control.

In the luxurious salons of the embassy, he appeared alongside his friend Zárate. The latter, in an extremely cordial manner, publicly referred to him by his first name only – Adel – leaving aside his surname and numerous honourable titles.

Some months ago, two senators, Bob Graham (D-Florida) and Richard C Shelby (R-Alabama), accused the Bush administration of refusing to declassify information demonstrating possible links

between Saudi Arabia and terrorism "because it did not want to bother the Saudis" or threaten its "special" links.

Remember how, when he was attempting to film outside the Saudi embassy, Michael Moore discovered that this delegation is protected by the Secret Service, the presidential security service – a unique case in the diplomatic world of Washington.

Zárate travelled to Saudi Arabia on at least three occasions: in December 2002, then with his boss Secretary John Snow – who is also obsessed with Cuba – in September 2003, and finally with Frances Fragos Townsend (one of Condoleezza Rice's advisors) in December 2003.

The privileged relationship of Zárate, who is responsible for investigating the financing of terrorism, and the Saudis – who are suspected of having financed terror – is still more surprising in terms of the violent condemnations of the Saudi kingdom expressed by human rights organisations. They confirm that the numerous political prisoners detained without charges or trials for indefinite periods are frequently subjected to torture and are denied the right to legal representation. And don't even mention women's rights.

## Anti-Cuban connection

In the White House, when it comes to looking after your buddies, no one cares about these considerations. Just as no one cares that Zárate's privileged interlocutors in Miami are known terrorists or have links to anti-Cuban terrorism. When the time comes to secure votes with the capos, no principle is worth anything.

When directing his troupe of Office for Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) investigators, Zárate does not get confused either.

And this is how the OFAC has dozens of officials to harass people who dare to travel to Cuba without its blessing whilst there are no staff to process their travel requests.

With respect to the investigations into the financing of terrorism, there is no hurry either.

Last March 24, by pure chance Zárate gave a talk on Saudi Arabia

and "the struggle against terror financing" before a Congress committee presided over by Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Cuban-American congress-woman linked to notorious Orlando Bosch – this last described by the FBI itself as the most dangerous terrorist in the hemisphere. Ros-Lehtinen has encouraged and contributed to campaigns supporting terrorist groups and maintains wide links with numerous individuals linked to terrorism.

She is the daughter of Enrique Ros, who was the first co-ordinator of the Movimiento Democrata-Cristiano counter-revolutionary organisation, and then conspired within the Frente Revolucionario

Democrático and the Consejo Revolucionario Cubano, a creation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

It is nothing strange that Zárate is responsible for both the Saudis and the anti-Cuban economic repression within his department.

Both tasks are priorities for George W Bush. Protecting his financial interests in the world of oil and his relationships with the Saudis who so greatly support his financial adventures, and guaranteeing his re-election in Florida thanks to the manoeuvres of Cuban-Americans from the Batista generation.

And, for this reason, Zárate is exactly the mercenary that the President needed. ☛

## Thoughts on medals of Olympic proportions

A few notes from Juan Veils of Notipaco in Colombia on the subject of Olympic medals:

**No sooner had the Olympic games in Athens kicked off than it appears that Colombia has been virtually guaranteed several medals.**

**Target shooting:** 45,000 violent deaths every year have given Colombia direct entry into the finals for a shot at a medal. However, Colombia has a record for hitting the wrong target. They hit the blacks, the Indigenous people, mixed-race and other marginalised people. The contenders are the valiant, patriotic, generous and distinguished infantrymen from the Army who, at a distance of mere centimetres, recently managed to find the heads of three elusive union leaders.

**Conjuring:** To former president Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala for being a ghost from the past who, along with other dried up mummies, has risen from the midst of the moans and fog of the swamp like vital young people pregnant with a radiant creature they call Pátria Nueva [the "New Fatherland" movement he will lead in the next elections].

**Oratory:** The Government's so-called High Commissioner For

Peace, "Doctor Tenderness", is the clear winner. The columns of the parliament trembled like those shaken by the biblical Samson under the uncontrollable force of his cynicism, fraud, transgressions and brazenness.

**Long distance hurdles:** A collective triumph for all 29 million Colombians and especially who live in absolute poverty and must endure all sorts of vicissitudes and obstacles simply to survive from day to day.

**Weight lifting:** Awarded to President Alvaro Uribe Vélez for his titanic effort in holding so high his statesman-like image while under his Napoleonic reign the country bleeds and misery, hunger, corruption and cronyism flourish.

**For optimism:** To those of us who in spite of all the dead, the cronies, the demagogues, the inequalities, the misery, the sycophants and supporters of the status quo ... still believe in the possibility of the joy and triumph of life, the Olympic medal that we so desperately seek.

Unofficial Translation ☛

# From labour to hip-hop

Susan Webb

**Eight thousand Pillowtex workers were thrown out of work a year ago when the textile giant shut its doors. Most are still out of work and will soon lose their unemployment benefits. Forty-three percent of them were behind in their rent or mortgage as of last autumn, and a tenth had received foreclosure or eviction notices. Ninety-three percent say they can't find affordable health care.**

Joan Moton of Eden, North Carolina, the former president of the

and-filers knocking on doors across the country to turn out the vote.

The Labor Department's July figures show job creation is stagnant, and long-time workers are losing their jobs at the highest rate on record.

There were 1.7 million long-term unemployed workers in July, up from 660,000 in January 2001. For those laid-off workers lucky enough to land a new full-time job, 57 percent earned less in their new job — their median weekly pay was 16 percent lower than at their old job.

the Economic Policy Institute reports.

Economic insecurity, the health care crisis, and deepening discontent over the Iraq war are fuelling frustration and anger that is sparking grassroots anti-Bush voter activity across the country.

"It's not just one thing", Arizona AFL-CIO Community Services Director Jim Watson said. "It's people's right to protect overtime, it's cuts in funding for first responders, it's 'No Child Left Behind', — there's a lot of doublespeak by this administration."

Arizona's manufacturing base in mining has taken "a big hit," and the low-paid call centre jobs that have come into the area are "modern-day sweatshops", Watson said.

## Can't pay the bills

Working families, the unemployed and under-employed, "just can't pay the light bills, don't know where to turn when they can't pay their mortgage", he told the *People's Weekly World Newspaper*. The government's jobless figures don't report people who have given up, whose unemployment insurance ran out, who just don't report in, he said.

Tucson neighbourhoods are being saturated with voter registration and mail-in ballot canvassers from a variety of progressive groups, local activist Joe Bernick told the *World*.

Undeterred by Tucson's 100-plus degree August heat, union members have kicked off neighbourhood "labour walks", knocking on union households' doors, talking to them about issues, educating them about what's at stake in the November 2 vote. On August 21, area union leaders and Congressman Raul Grijalva will headline a



Working Families Boot Camp to mobilise rank-and-file involvement.

Watson, the 2004 Tucson labour coordinator, sees a "very increased level of interest" in the presidential elections this year, with more volunteers coming out. People are "sick and tired", he said. "They don't believe this administration has lived up to its promises." The election of Grijalva and Democratic Governor Janet Napolitano in 2002 showed people their votes can bring results, Watson said. "They think their vote matters."

In Ohio, young hip-hop activists are organising an autumn bus tour to small colleges in isolated spots around the state. The hip-hoppers will tell students why they need to get out to vote.

One thing that stands out for this generation, Ohio Hip-Hop Political Assembly coordinator Angie Woodson said, is the Iraq war. They see the cost of the war leading to cuts in education funding and tuition increases, and they're nervous about possible reintroduction of the draft.

"They are staying in school because there are no jobs. They don't know how they are going to pay back their student loans. They are frightened and angry", she told the *World*.

The hip-hop generation is "anywhere from 18 to 40, but goes beyond", said Woodson. "It's a rainbow effect. The music pulls everyone under one umbrella, colour-blind, all social classes, people who have been incarcerated, high school dropouts, college students."

The multi-racial Ohio group has 68 members organising in every city in the state, she said. It is part of a growing hip-hop political activist movement that drew wide attention with a National Hip-Hop Political Convention this June in Newark, New Jersey. It will announce a national agenda at the Washington Press Club on August 19.

"The level of motivation, the energy, is phenomenal", Woodson said.

*People's Weekly World* ☪

## Economic insecurity, the health care crisis, and deepening discontent over the Iraq war are fuelling frustration and anger that is sparking grassroots anti-Bush voter activity across the country.

Pillowtex UNITE local, was one of several workers who told their stories to Democratic vice presidential candidate John Edwards at the peak union body AFL-CIO's Executive Council meeting in Chicago.

The government's latest job reports only confirmed what Moton and other ordinary Americans already knew: under George W Bush's CEO-friendly policies, conditions are getting worse, not better, for working families. "Bush has made a mess of this", AFSCME President Gerald McEntee said in Chicago.

In response, the nation's unions have suspended business-as-usual, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney told reporters at the Executive Council meeting. Hundreds of AFL-CIO staff have headed out into the field, joining thousands of rank-

Nationally only 32,000 new jobs were reported in July, following a skimpy 78,000 increase in June. These make a mockery of Bush's claim that his 2003 tax-cuts for the rich would create 5.5 million jobs by the end of this year (306,000 a month). The largest growth was in low-paying jobs with few or no benefits.

Joblessness among African Americans and Latinos has increased — more than one in 10 African Americans and one in 14 Latinos are jobless. Overall unemployment remains essentially unchanged at 5.5 percent.

For those with jobs, pay cheques have not kept up with inflation. Workers' real weekly and hourly wages are lower now than they were in November 2001, when the so-called economic "recovery" began,

## CP of Chile expresses support with Venezuela

**The following is a message sent to the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mr Hugo Chávez Frías, on August 10 from the Communist Party of Chile.**

Dear friend and President,

At this time when the people of Venezuela are preparing themselves to reaffirm your presidential mandate at the Referendum of next Sunday August 15, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Chile wishes to express to you

anti-imperialist measures that you are leading in Venezuela — with the support of a people becoming more and more organised in the framework of Bolivarian institutions — correspond to the national aspirations of the countries and peoples of Latin America.

The political changes have allowed for the incorporation a new generation of leaders that has replaced the old oligarchy, which had submitted to the imperial pow-

international prestige of its mother country.

The process that you direct is placed to be a decisive factor in the integration of the economies of our peoples — an alternative to the FTAA [Free Trade Area of the Americas headed by the US] and other oppressive forms of dominion over our nations.

The objectives of your government, the great works that have been achieved and those that are planned have their inspiration in common historical sources. They represent, in a new phase, the continuation of the fight of the Liberators of the 19th Century who — like Simón Bolívar, Martí, Sucre, San Martín, O'Higgins, Artigas — advocated the independent development of our countries.

The peoples of Latin America, who have known the solidarity of the Venezuelan people, have placed their hopes in the possibilities that your triumph in the Referendum will open up. From Chile we will continue expressing, our support and solidarity with the democratic and anti-imperialist process that the Bolivarian project that you head represents.

The letter was signed by Jorge Insunza B of International Relations and General Secretary Guillermo Teillier.

Unofficial translation ☪

## The peoples of Latin America, who have known the solidarity of the Venezuelan people, have placed their hopes in the possibilities that your triumph in the Referendum will open up.

its total solidarity and its opposition to the manoeuvres organised by internal and imperialist forces to frustrate the process of transformation that your government is carrying out.

In doing this we are interpreting the convictions of our members, organised from north to the south of the country and those of an increasing number of our compatriots who have overcome the poison being spread about the Bolivarian process. The revolutionary, democratic and

ers and taken advantage of corruption. They are the ones who today are resisting the loss of their privileges and resorting to worthless methods.

The economic clean-up, the nationalisation of PDVSA [Venezuela's state-owned oil company] and the elaboration of plans through "Missions" to take care of the urgent needs of the great majority, have opened the way to a new State — one in which the exerting of effective sovereignty restores the

## Cuba offers "ray of light" in cancer battle

Terrie Albano

**Cancer may have met its match, and the potential breakthrough may have far-reaching political ramifications as well.**

For the first time a US company signed an agreement with a Cuban firm to develop and test anti-cancer drugs. The US Government broke with its long-standing trade embargo and gave a green light to California-based CancerVax to enter into a deal with Havana's Centre for Molecular Immunology (CIMAB).

CancerVax obtained exclusive rights to complete the development of "three product candidates" designed to halt the growth of malignant tumors related to lung, breast, prostate and ovarian cancers. Cuban President Fidel Castro was present at the July 15 signing.

CancerVax chief Dr David Hale, who signed the deal in Havana, said, "There is a ray of light in the darkness of cancer". He said patients

are excited about the cooperative arrangement that could produce a cancer vaccine.

Dr Agustín Lage Dávila, director of CIMAB, noted there is not a tradition of technology transfer from southern to northern countries, particularly in the case of Cuba and the US.

"It is no secret that there is a 40-plus year void of a total absence of economic cooperation, a situation for which we have never blamed the US people, far less the scientists of that country", he said.

US cancer specialist Dr Donald Morton, speaking via video said, the Cuban-created drugs, designed to stimulate the immune system against cancer, represent a "unique, unprecedented discovery".

The Treasury Department, which oversees the US embargo against Cuba, denied a cash exchange. Instead, CancerVax will trade food and medicine with Cuba, estimated at US\$2 million a year.

*People's Weekly World* ☪



# Haitians confront new repression

Rosita Johnson

**In the wake of the February 29 US-backed coup d'état against Haiti's constitutionally elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the Haitian people's living conditions and political freedoms have sharply deteriorated, eyewitnesses say.**

Representatives of four delegations to Haiti held a press conference in the US on July 28 to inform the public of the situation there.

The current regime in Haiti, headed by businessman Gerard Latortue, was formed by an alliance of Aristide's non-elected political

lawyers, trade unionists, community activists, religious leaders, former Haitian Army officers and ordinary Haitian citizens.

In addition to the capital, Port-au-Prince, they visited Les Cayes, Petit Goave, and Gran Goave, among other places.

Griffin said, "Overwhelming evidence shows that violence and threats are being directed at anyone who is or has been a supporter of President Aristide".

The delegation found that the interim government has failed to establish a credible judicial system and ignores the Haitian constitution.

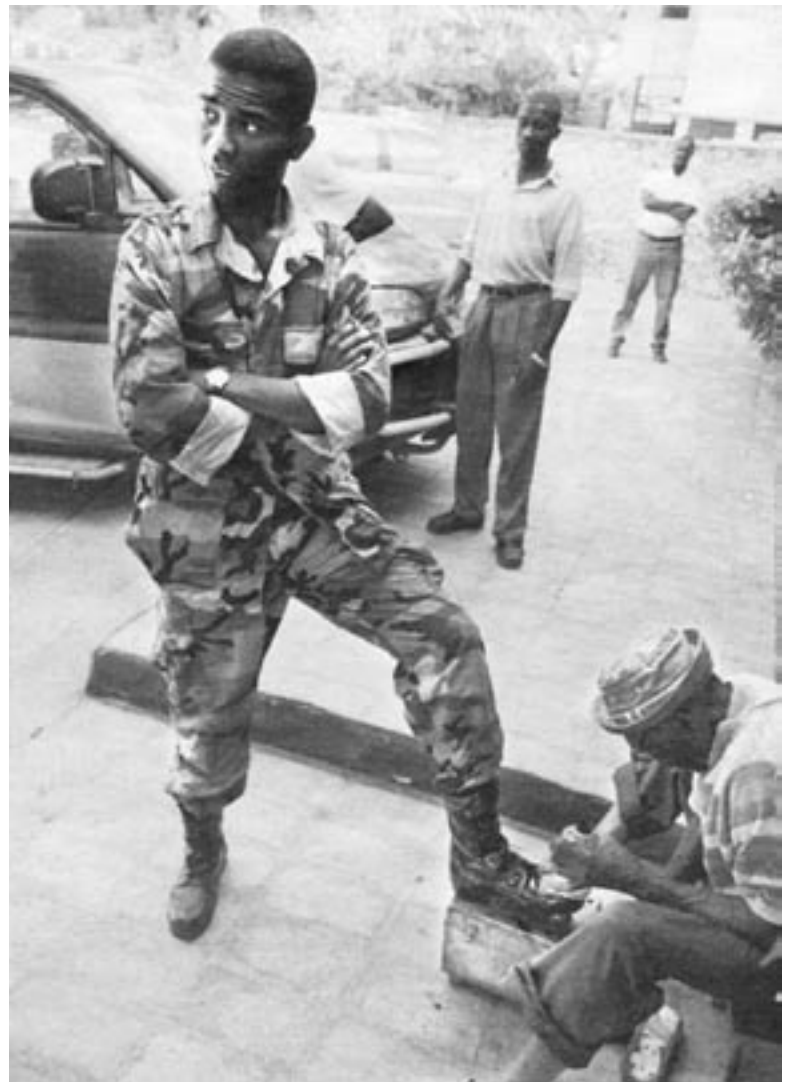
to the Latortue regime and both receive funding from US agencies and "private sources." CARLI furnishes a daily list of names of Lavalas Party supporters to be read on radio broadcasts as "human rights abusers", even though CARLI lawyers admit they had not investigated or spoken to the accused.

Interviews with community group leaders confirmed that Aristide supporters have been singled out to be murdered and their homes burned to the ground. Those not killed are in hiding and are pleading for protection or asylum in countries outside of Haiti. The 3600-member "multinational military force" patrols the slum area of Port-au-Prince, but does not protect Aristide supporters.

The panellists described the new economic hardships imposed on the Haitian people. All the government-sponsored food, shelter and literacy programs ended with the coup. Unemployment, a long-term problem, has shot up to 70 percent. The average Haitian ate one meal per day before the coup, but now the prices of rice and other foods have doubled and most people, even those with jobs, are eating only about three times a week.

Dr Frantz Latour, director of the Haitian Community Center said, "Eighty-nine years ago today US Marines began a 19-year occupation of Haiti. But before leaving, the US created the Haitian Army to enforce US interests in Haiti. Today courageous citizens in Haiti, under the 33rd brutal coup, risk their lives to protest, and we will do the same."

*People's Weekly World*, ☼



Made in the USA – coup leader has his shoes shined in Cap-Haitien

**... 1000 bodies were brought there in March, ten times the normal amount. Many had been shot with their hands tied behind them and plastic bags over their heads.**

opposition and former right-wing Haitian Army officers and paramilitary death squads. These forces, in turn, have been backed by the US and French Governments.

US Attorney Tom Griffin travelled to Haiti with the National Lawyers Guild in late March and again in mid-April. He and his colleagues interviewed elected officials, members of the Fanmi Lavalas Party (Aristide's party), members of the opposition parties, police officers, and troops from the US, France, Canada and Chile. They also spoke with journalists,

Griffin described a visit to the morgue in Port-au-Prince. He and others interviewed the director and workers, who revealed that 1000 bodies were brought there in March, ten times the normal amount. Many had been shot with their hands tied behind them and plastic bags over their heads.

The delegation interviewed two Haitian human rights groups, the Committee of Advocates for Respect of Individual Liberties (CARLI) and the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR).

Both proved to be closely linked

## Cyprus: strenuous efforts to move unification process forward

Steve Katsineris

**New steps announced by the government of Cyprus show its continued resolve to support efforts for a viable and comprehensive solution to the Cyprus conflict. As part of its ongoing efforts to promote improved relations and make positive initiatives towards the Turkish Cypriot side, the Cyprus Government has recently put forward a package of wide-ranging confidence building measures intended to benefit both communities and to encourage further co-operation.**

In a statement on July 16, the Cyprus Government Spokesman Kypros Chrysostomides said, "The Government of Cyprus in its efforts to reduce tensions, enhance the climate of cooperation and confidence among the two communities, materialising its ultimate goal of the reunification of the country, has taken a series of measures that serve

this purpose." The proposed measures were:

- The opening of eight further crossing points along the ceasefire line
- The process of de-mining (which has already been started unilaterally by the Cyprus Government within the buffer zone)
- The disengagement of military forces in the walled town of Nicosia and the Derinea-Famagusta area, the limitation of military maneuvers across the ceasefire line and to extend two kilometers each side.

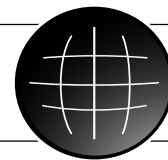
Furthermore, the government has suggested the return of the closed town of Famagusta, which remains empty. The government stated that the freeing of the town is a prerequisite for further discussions in relation of the operation of the Famagusta port. The port could be operated for the benefit of both communities.

The UN, the EU, the US and

much of the international community received the announcement of the measures as positive and welcome steps in the right direction. Unfortunately the Turkish Cypriot leadership and the Turkish Government were quick to reject the measures. The world should be asking why they would reject such practical and reasonable offers.

If Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot regime really want a settlement of the Cyprus issue, then these important smaller steps need be settled and built on to encourage trust and show that the essential bigger issues can be truly resolved. These sensible and realistic approaches by the Cyprus Government are the key to advancing the process of reunification and offer the right opportunity for the EU and the rest of the international community to let the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leadership know this.

Despite this negative response the Cyprus Government said it was discussing further initiatives with the European Union to be announced at a later stage. For its part, the Cypriot Government and people have consistently sent a clear message that they are truly working towards a just and workable settlement of the Cyprus problem. The initiatives of the Cypriot side deserve support. We can all play our part by pushing for the Australian Government and other countries to support the genuine efforts of Cyprus to resolve the division of the island. ☼



## Global briefs

**IRAQ:** USA authorities in Iraq spent hundreds of millions of dollars of Iraq's money much of it without documentation. For example, officials in the US occupation authority had no records to justify a \$24.7 million item for the replacement of Iraq's currency. A report released at the end of July is the first formal audit of contracting procedures under the authority which oversaw "reconstruction" spending. The US occupation authority used seized funds from government sources and oil revenues to pay for 1928 contracts worth about \$847 million. At the same time the US authorities have spectacularly failed to provide the population with such basics as electricity, clean water and a working sewerage system.

**RUSSIA:** Thousands of people staged protests against legislation that would rob millions of pensioners and war veterans of benefits such as the right to free transport and medicines. The additional payment being offered as compensation is far from adequate and will quickly be wiped out by inflation. For many of those already struggling below the poverty line it could be a death sentence. Those supporting the cruel cuts claim they are central to President Putin's aim to slash bureaucracy and corruption. Protests continue with many younger people going on hunger strike in different parts of the country in defence of the old and the sick.

**INDIA:** More than 3000 peasants have committed suicide in Andhra Pradesh as a result of neo-liberal policies of the ruling classes in the last 15 years. Thousands of children in tribal areas are malnourished and have many died. Soon after the reports of starvation deaths, peasant suicides and severe drought started coming in, the Left Front organised a wide campaign of actions and prepared a charter of demands. The Left mobilised in strength throughout the state on the issue of agrarian distress.

**CANADA:** Workers at a Wal-Mart store in Jonquiere, Quebec, have won the right to a union, after the Quebec Labour Relations Board ruled on August 2 to grant them union certification with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Canada. The union said this is the first unionised Wal-Mart in North America. Accreditation was won after a majority of the store workers signed UFCW Canada membership cards. "The Quebec certification shows that when workers' rights are protected, Wal-Mart workers will exercise those rights for a voice at work", said UFCW International President Joseph Hansen.

### Big Red Clearance Sale

Books, posters, desks, tables, chairs, bookcases, metal racking, records.

We are moving following last December's fire in our premises. Thousands of books: Marxist classics, Left Book Club titles, general literature, Melodya 33 records

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

## Moulding our youth

I have recently read a book, a collection of poems and articles by a class of high school students, telling of their experiences and emotions.

The teacher encouraged them to say frankly how they felt. I was surprised and alarmed at the complaints of the prevalence of bullying among boys and girls, most often inter-gender. The telling and writing of bad experiences is generally therapeutic.

I then read an article coming from The Telegraph Group, London, of the experiments of promoting mutual massage of head, neck and shoulders between pairs of children in primary classes.

"They ask permission to do the massage and check to see the pressure is OK". One of the head teachers said that after one half term the class became much more settled and more aware of each others' feelings.

"We saw a definite decrease in aggression and bullying ... the children have more friends, working hard and more able to concentrate".

It is when we look at factors that cause bullying among children that we realise the very big effect of violence on TV on bullying. How much of this is the deliberate policy of the leaders of capitalist states? Dramatic personal conflicts and violence sells films. The Pentagon asked for a film on a particular US war experience in Somalia and got "Black Hawk Down".

The capitalists want aggressive

anti-social youth for their armies to be trained to kill.

For progressives it become a political task to promote the healing and pacifying practice of mutual massage among children, not only primary children but also possible high school students.

It can deny the war-monger the aggressive, bullying youth they need to make their soldiers and mercenaries for their wars.

Vic Williams  
Willagee, WA

## "Let's have just a touch of humility"

Following the recent correspondence on the Iraqi Communist Party it is important that I, as Communist Party of Britain international secretary, should explain our party's position of full solidarity.

Along with the communist parties of Vietnam, Cuba, Greece, Germany, Finland and the Russian Federation, the CPB signed the Helsinki Appeal for Solidarity in May 2004.

This expressed full solidarity with the "ICP and Iraqi democratic forces in their struggle to end the occupation, restore national sovereignty and independence and build a new unified, democratic and federal Iraq".

This remains the position of the CPB. Richard Bagley's (published in the *Morning star*) article provided a balanced assessment of the objectives of the ICP in the current phase and the daunting obstacles it faces in redeveloping mass democratic movements and providing leadership for genuinely democratic and anti-occupation forces within the interim government.

Those attacking this position should question the political programmes of those they appear to support. Do any of these forces have perspectives which resemble those

of resistance movements in France, Vietnam or South Africa?

Most of the organised groups are backed by regimes, or ex-regimes, that have been reactionary in the extreme. Most have not hesitated to take money from US agencies in the past to participate in actions against socialists and democrats.

Rather than debating the tactics of the ICP, we should, with some humility, recognise our status as citizens of one of the two key aggressor states occupying Iraq. The debate for us should be how we take steps to end the occupation.

John Foster  
CP of Britain

## Hugo Chavez and the Venezuelan Recall Election

Last night on the SBS news (12-8-04) there was an overview of this weekend's referendum in Venezuela on whether President Hugo Chavez should be recalled and fresh elections held.

Hugo Chavez is favoured to win the "NO VOTE" in the referendum as he has the support of the majority of Venezuela's citizens, but especially its less well off masses.

The right wing in a demonstration of sour grapes has accused Chavez of spending up big time on the windfall from the spike in world oil prices to fund health and education programs for the poor!

That sort of thing would never happen if the right wing US government backed opposition ran the country - which was exactly what Venezuela was like before Chavez came to power.

Meanwhile in Australia, following on from the obvious pork barreling of the baby bonus, Howard and Costello lament upon Telstra's latest record profit result. The problem is that they can't flog off the balance of the telco to the private sector where the profits will line the pock-

ets of a well moneyed elite rather than the monies be used to improve services for all Australians.

Richard Titelius  
Perth, WA

## High class films

I may have received edition No 1194 late. I was very pleased to have read the opinion of Rob Gowland concerning "Soviet-class films, a thing of the past".

What is coming out of Hollywood now proves that Hollywood is running out of ideas. Why give a high rating and call a film a box office hit when it is encouraging the audience to develop a low cultural level?

I think it is worth watching a Soviet film than a Commercialist blockbuster film or the day to day telenovel also known as a soap opera.

Let's hope that one of our public broadcasting channels one day will televise a first class uncensored Soviet film.

Julian

## Terrorism & Alexander Downer

I find it extremely interesting that it is Alexander Downer of all people who is berating the Spanish and Philippines governments for withdrawing their troops from the illegal war in Iraq and because of this not being committed to the struggle against terrorism.

Wasn't Mr Downer the person who justified the resumption of co-operation between Australia and KOPASSUS, the Indonesian Special Forces?

These are the forces that are responsible for the past genocides in Indonesia and East Timor and the present ones in West Papua, Aceh and the Moluccas.

The Indonesian military is

the greatest force for terror in our region.

Who did you say was soft on terrorism, Mr Downer?

Andrew (Andy) Alcock  
Forestville SA

## Out of sight

I'm sick of doing the talking. Let William Rivers Pitt talk:

"We invaded a country based upon the false claim that Iraq was allied with al Qaeda. We invaded a country based on the false claim that there were weapons of mass destruction which needed to be destroyed. We promised freedom and democracy, and instead installed a CIA-trained strongman named Allawi who has all but created a dictatorship in Iraq, and who has been accused of killing Iraqi prisoners by his own hand. 896 American soldiers have died so we could do this. We took thousands of innocent civilians off the streets in Iraq and threw them into hellhole prisons, where they were beaten, raped, and killed.

"This story has faded from public view because no new pictures of the abuses have come out in the last several weeks. Those pictures are out there, and they show the rape and torture of children. The international media is reporting on it. Coalition ally Norway may be preparing to flee Iraq because of the allegations regarding these children."

Yours for sobriety and rectitude.  
James B Warburton  
Bondi, NSW

Got something to say?  
Then write it down  
and send it to us.



# Culture & Life

by  
Rob Gowland

## Arcane mysteries

I may have said this before, but capitalism's a curious business, isn't it? I mean, the overall process is simple enough to grasp: accumulate all the capital you can, whenever you can and wherever you can. And do whatever it takes to make that possible.

The leading capitalists are able to make or break governments, manipulate whole economies and live like kings. At the same time, prominent corporations crash and burn with alarming frequency.

The day to day running of "developed capitalism" is entrusted by the capitalist corporations to an army of financial advisers, traders, brokers, bankers and economists, all of whom have been assiduously taught to believe that accumulating personal wealth is the highest aspiration of a human being.

And so they struggle with the global chaos created by capitalism, trying to make sense of its contradictions and disorder. Like capitalism itself, but on a smaller scale, they lurch from one crisis to the next, desperately seeking to discern a pattern they can turn to their advantage.

For, while the overall process may be simple, in its details the process of capitalism is full of arcane mysteries, misinformation and a prevailing hysteria. Its minions are seized by unbridled optimism one moment, doom and gloom the next.

"Buy!" they scream, then just as loudly "Sell!", as the market ebbs and flows and the Aussie dollar gains (or loses) against the Greenback.

However, the leading capitalists, especially the ideologues of the system, clearly know exactly how the system works and why things happen as they do. Their problem is that they cannot impart that knowledge to the people, for it would expose them to the wrath of those they exploit and condemn to poverty amidst plenty.

Instead, they keep their army of financial workers misinformed about the nature of the system, and encourage them to master the intricacies of its supposed arcane mysteries.

Deliberately mislead as to how the system actually works, all these poor souls can do is closely observe what happens, and on the basis of that try to deduce whether a trend is developing (i.e., will it last beyond tomorrow) or whether it is merely a blip (or a glitch)?

On Monday, August 9, the Reserve Bank's quarterly assessment of the state of the Australian economy asserted that the economy was expanding at a good pace and the "strong world economy" would provide a further boost to growth.

The very next day, readers of the *Daily Telegraph's* financial pages

learnt (presumably to their surprise, in the circumstances) that Australian stocks had been "hit across the board ... with banks and blue-chip miners leading the fall".

Financial reporter Ian Lovett informed readers that over the preceding couple of days, "Wall Street went on alert ... as lower July job numbers heightened fears the US economy was running on empty".

Eh? What happened to the "strong world economy"? Apparently the US economy is not part of it.

US financial experts had been confidently predicting that some 240,000 new jobs would be added to the US economy in July. In fact, the number of new jobs only came to a miserable 32,000.

No wonder the spokespersons of capitalism sometimes seem a trifle harassed - or simply bewildered.

Joe Spadaro, an analyst for an outfit called Trend Resources, told the *Telegraph* "the US market looks terrible". He then proceeded to detail a litany of financial woes: "The Dow closed at a new low for the year and so did Nasdaq and the S&P 500. The advance-decline line made a new low, the US dollar fell and gold rose almost US\$10."

The price of gold rises when capitalists lose faith in the ability of national currencies to retain their value. Currency analyst Frank Kennedy declared "this is just one more nail in the US dollar's coffin", a statement with decidedly downbeat implications.

Even the Reserve Bank, for all its upbeat talk about the nation's finances being so good and how



"the strong world economy" would help drive an export recovery, included a caveat to the effect that that export recovery was in fact "overdue" and that debt was accumulating "too quickly".

But the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and Australian investment outfit ARGO is choosing to sit on \$280 million in cash rather than invest it because they can't find "good value".

Like the Reserve, ARGO's Chairman Chris Harris also chose

to ignore the sorry state of the US economy in a guarded statement as to why ARGO's management would "sooner just park it [the \$280 million] in cash": "Although both the Australian and global economic outlooks appear favourable at the present time, going forward domestic and international economies may be influenced by higher energy and mineral costs, together with interest rate and currency pressures."

Not looking too good, really, is it? ☹

**Rob Gowland**  
**previews**  
**ABC & SBS**  
Public Television

Sun August 22 ~  
~ Sat August 28

**Compass (ABC 10.15pm Sunday)** this week deals with the witch craze of 1589-91 that resulted in the deaths of over a thousand people, mainly women, and mainly in Scotland.

The program concentrates on the influential role of the 24-year-old King James VI of Scotland, the future King of England – who became the most brutal witch hunter of them all.

In the manner of so many “modern” TV documentaries, writer-producer Mark Hayhurst presents the facts in dramatised form, presumably so the program won’t be “dull”. In fact, the program actually features fictional “interviews” with the leading figures of the time, played by actors who were no doubt grateful for the work but who do not enhance its historical authenticity.

For all this dressing up, the program misses the main point of the witch cult, which in Communist historian A L Morton’s words “existed through the Middle Ages [not just at the end of the XVI Century] as a secret religion of the exploited masses”.

Morton notes that “the social history of the cult has been lost because it was a religion mainly of the illiterate and because it was savagely persecuted and forced to exist underground.

“Men who felt that Church and State were leagued against them turned for consolation to the old enemy of the Christian mythology, the Devil.”

Morton quotes the French historian Michalet who declared that “the medieval peasant would have burst but for his hope in the Devil”.

Significantly, Morton notes that “the cult was strongest where the peasantry was poorest and most wretched – very strong in France and Germany, for example, and stronger in Scotland than in more prosperous England”. As always, economic considerations are of greater importance than the personal whims of this or that prince.

The organisation of the witch cult is interesting: “Fragmentary references indicate that it was often connected with political unrest and conspiracy. Its organisation, in local groups, or covens, and districts with coven and district leaders whose identity was unknown to most of the members was curiously like that of an illegal party.”

So that’s why I like *Harry Potter!*

**Dynasty Of Terror**, screening on **The Big Picture (ABC 8:30pm Wednesday)**, is not about the Bush family (as you might have expected) and their record of sowing death and destruction willy nilly over large parts of the globe.

No, it’s about the Bush family’s number one global scapegoat, “the sprawling bin Laden family, one of the richest, most pervasive and influential dynasties in the Middle East”.

The program asks: Does the family support their 17th son Osama’s radical Islamic views?

Would they tell a TV journalist if they did?

Needless to say, the program fails to delve into the murky but well documented relationship between bin Laden and successive US administrations. Might have cast



Does his family support Osama’s fundamentalist views? (*Dynasty Of Terror*)

light on the wrong “dynasty of terror”, presumably.

**Eagle & Evans (ABC 9.00pm Thursdays)** is a new Australian comedy show that is both clever and original – as well as quite amusing. I was impressed and pleasantly surprised.

Part sketch show, part sitcom, **Eagle & Evans** has a format that is a little (but only a little) reminiscent of cult classic the *Larry Sanders Show*. It’s a comedy show about a comedy show.

The principal characters, comedians Craig Eagle and Dailan Evans (played by themselves) are the warm-up guys and general dogsbodies on *The Blaze da Silva Experience* – “Australia’s most popular television variety show”.

Their job is to hype up the audience for *Blaze*, then they hang around in the green room trying to put off anyone they think might do a better comedy routine than them.

What Craig and Dailan really

want is for *Blaze* to give them a proper guest spot on the show. Every week we find them pitching their latest idea to him, only to have it rejected.

Created by Craig Eagle and Dailan Evans, this droll mix of sketch, stand-up and sit-com is a co-production between ABC TV, Burberry Productions and Princess Pictures.

**Martyn Edward Hesford’s** 2001 adaptation of **The Life And Adventures Of Nicholas Nickleby** (directed by Stephen Whittaker) returns this week (**ABC 11.05pm Thursdays**). With the notable exception of Miss Squeer’s grotesque attempts to woo Nicholas, the two-part series misses much of Dickens’ rich and pointed humour, tending instead to be overly grim.

Nevertheless, it is extremely well done, largely justifying the *Radio Times*’ comment: “Breathes an astonishing life and vibrancy into Dickens’ third novel ... will enthrall, amuse and horrify.”

Only Dickens’ third novel, is the story of a young man, left penniless on the death of his father, who is “helped” by a mercenary uncle who sends him to work in a “school” that is more like a concentration camp for unwanted children.

Dickens’ portrayal of the conditions at Dotheboys Hall was a major factor in bringing about the reform

of English education practices. The novel “passed like a whirlwind over the schools of the North”.

It was, in fact, one of his most successful crusades. He had had to leave school himself for a time and work in a warehouse capping and labelling pots of shoe-blackening. For the boys who worked there the place was a malodorous nightmare, equalling anything in his later novels.

It was his evident sympathy with ordinary people, and especially his penchant for peopling his novels with affectionate portrayals of decent people in all stations of life, as well as his unrivalled ability to create grotesque but thoroughly believable villains and hangers on, that made his books so deservedly popular.

James D’Arcy plays Nicholas with an appropriate mixture of polite diffidence and righteous affront at the injustices so rampant around him.

As his money-lending uncle Ralph Nickleby, Charles Dance is broodingly malevolent – but then does he ever play anyone who isn’t? Lee Ingleby brings the unfortunate Smike to life with astonishing clarity and understanding, while Sophia Miles makes a very beautiful and sympathetic Kate Nickleby, amongst a huge cast of top British acting talent. ★

Fremantle

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**Schedule assumes October 9 election**

Please contact any of the below if you wish to speak on any subject

Brian Jenkins 08 9528 1864  
jenks@inet.net.au

Bill Plowman 9450 3588  
35 Edgewater Road Salter Point

Program updates at  
<http://members.inet.net.au/~jenks/club.html>

The Australian National Organisation of the Unemployed (also UPUWA Inc)

Sydney

**WAR (Krig)**

by Lars Norén Translated by Anna Landgren  
World English-language premiere Translation specially commissioned by New Theatre

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By arrangement with Rowohlt Verlag  
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Sydney

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**August 20**  
**Understanding the Middle East – why don’t we?**  
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Ahmad Shboul, Prof Arab and Islamic Studies, Sydney Uni

**August 27**  
**The grab for water – selling it off**  
Michael Johnson, Assoc Prof, Science and Policy, UNSW  
Ian Cohen, MLC, NSW Greens  
Speaker from the Australian Conservation Foundation

**September 3**  
**The politics of climate change – too hot to handle?**  
Speakers to be advised

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# The Ten Commandments Stakes

The Howard Government's outlook is that of a religious fundamentalist regime, with all the contradictions that the term implies. It is committed to the ruthless pursuit of corporate profit, greed, inequality, vested interests, warmongering – all alongside the espousal of Christian values, which adds hypocrisy to the list. Here's a brief look at how Howard and his gang of apostles fare in the Ten Commandments Stakes.

## 1 "I am the Lord your God ... you shall have no other Gods before me"

Howard, his Treasurer Peter Costello and other Ministers are regulars at the fundamentalist "hot gospel" Hillsong Church in Sydney. However, their obvious and unswerving determination to serve corporate interests indicates that they really worship the Great Gods, Money and the Finance Corporations.

## 2 "You shall make no graven image or any likeness of anything in heaven or earth, nor bow down to any such thing"

"We won't just automatically click our heels and follow the Americans", avowed John Howard, in Sept 2002.

But one year earlier, while bowing deeply, he had said: "I've

take God's name in vain. But surely breaking all the other commandments while proclaiming your piety has to be the worst sort of blasphemy!

## 4 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a day of rest"

Since first being elected the Howard Government's deregulation of the labour market has given employers the means to greatly increase hours of work while reducing pay. More than half Australia's workforce now works seven days a week and the day of rest replaced by "flexible work practices" to satisfy the Financial gods. (And what about Christ's declaration that "The labourer is worthy of his hire"? They seem to have overlooked that one.)

**A quick glance and at what the Hillsong Church values – beliefs to which Howard and some of his extreme right colleagues adhere – reveals that they bear no resemblance to the underlying principles of the 10 Commandments**

indicated Australia will provide all support that might be requested of us by the United States in relations to any action that might be taken".

Since then his actions, particularly those concerning foreign policy, defence and trade, have demonstrated that his later statement was correct, not his original one.

## 3 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain"

In the narrowest sense of the term it's true that government members don't seem to frequently

## 5 "Honour your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land"

"4600 more [aged care] places will come on line in the next three months", said Aged Care Minister Bronwyn Bishop, during the 2001 election campaign.

However, officials from her department said they didn't provide the bed numbers to Bishop and didn't know where she got them from, and that only 1263 aged care beds "came on line" in the three

months period. The number of places remains way below the level needed to care for those aged mothers and fathers.

## 6 "You shall not murder"

A) In October 2001, 353 asylum seekers people died when their boat, the SIEV X, sank on route to Australia. Afterwards, Howard stated: "The boat did not sink in Australian waters". However, despite several government agencies trying to conceal the facts, subsequent evidence proved the vessel went down within waters under Australian responsibility.

B) Tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis have been killed during the war waged on Iraq by the "coalition of the willing", of which Australia, to its eternal shame, remains a member.

In February 2003 Howard declared: "Iraq's ... possession of chemical and biological weapons and [its] pursuit of nuclear capability poses a real and unacceptable threat to the stability and security of our world". However, a later Parliamentary Joint Committee stated: "Assessment by Australian agencies ... cast doubt on the suggestion that the Iraqi 'arsenal' represented a 'grave and immediate' and 'real and unacceptable' threat". Mr Howard might like to check the text of the ninth commandment in reference to these transgressions, too.

## 7 "You shall not commit adultery"

Lots of parliamentarians, and others, have skeletons in this particular cupboard, and there's no reason to suppose that the members of the Howard Government are any holier than the rest of them in this respect! And just in case any of them claim they are, then "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone" as the Bible says.

## 8 "You shall not steal"

A) "There never was a generation of stolen children", said Howard. True. It was more like several generations

B) The Government is currently trying to steal East Timor's oil and gas. It conveniently overlooks the fact that the oil extraction platforms are within East Timorese territorial waters, being much closer to East Timor than to Australia.

C) "The coalition will maintain expenditure on labour market programs", said Howard in February 1996. Labour market programs were cut by more than \$1.8 billion over the following four years.

D) The whole system of capitalist property relations, which Howard is sworn to uphold, is based on theft of the surplus value created by working people.

## 9 "You shall not bear false witness"

A) In October 2001 Ministers Peter Reith and Philip Ruddock claimed asylum seekers had thrown children off their boat into the sea: Ruddock said: "Well, it did happen.



The fact is children were thrown into the water".

"All we know is that children were thrown in", added Reith, parrot fashion.

However, on November 7, three days before the 2001 federal election, the Defence Force told Reith: "There was nothing to suggest that women and children had been thrown into the water". The Howard Government kept this information well and truly under its hat, and won the election.

B) "There never was a generation of stolen children", said Howard. (See also No. 8)

C) The Government accuses East Timor of wrongfully making a claim to its oil and gas. (See also No. 8)

D) "Medicare will be retained in its entirety", said Howard, in February 1996. Tell that to patients now paying a doctor's fee for service!

## 10 "You shall not covet anything which is your neighbour's"

A) The Howard Government covets the ABC on behalf of the commercial broadcasting industry, which in turn covets the market represented by ABC viewers and listeners. And, as demonstrated with several other government authorities in Australia, the first step in handing the ABC over to them would be to

cut back its funding until it ceases to function adequately, and then dispose of it as an unsuccessful area of government activity.

And lo and behold, in March 2001 Howard declared: "We made a cut in 1996 [\$60 million to ABC funding] ... I acknowledge that". (Mind you, he assumed that people's memories are short, declaring in May 2003 that: "We said we would maintain ABC's funding in real terms and we have done that".)

B) As indicated above, the Government certainly covets our neighbour East Timor's oil and gas in the Timor Straits. But just whose oil is it? (See no. 8)

**So how did the government go in the "Ten Commandment Stakes?"**

The government can only claim a technical "pass" with regard to number 3, but even this fails in the real sense in which the commandment was intended. So with all things considered, the government should really be marked down to 0/10.

A quick glance and at what the Hillsong Church values – beliefs to which Howard and some of his extreme right colleagues adhere – reveals that they bear no resemblance to either the underlying principles of the 10 Commandments, or to what are commonly referred to as "Christian values". ☹

Fremantle, WA

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