

Qantas greedy & dangerous

Andrew Jackson

Anyone watching the Olympics broadcast would now be familiar with the heart-melting Qantas ad which has scores of angelic children sweetly singing "I still call Australia home". However, investors looking for even sweeter music were doubly rewarded by Qantas last week: a record profit of \$648 million and news that JetStar, the domestic budget airline fully-owned by Qantas, will be moving its maintenance operations offshore.

If this move is considered along with Qantas' plans to move 400 flight attendant jobs offshore to London, we get a clearer picture of the Flying Kangaroo – a company intent on slashing its Australian workforce by moving as many of its operations off shore as possible.

Low-cost JetStar is already notorious for cost-cutting when it comes to safety, and the latest move may end up being a nail in the coffin – literally – of its passengers.

Why call Australia home?

JetStar currently services its fleet of Boeing 717s at Newcastle, on the NSW central coast. However, with Newcastle physically unable to accommodate the fleet of larger Airbus A320s JetStar has on order, the airline is seeking out new quarters.

The budget airline has announced that jobs would definitely be going overseas: the most probable move would be to contract out the work to an existing A320 base – with lower paid workers – owned by Air New Zealand.

What JetStar failed to tell the public was that there is already a custom-made A320 base sitting vacant in Australia – the disused Ansett base in Melbourne.

Along with utilising Australia's existing infrastructure JetStar would also then be able to offer employment to the dozens of ex-Ansett engineers who have not been able to find suitable employment since the airline's collapse.

It is practical common sense to have all aspects of an airline's

operations – including maintenance – working together, not contracted out piecemeal around the world.

Since its launch, JetStar's cost-cutting on safety measures has left the airline plagued with problems, and an offshore move would put further distance between the engineers and the safety of the aircraft.

"Unwarranted and careless"

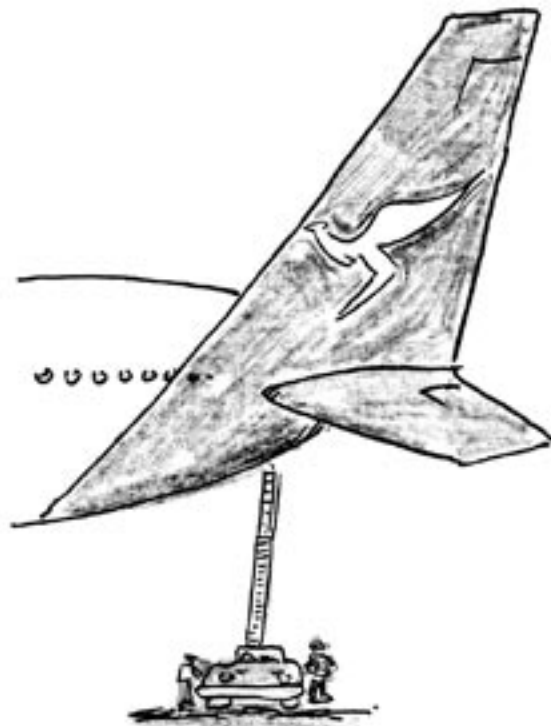
JetStar is determined to abandon the pre-flight safety inspection and attendance during pushback (when an aircraft backs up from the terminal prior to taxiing down the runway) by licensed engineers at every take-off – a safety measure long regarded as sacrosanct in the Australian aviation industry.

In an open letter to Qantas General Manager Alan Joyce, ALAEA (Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association) Federal Secretary David Kemp elaborates: "The ALAEA regards the introduction of operating procedures which remove Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineers from the transit/turnaround phase of an aircraft's operations to have the potential to seriously impact on the safety of the airline fleet."

"The ALAEA holds grave fears that a continuation of this procedure, with significantly reduced engineering presence at the transit of the aircraft, increases the likelihood of damage to aircraft and equipment and/or injury to airline workers and passengers.

"In the view of the ALAEA this constitutes not only a serious breach of trust by JetStar but also raises the risks involved in the dispatch of aircraft in an unwarranted and careless manner. Under-resourced and over-worked ground handling crews are being charged with levels of responsibility for which they have been provided grossly inadequate training and for which they are ill-equipped in terms of qualifications, experience and knowledge.

"The ALAEA appeals to you, in the interests of public safety and the safety of airline workers to reinstate suitably qualified, trained and experienced Licensed Aircraft



Maintenance Engineers to the role of engineer in charge of the pushback – a function for which they are qualified and have been trained."

Since the letter was written JetStar has suffered a further spate of safety incidents.

"A near collision, smoke in the cabin and slashed seatbelts low-lighted another ugly month in

the short life of cut-price operator, JetStar", the ALAEA August newsletter tells us.

Those incidents occurred as planes were approaching or leaving Queensland holiday destination, Hamilton Island. And on July 27 a flight attendant was transferred to hospital suffering from smoke inhalation after a diversion and

emergency landing at Mackay.

"We don't want to see Australia's world class safety record undermined by the new low-cost airlines and we will be doing all we can to convince them to use the expertise of licensed aircraft maintenance engineers before each and every flight", says David Kemp. ✪

We are moving!

As from Monday, August 30 our new address will be:

74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

New phone number: (02) 9699 8844

New fax number: (02) 9699 9833

Emails remain the same: guardian@cpa.org.au & cpa@cpa.org.au

As a consequence of our moving there will be
no issue of *The Guardian* next week

Obituary
Jack McPhillips
- p2

Aged care
staffing crisis
- p3

Conservative angst
over Howard
- p5

Iraqi CP condemns
"sabotage" violence
- p9

Venezuela –
CONGRATULATIONS!
- pp 8 & 12

The Guardian

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Institutionalised racism

On February 14 in Redfern, Thomas Hickey, known as TJ to his family and friends, was killed when being followed by police. He came off his pushbike and was impaled on a fence and died from his injuries in the Sydney Children's Hospital. Last week the NSW state coroner found that the police played no part in the death of the 17-year-old. The driver of the police vehicle involved in the "police operation" at the time of Thomas' death did not even give evidence at the inquest.

The police were exonerated, the coroner finding that Thomas wasn't being "chased" by the police wagon but was being "followed" as a "person of interest". He praised one of the officers for giving first aid to Thomas in "horrific and extremely upsetting circumstances". He found two of the officers were "doing their best to tell the truth" and that another two "were not completely candid".

The Police Commissioner, Ken Moroney, defended the contradictory stories given by the police, saying they had "different memories" of the events and that that didn't make them liars. He added they were suffering from "trauma".

Thomas was an Aborigine and that's the way the system treats Aboriginal people. Cold statistics are telling: one in 27 Indigenous men is in prison, nearly 17 times the rate for non-Indigenous men. And if you're an Aboriginal kid in Redfern being followed by the police, it is a chase. Thomas' death should be considered a death in police custody.

After Thomas' death the simmering anger at the generations-long constant police presence and harassment of Aboriginal people in Redfern boiled over into confrontation on the streets. What has become known as the Redfern riot was seen on television around the world, no doubt jolting people who recall the Sydney Olympics into wondering at the contrast between the apparently harmonious society presented to them then and the images of a race riot in the centre of the Olympic city.

Of course, the appearance of classless harmony is an illusion. It served to cover up, among other things, the oppression and dispossession of Indigenous Australians, while the Games themselves were used as a pretext for the introduction of laws that handed the police and military draconian new powers, putting in place the repressive measures of a police state.

What happened to Thomas Hickey and the developments that followed his death are the overt manifestations of a society split by antagonistic classes. It is a system based on exploitation and one of its features is institutionalised racism.

The findings of the coronial inquest, and the state's response, are those police state measures and that racism in action:

- Redfern police numbers will be increased by 56;
- There will be a full-time riot squad of 46 officers to "respond to civil disorder or public order management" state-wide;
- There is to be a new \$6 million, seven-story police station built in Redfern;
- Redfern police will have riot shields and helmets as standard issue and will be tutored in "cultural awareness" at the same time as having riot control training.

Meanwhile, the police will be investigating the police.

So, what is being planned for the future of Redfern? It is a prized piece of inner-city real estate and with the Carr Labor Government in the pocket of the developer lobby some form of dirty tactics cannot be far away. The huge police build-up will serve to inflame the situation. The Government clearly does not have reconciliation and a peaceful solution on the agenda.

It may be that a situation will be created to give the Government an excuse to carry out the forced removal of Aboriginal people from the area. It is no coincidence that the same thing is happening at Sandon Point, near Thirroul, on the NSW south coast, where the traditional owners of the land are fighting against the construction of a housing development. Thirroul, too, is getting a new police station, a whopping eight-story job.

PRESS FUND

Relocating an office can be a moving experience! But alas, it can also have negative effects. For example, there will be no *Guardian* next week, because we're moving to new headquarters less than a kilometre away, in the old Sydney suburb of Surry Hills. However, you can still help us during the week by contributing to the Press Fund. And we certainly need your support, if we are going to reach our annual target of \$14,000. So please keep those cheques, money orders, etc rolling in. This week our grateful thanks go to the following, for their generous contributions:

B Appleton \$20, Tony Battino \$20, Anthony D \$20, W Irving \$5, Donna McLaren \$25, T Bartlett \$100.

This week's total \$190. Progressive total: \$8090.

Obituary

Leslie John (Jack) McPhillips

The Communist Party of Australia regrets to announce the death on August 19 at 94 years of age of Leslie John (Jack) McPhillips. His death brings to an end an era of outstanding communist trade union leaders who played a major role in the Australian trade union movement in the 1940s, '50s and '60s. Never afraid of controversy, Jack remained throughout his life a militant and active communist giving all his strength and abilities to the cause of the working people.

Born in Rockhampton on March 21, 1910, he grew up in Queensland and New South Wales country towns until his family moved to Sydney in 1921. He finished school just before he turned 15 and became an office worker with one period as a shearer.

The years before the onset of the Great Depression were hard for workers and Jack soon became part of the struggle. He joined a union as soon as he started work.

Like hundreds of thousands of other workers he was unemployed between April 1931 and October 1939, finding work for only short periods in offices and as a furnace labourer and foundry labourer.

During his periods of unemployment he was active in organisations of the unemployed, often working as secretary or president. He was victimised for union activities in 1937.

Learning from his experiences in the Depression and in trade unions, Jack joined the Communist Party of Australia in October 1929. He remained true to his commitment to the Party and the working class for the rest of his life.

He was a leading figure in the Militant Minority Movement which brought together trade unionists whose activities were directed to the development of trade unions into militant, class conscious organisations.

He accepted a Party assignment and became Secretary of the North Australia Workers' Union in 1940. The NAWU was based in the Northern Territory and covered mainly unskilled workers. Jack and his wife Kathleen moved to Darwin for a time.

In December 1941, the Party called him back to Sydney where he

became an official of the Federated Ironworkers' Association, a union covering workers in the steel and non-ferrous metal industries, and unskilled workers in metal manufacturing, ship building and steel construction.

Jack was jailed for two short periods in 1949. On the first occasion, he was convicted of contempt for a speech he made to a meeting of workers criticising the legal tribunal which fixed wages. On the second, he was imprisoned for actively supporting striking coal miners.

He became Assistant National Secretary of the Ironworkers union and, in 1950, the National Secretary. During this time he played a leading part in several major post-war strikes in the steel, rail and metal industries.

Early in 1952, along with a number of other communists and left-wing union leaders, Jack was removed from his union positions by the right-wing anti-communist "Groupers". This was the time of the Cold War and virulent anti-communism promoted by the leaders of the western imperialist countries led by the governments of the United States and Britain.

After being defeated as National Secretary of the Ironworkers Association, Jack worked as a full-time functionary of the Communist



to form the SPA as the only way to restore a Marxist-Leninist Party in Australia.

He became the SPA's National Organiser as well as a member of the Central Committee, CC Executive (Political Bureau) and CC Secretariat. He was Chairman of the CC from 1981 to 1984 and was elected Party President in 1984.

At the SPA Congress in 1988 he resigned as President. However, this did not end his activities in the Socialist Party – which in 1996 took back its name and became the

Never afraid of controversy, Jack remained throughout his life a militant and active communist giving all his strength and abilities to the cause of the working people.

Party of Australia from 1952 to 1968, with responsibility for Party work in the trade unions. He had been elected to the Central Committee of the Party in 1945.

In mid-1960s the CPA leadership began to abandon Marxism-Leninism and adopt a Eurocommunist position. Jack and other Party members fought these changes. He was removed from the Central Committee at the 1967 Congress.

Jack worked as Secretary of the Conference of Communists held in December 1971 which decided

Communist Party of Australia.

He continued to write Party pamphlets, to contribute to Party education, to help in the production of the *Maritime Bulletin* and to advise younger Party members for well over a decade until ill health gradually forced him to withdraw from activity.

Jack and his late wife Kathleen were married for almost 54 years. He leaves two daughters, four grand-daughters, one grand-son and one great-grandson. We extend our deepest sympathy to them and to all his comrades and friends. ☺

Fire and New Building Appeal \$10,000

Almost there!

The response to the appeal has been terrific but still need \$1248 and just under a week to go until the big move. Come on, we can do it! Who can help with a \$1000 or a \$500 contribution? Or \$100 or \$50 or \$10? All contributions are appreciated regardless of size, and they all add up. For this week's contributions, a special thanks to:

Gwen Goedecke \$20; Brian Griffin \$40; Scott Turner \$50; Glen Humphrys \$20; Jim McKenzie \$20; Anonymous \$50; From North Branch Adelaide: Carole and Mark Window \$20, Connie and Les Purkis \$100, Greek comrades and supporters (Adelaide) \$100 & Bert Heylen \$10.

Total this week \$430 Progressive Total \$8752.



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.

Aged care: "Survival of the fittest"

Peter Mac

The union representing aged care staff has told a parliamentary inquiry that inadequate staffing levels are severely affecting the care of the elderly in aged care.

Craig Thompson, National Secretary of the Health Services Union, told the Australian Senate inquiry into aged care in Australia that inadequate staff numbers were resulting in unsatisfactory treatment or therapy, increased chances of assault of staff and residents, and staff being forced to carry out extra duties such as laundry and cleaning work.

He said that in order to conceal the situation employers were deliberately making major changes to staff numbers, care plans and records before inspections by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency (ACSAA).

The accreditation system currently used by the ACSAA was introduced in 1997, following a number of scandals over sub-standard treatment and even deaths in nursing homes throughout

the agency is ... giving too much notice before they conduct inspections, allowing staffing and records to be changed

Australia. The system is intended to monitor matters such as hygiene and appropriate medication, but the inquiry has been told that it has proved to have inconsistencies and inadequacies regarding inspection and definitions of care.

The union's report, which was based on examples given by nursing home staff, included cases where inadequate staffing levels had resulted in patients having to

be restrained by physical or chemical means, as well as the inability of staff to answer calls from residents, organise their physiotherapy, or attend to clinical care and incontinence management for them.

One of the most poignant submissions to the inquiry was made by Olive Mell, a 93-year-old patient, who pointed out that as a result of staff being overloaded with paper work and normal chores, for residents who have no visitors "there isn't a hope in hell of the staff having time to come in for a chat with them".

She noted that activities or entertainment had been curtailed or abandoned at her nursing home. She described life there as "rather like prison", and added simply: "I wish I could die".

The union pointed out that many nursing staff have technical college qualifications and do appallingly arduous and often distressing work, but are paid less than teenagers working in supermarkets. As a result, the union pointed out, there has been a fall-off in interest from prospective employees in aged care work.

Mr Thompson stated: "In NSW alone, of the 25 facilities inspected by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency since March, a total of 12 of them have been found to be sub-standard. We believe the actual rate is much higher because the agency is failing in its role and giving too much notice before they conduct inspections, allowing staffing and records to be changed.

The union has been highly critical of the Howard Government, which it said had boosted funding for aged care employers by some \$1.4 billion, but had not demanded accountability measures to ensure that the funding was directed towards actually improving patient care.

The union is seeking the implementation of strict staff/patient ratios. As Craig Thompson commented: "Without mandated minimum staffing levels it's the survival of the fittest in aged care."



ABC arts programming under attack

Peter Mac

There are signs that ABC management is yielding further ground to the government's attempts to exert political control over it.

This is particularly apparent in arts programming, which has long been attacked by conservative governments as being "intellectually elitist". ABC programmers recently announced they had canvassed new program initiatives, mostly based on the "reality TV" format. Although they later denied such programs would "dumb down" ABC arts, they clearly would.

Judge for yourself. In one proposal a team of caffeine-saturated potential authors would "churn out" a novel in three days while established writers assessed each chapter. Such a show would be most unlikely to result in great literature, great enlightenment or great entertainment.

Another idea was for "a race among communities to find their favourite historic house, one of which will be saved at the end of the show". The others would presum-

ably be demolished! And is such a "race" the most illuminating way to find out why communities cherish certain buildings and sites?

Yet another was for "bricklayers going aria for aria with pig farmers in a contest to find the best opera singer". Why single out such workers, as though sniggering that they are the least likely to yield worthy performances? Talent quests have in the past helped to identify great potential, but would this be the real object in this type of contest? Or would it be set up to provide an audience battleground for contestants' backers?

And then there is the whole issue of "arts" alienation by programming. Some of the most successful arts programs have been aired on weekday evenings - for example the highly popular and intriguing archaeology programs. Why should other programs be stigmatised by being put in a Sunday afternoon arts "box", which virtually ensures that their potentially wonderful and uplifting content is enjoyed by the smallest viewing audience? It is not the right idea for everyone's ABC. ❖

Olympic stitch-up

Twenty faceless women took to an Athens rooftop on the eve of the Olympics in solidarity with exploited sportswear workers around the globe.

Against a backdrop of the Acropolis, they operated sewing machines in a silent protest against the continuing refusal of sportswear manufacturers to sign off on basic labour codes.

Play Fair at the Olympics spokespersons conceded some improvements had been made in the sector but urged Olympic bosses to use their influence to end the appalling working conditions faced by hundreds of thousands of women, worldwide.

The action was sparked by the refusal of the IOC to accept a petition on labour standards signed by over half a million people.

Play Fair said that punishing

work schedules, poverty wages, harassment and discrimination were still facts of life in an industry enriching Western manufacturers.

Launched this year by Oxfam, the Clean Clothes Campaign and global unions, Play Fair at the Olympics have focused world attention on sweat shops.

Other actions have included a regional workers' Olympics in Thailand and a ride, from Belgium to Greece, by 27 cyclists supporting the campaign.

Meanwhile, in the final week before the 2004 Games, paramedics, ambulance drivers and thousands of hotel workers took direct action in a bid to share in the Olympic bonanza.

One Greek union spokesperson summed up the wave of strikes like this: "As we say in Greece - we will smack the pig until it squeals". ❖

Pete's Corner



Sir Dick heads to his comeuppance

Flight attendants asked to sing and dance during job interviews to demonstrate their "Virgin Flair" are taking the airline to the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Board.

The group of eight attendants, some experienced ex-Ansett employees, argue they were rejected by Virgin Blue because they were "too old".

The applicants, aged 36 to 56, say the 2001 interview process was little more than a meat market.

The Sir Richard Branson-owned Virgin has been criticised for its "sexist" marketing practices that often feature media stunts involving Branson and young female flight attendants. In one such incident Branson sprayed their t-shirts with champagne.

In 2001 the airline denied claims by the Flight Attendants Association that it had asked female flight atten-

dants to wear G-strings after the union fielded complaints.

The union's Darryl Watkins says age should not be a barrier for flight attendants if they know emergency procedures and provide good service.

"We encourage all airlines to recruit regardless of age and to recognise the need for progressive policies such as part-time work and workplace flexibility", he says.

In their job interviews the applicants are asked to show they have the "Virgin flair" by singing or dancing. One former Ansett employee, Carol Dowling, put it this way when comparing a Qantas job interview with Sir Dick's exploitation: "They [Qantas] were extremely professional and they asked me things that were extremely relevant. It took five hours and they didn't ask me to sing or dance." ❖

Hardie "scheming since 1995"

James Hardie shareholders are being asked to rubber stamp the company's executives latest compo bid without access to Jackson Inquiry findings about their possible misdeeds. Asbestos sufferers and unions are demanding that the company postpone shareholder meetings, including the AGM set down for the week before David Jackson, QC, makes his findings public on September 21.

Asbestosis sufferer, Bernie Banton, urged Australians to be wary of the line being run by new chair, Meredith Hellicar, who stepped into the role after predecessor, Alan McGregor, received unfavourable mentions at the Inquiry.

"This company has a history of saying one thing and doing another", Bernie Banton warned. "The fight is not won because Hardie is so slick and slippery it is hard to deliver the knockout punch."

"Last week they got enormous publicity for saying all victims should be compensated. All their media, since, has back-tracked from that position."

"They have scheduled their shareholder meetings to cover up anything about their treatment of asbestos victims that may come out of the inquiry."

Hellicar has been apologising all over town to asbestos sufferers likely to be duded by the company's 2001 corporate restructure but continues to run her predecessor's line that only a state-run scheme will deliver a fair go.

Months ago the company was adamant it had no legal or moral obligations to Australians dying of asbestos-related diseases, beyond what was left of the \$293 million it deposited with trust fund, MRCF (Medical Research and Compensation Foundation).

Hardie had assured the Supreme Court and the share market that Australian creditors would have access to \$1.9 billion in partly-paid shares. Barely a year later directors rescinded that arrangement, leaving a compensation hole estimated at \$2 billion.

On the final day of the Jackson Inquiry, after copping a public relations flogging, Hardie agreed to wider funding, conditional on a "statutory" scheme.

Unions and asbestos groups expect Hellicar to seek shareholder endorsement of that stance in the days before Jackson's findings are released.

But Mr Banton says veteran director Hellicar's round of media mea culpas should be taken with a grain of salt.

"She had 12 years to be sorry", Banton said. "Now she is saying – all victims should be subject to a scheme – Hardie has been scheming against its victims since 1995."

Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union Secretary Paul Bastian said the proposal was what James Hardie had wanted from the beginning i.e. for the state to underwrite compensation payments to



Hardie wants the state to underwrite compensation payments

Australians killed by contact with its products.

"Hardie and their insurers want a capped statutory scheme because that is the best outcome for their share price", Mr Bastian said. "That

has been their position since day one. Their motivation has always been their share price, rather than the victims.

"James Hardie is not the victim in this scandal." ✪

WA hospital workers make gains

Enrolled nurses, patient care assistants and cleaners in Western Australia's public hospitals have made big breakthroughs in their enterprise bargaining agreement, with gains in pay and conditions as well as a written guarantee from the Gallop Government that there will be no contracting out of services.

The agreement, which was negotiated by the state branch of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU), includes a \$28.60 a week pay rise each year for three years, commitment from the Government for better coverage of staff on leave, more control over the use of casual labour and 15 days of personal leave.

With the latter, personal leave includes the current 10 days per year for sick leave and the right to personal leave to care for family or a household, and for unanticipated or planned matters.

The uniform supply which

was taken away under the Howard Government's IR laws was regained, including a laundry allowance. Parental leave is increased from six to eight weeks.

There is increased access to workers by the union, including provisions to allow for regional delegates meetings. There is to be paid time for employer-provided training, and long service leave may now be taken in up to three portions.

Where the union has reason to believe a hospital is overusing casuals it can examine the record of

casual employment, and if overuse is proven the union can then push for the creation of permanent positions.

Existing casuals and contract workers will have priority over outside applicants to apply for a position that becomes available. There is

to be no contracting out. The union says it has an "absolute guarantee" from the Government that no services will be privatised. ✪

There is to be no contracting out.

Miners win after six-year battle

Five Queensland miners have returned to work after a six-year battle against Rio Tinto. The Industrial Relations Commission found the five were unfairly dismissed from a central Queensland coal mine in an act of "victimisation" by the company.

Ned Appleton, Athol Finger, Don Halverson, Morgan Lindley and Bryan Walsh have all been reinstated, while two other men will start at the Hail Creek mine in October.

Health reasons precluded three other miners from returning to the industry.

Ned Appleton says the men are looking forward to returning to work at the Blair Athol mine.

"The brave and victimised Blair Athol coal mine workers finally received justice", says Bruce Watson of the CFMEU Mining

Division. "That these men and their families should have been subjected to almost six-years of victimisation and all the hardships that brings is a disgrace."

"That their unfair dismissal case could be dragged on for that long by a vindictive and powerful multinational is a gross miscarriage of justice inflicted on the Australian community by the Howard Government's rotten industrial laws."

Mr Watson pointed out that the laws provide no time limit on unfair dismissal cases and allow only a maximum six months wages in compensation for workers found to have been unfairly dismissed.

"Under Howard's laws, an ordinary worker doesn't have a snowball's chance in hell against a corporate giant like Rio Tinto", he said. "Our union estimates that

Rio spent in excess of \$6 million in legal fees to keep out the Blair Athol 16."

The full bench of the AIRC in handing down its decision slammed the use of dodgy medical reasons to victimise staff.

The decision singled out the practices of Dr Peter Fenner, the nominated medical adviser for a number of Rio Tinto mines in central Queensland. The doctor was involved in assessing whether miners were fit to return to work.

The decision criticised Dr Fenner for being evasive and changing his evidence; being contradictory in his approach to medical examinations; having a poor understanding of his legal obligations as a nominated medical advisor; and exaggerating his professional status (i.e. claiming to be a specialist when he was not). ✪

Racing to the bottom

The Howard Government is building a low paid, insecure workforce according to official statistics that show no full-time jobs were created in Australia, last month.

The ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) jobs data, released this week, confirmed peak union body ACTU research showing a trend to low paid work.

The data revealed that another 21,600 part time jobs came into the economy while no extra full-time positions were created.

Twenty eight percent of the workforce is officially part time or casual at a time when ACTU figures say more than 600,000 part timers are looking for longer hours.

"Low-pay less secure jobs and 'work till you drop' are the major trends in the Australian job market", ACTU President, Sharan Burrow, said.

"These figures confirm the need for a change in direction from the Federal Government."

The official figures tally with

the ACTU's analysis of a surge in low paid work. Its figures show that two out of every three jobs created since the last election carry gross wages of less than \$600 a week.

The ACTU says that while hundreds of thousands are clamouring for increased hours, at the other end

of the scale more than one million Australians are doing unpaid overtime – up nearly 25 percent on the 1996 figure.

Economic analysts suggest a number of factors, including a sustained attack on the trade union movement since 1996, have helped depress Australian wages. ✪

Bluescope's big steal

Bluescope Steel is carving around \$1000 a year out of employees' retirement nest eggs while plonking more than \$200,000 into its American CEO's superannuation account.

The company, which has just posted a record profit of \$584 million, has been warned that industrial action will escalate unless it improves its attitudes to super and redundancy.

More than 1000 Bluescope employees in Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia went out on strike two weeks back.

Australian Workers' Union Secretary, Bill Shorten, says the company is using an "outdated legal technicality" to dud workers of super contributions, and its redundancy policies are undermining the security of thousands of families.

Mr Shorten said Bluescope

refused to include bonuses in super calculations, contrary to accepted industry practice.

His union estimates the policy has short-changed 10-year workers at its Western Port plant in Victoria by around \$13,000.

Bluescope has announced it paid a \$4.4 million salary package to CEO, Kirby Adams, last year, including a super component of \$204,528 a year. That represented a 28.1 percent increase on his 2002-03 "earnings".

The company's annual report reveals that it paid another three executives more than \$1 million, last year.

Their earnings, and percentage movements on the 2002-03 financial year, were: Lance Hockridge \$1,600,669, up 39 percent; Kathryn Fagg, \$1,253,429, up 15.2 percent; Brian Kruger, \$1,251,333, up 26.8 percent. ✪

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

No charge for entry, but donations go towards CPA's head office fire and new building appeal.

For more info call: Mick on 0421 205 770 or Vinnie on 0419 812 872
Light refreshment will be available

Unease amongst conservatives over Howard leadership

Bob Briton

On May 24, 1962 Prime Minister Robert Menzies' Defence Minister Athol Townley announced "at the invitation of the Republic of Vietnam Australia was sending a group of military instructors to that country ... to assist in the training of the people of Vietnam and so help defeat the Vietcong communists, whose aim is to take over the country by organised terrorism".

The statement was a lie from beginning to end. In 1995, with the release of the relevant Cabinet Papers under the "Thirty Year Rule", we had it confirmed that South Vietnam's President Diem had actually tried to dissuade Australia from joining the US's dirty war in South East Asia. Two years later, the US Administration fabricated the now infamous Gulf of Tonkin incident in which it claimed US naval vessels had come under unprovoked attack from the North Vietnamese. This was the cue for a massive US invasion that Australia joined to its enduring shame.

The acceptance of lies, particularly the phoney reasons given to sign up for wars to shore up imperialism and the dominance of the US, is not new to the Liberals. However, there are unmistakable signs of disquiet in the circles that used to overlook the occasional whopper in the interests of maintaining the status quo.

"I will always be judged by my masters, the voters ... they are the great lie detector of Australian politics." – John Howard

Growing numbers of essentially conservative people are expressing their unease at the frequent use of underhand means previously thought justified to preserve the ends. In particular there is growing concern over the threat to bourgeois democracy posed by the direction and conduct of the Howard Government.

Recently there was the hotly debated open letter about honesty in government from a group of 43 former service chiefs and Australian diplomats. A number of the signatories subsequently commented in the media that the group contained Liberal voters, Labor voters and even swinging voters.

There could be little doubt, however, that the list of retired "eminent Australians" would be top heavy with conservative individuals that could previously have been relied on to support the Libs' agenda in the forces and the bureaucracy.

The letter complained that the concern about terrorism after September 11 had been diverted to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq, that the Howard Government knew that there were no WMDs and that, as a result of Australia's involvement we are now a bigger terrorist target than before.

It warned that damage is being done to relations with our Asian neighbours and with the nations of the South West Pacific. The signatories expressed their concern that we have lost our ability to "choose"

how we will fulfil our obligations to the ANZUS Treaty and that the US and the office of the President have suffered a precipitous decline in respect in the international community in the last two years.

The lies used to justify the entry into the war in Iraq were the chief worry, however. The letter concluded:

"Above all, it is wrong and dangerous for our elected representatives to mislead the Australian people. If we cannot trust the word of our Government, Australia cannot expect it to be trusted by others. Without that trust, the democratic structure of our society will be undermined and with it our standing and influence in the world."

There is genuine angst in the words about the lack of "balance" in the policies of the Howard Government. These old school conservatives would have seen major a role for the UN in world affairs. Howard, Bush and Blair ignore the organs of international law when it suits them and have substituted the barely disguised Nazi methods characterised by the slogan "might makes right".

They would have seen the need for "due process" and would probably be shaken by the scope of the powers given to ASIO, a body that has now been converted into a fully-fledged secret police force.

They would even have seen a role for trade unions (albeit with tightly limited powers) in society. Howard and successive ministers

for industrial relations have waged war on unions since their election in 1996 and clearly intend to destroy them or rob them of any meaningful role in the workplace.

Conservatives cling to the belief that the capitalist system of exploitation – as it is carried on in the countries of the developed world – can stay in place with the consent of the majority of the people.

It can do this as long as managers to be perceived as "balanced" and its methods remain "sophisticated". It is therefore crucial that Australia's democratic institutions – remote and shallow-rooted as they are – should not be brought into disrepute through sledgehammer tactics and blatant dishonesty.

For all the above listed reasons, John Valder – a wealthy retired stock broker and former president of the NSW and Federal Liberal Parties – has now set up a "Not Happy, John" campaign. Its object is to help defeat John Howard at the next elections in his seat of Bennelong. Mr Valder wants the Liberal Party returned to power in a Coalition Government but without Howard. If only the problem could be so neatly contained in one person!

Last week, the hopes of these conservatives would have been dealt a further blow with new revelations in the ongoing "children overboard" scandal. It turns out that an officer in the Defence Department (reporting to the then Minister Peter Reith) had three separate conversations



with the Prime Minister before the last elections about the sinking of the SIEV 4 vessel carrying asylum seekers.

Mike Scrafton insists that he made it clear to the PM that Defence Department experts did not believe that the relevant video and photos showed asylum seekers throwing their children overboard. Mr Howard did nothing to correct the racist slur pedalled by his 2001 election campaign and his infamous "we will decide who comes to Australia" speech.

Mr Scrafton has taken a polygraph test that appears to bear out his account of events. Mr Howard, on the other hand, has resorted to weasel words again. Howard claims he "has no strong recollection" of such conversations and refuses to submit to a lie-detector test: "I will always be judged by my masters, the voters, and your viewers will decide my fate, they are the great lie detector of Australian politics".

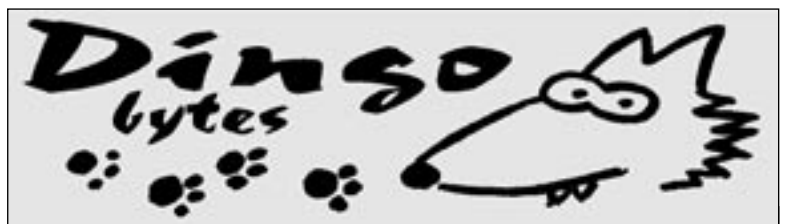
The extraordinary turn of events – that would lead to a call for the PM to undergo a polygraph test – has not, apparently, caused Mr Howard to consider how low his credibility has fallen in the eyes of the public.

He will not drop his ban on ministerial staff coming before Senate inquiries like the current one being conducted into the "children overboard" scandal. Instead, he will enlist the mainstream media to cast doubt on those brave enough to speak the truth. Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty has been dealt this treatment. So have former Office of National Assessment senior analyst Andrew Wilkie and a long list of others.

Howard and his parliamentary colleagues have made many enemies with their makeover of the Liberals into a party of the radical right.

The divide is deeper than that which used to separate the "wets" like former Fraser minister Ian MacPhee and his "dry" conservative colleagues.

By the way, MacPhee went on record late in 2001 to say that Howard heads "the most repressive government in our history". He is right. As is the case with the Bush Administration in the US, a corner has been turned. The conservative style of managing capitalism has given way to something else. A road has been taken that could end in outright fascism if a political challenge is not organised and organised soon. ☛



Australian Greens Senator Kerry Nettle has called on both the Federal Government and the opposition to commit to ensuring women living in rural and remote communities in Australia can access safe and sustainable care when giving birth. The Australian College of Midwives and the Council of Remote Area Nurses of Australia have supported her call, saying that maternity wards have been closed in at least 40 rural towns in recent years. In the Northern Territory the Midwives Registration Board has recently restricted the practice of community midwives to government services that provide indemnity cover. This has led to many communities, particularly Aboriginal communities, not being able to access midwifery services.

The NSW Government has come under fire after a series of community forums run by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Government services are struggling to provide acute care or early intervention services to the mentally ill. One Central Coast couple blamed inadequate services for the suicide death of their 19-year-old son who was released too early from a Gosford mental health unit. Other cases heard by the Commission include a man who was refused admission to two mental health units in Sydney and committed an assault on a police officer in order to receive help. The NSW Police Association told one forum in Sydney that this was a regular occurrence that had been known to a NSW parliamentary inquiry in 2002 but no action had been taken.

Sydney University has increased fees for full-fee paying students claiming that it is "significantly undercharging". The increases, which will take effect in 2005, will force students to pay fees of up to \$6500 more per year to obtain a degree. The University of Newcastle is also entering the full fee market next year and will charge up to \$12,760 per year for students to complete an arts degree. At present Australian universities are allowed to enrol up to 35 percent of their Australian student intake as full-fee payers after filling all HECS places. Apparently the Labor Party has said that it will bar universities from enrolling local students in full-fee programs if elected at the federal election. We shall see.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: This week's hog is former Australian Broadcasting Authority Chairman David Flint who wants to see changes to Australia's defamation laws. The cash for comment advocate says that though controls on the content of news and information are "necessary" his preferred path is self-regulation. In other words he wants to prevent people who believe they are slandered and defamed from suing the media monopolies. He even paraphrases Milton Friedman, saying that "when entering the marketplace for acceptance full and free discussion exposes the false". Of course, in Flint's world everything, including the right to dignity and privacy, must always end up in the marketplace.

Olympics and the limits to human performance

Amit Sen Gupta

The greatest sporting spectacle is now underway in Athens. The Olympic Games are a test of the limits to which the human body can be made to perform. The motto of the Olympic Games – Faster, Higher, Stronger – is symbolic of this quest for excellence, the quest to reach the absolute limits to which the human body can be pushed.

Over the last century athletes competing in the Olympic Games have pushed the performance of athletes to higher and higher levels.

Are we nearing the limit of human performance? The simple answer to the question would be: not yet; but records are being broken by ever narrower margins.

That brings us to the obvious question – are we nearing the limit of human performance? The simple answer to the question would be: not yet; but records are being broken by ever narrower margins. When we plot a graph showing how the best performance in a given event changes over time, we see the graphs leveling off.

Theoretically, an absolute limit to how far or fast the human body can go does exist, but it is impossible today to accurately predict that limit. Perhaps the only way to recognise the ultimate performance will be retrospectively, after a record has stood for years.

Some experts have tried to calculate the absolute limit of performance. They take the highest value for each crucial physiological factor ever recorded in an athlete, such as the maximum oxygen uptake, the greatest efficiency with which energy is burned and the best stamina. Then they figure out how fast someone might go if these were all combined in one body.

What drives performance?

What are the factors that drive performance in athletes? Much of the increase in performance, especially in the early part of the modern era, came from improved nutrition and improved training techniques.

In developed countries the advantage of these two factors has tapered off, even disappeared. But they are now coming into play in the improved performance by athletes from developing countries.

In the last 80 years, on an average, records related to disciplines that involve running have improved by about 10 percent. In contrast, the triple jump record is over 30 percent longer, for high jump it is 35 percent, and for long jump it is 41 percent. For the more technical pole vault event, the record is over 80 percent higher than in 1896.

This illustrates the fact that there has been greater improvements in events that are more technical or where an improvement in the apparatus makes a major difference in performance. The application of scientific methods in training has also helped stretch the levels of attainment.

Much of Olympic sport involves mechanics. The application of the principles of physics has also helped boost performance. The sportswear company called Speedo is promoting the use of its “sharkskin” swimsuit that covers almost the entire body. The suits are designed to simulate the skins of sharks and minimise “drag”, that is, the resistance that swimmers feel in the water.

In the jumps, improved techniques (like the Fosbury Flop technique for high jump introduced in 1968) have contributed to advanced performance levels. In pole vault the introduction of the new pole made of fibreglass revolutionised the sport. Such improvements, based on better equipment also took place in throwing events such as discus and javelin, as well as in events such as archery and shooting.

However, the advantage conferred by technology and improved training techniques is now tapering off.

Today, there are two important factors that continue to drive up Olympic records. First is the fact

that more people are competing today than ever before. Statistically, that must lead to improved records. We see the entry of new nations that are doing well in the Olympics. They are able to do so because of a minimum level of health and nutrition that they are able to provide to the general population, and basic facilities for sports that a large number of people can use.

The performances of Chinese and Cuban athletes, for example, have shown tremendous improvement in the last two decades. When a country like China is able to compete on equal terms with the rest of the world, it means an addition of one-fourth of humanity to the pool of possible competitors.

Secondly, those who excel are really the exceptionally talented or gifted – whose performance level is way beyond the average for the population. While improved health, nutrition and training can and do improve the abilities and performance levels in a general population, those who truly excel in modern day competition are possibly also gifted with a physical and physiological advantage to start with. Better facilities and nurturing helps to bring out this advantage.

Physiological and physical advantages

The first is the oxygen-carrying capacity of the individual. Remember that oxygen is vital for any physical activity, as the body burns oxygen to produce energy. The way athletes use energy differs – long distance runners require a steady supply over extended periods while sprinters need very high volumes over a short period. The ability of the body to deliver oxygen is determined by the lung capacity – that is, the volume of air that the lungs can hold, as well as on the oxygen carrying capacity of blood.

Sporting performance also depends on muscle mass, and crucially on the kind of muscle fibres that are present. Skeletal muscles, that is muscles in our body that we use for physical exertion, have two types of fibres, categorised on the basis of the speed at which they contract – type 1, or slow-twitch muscles and type 2, fast-twitch muscles. There are two kinds of the latter – type 2a, intermediate between fast and slow; and type 2b, which are superfast-twitch. Long distance runners tend to have mostly type 1



The application of the principles of physics has boosted performance

fibres, which have more extensive blood supply and are packed with mitochondria, which deliver sustained levels of energy.

Sprinters, on the other hand, have mostly type 2 fibres, which hold lots of sugar as well as enzymes that burn fuel in the absence of oxygen. Another physiological advantage that athletes can have is a larger lung capacity and a higher oxygen carrying capacity of the blood.

This is seen typically in populations who live in higher altitudes – they need the high lung capacity as the air they breathe has less oxygen. They also have higher oxygen carrying capacity in the blood – a larger number of red blood cells that carry the oxygen. This explains why many of the greatest long distance runners have been from such regions – the great Finnish runners like Pavo Nurmi, Lasse Viren and more recently the legendary Kenyan runners like Kip Keino.

Domination by Kenyans and West Africans

The Kenyan runners who have dominated modern day distance running in the last 30 years are a unique phenomenon. Kenyan men now hold world records in distances of 3000 metres, 15 kms, 20 kms, and 25 kms, the half-marathon, and the marathon. Kenyan men have won 13 of the last 14 Boston marathons. Kenyan women hold half of the top 10 marathon times and world records in 20 kms, 25 kms, and 30 kms distances. What is even more remarkable is that most of these athletes come from a small area in Kenya's Rift Valley, from a group of tribes called the Kalenjin who number little more than three million people.

A major physiological advantage that the Kenyans seem to have is their ability to withstand fatigue and sustained physical exertion over long periods. Studies now show (reported in *Science*: Vol.35 July 30, 2004) that lactate, generated

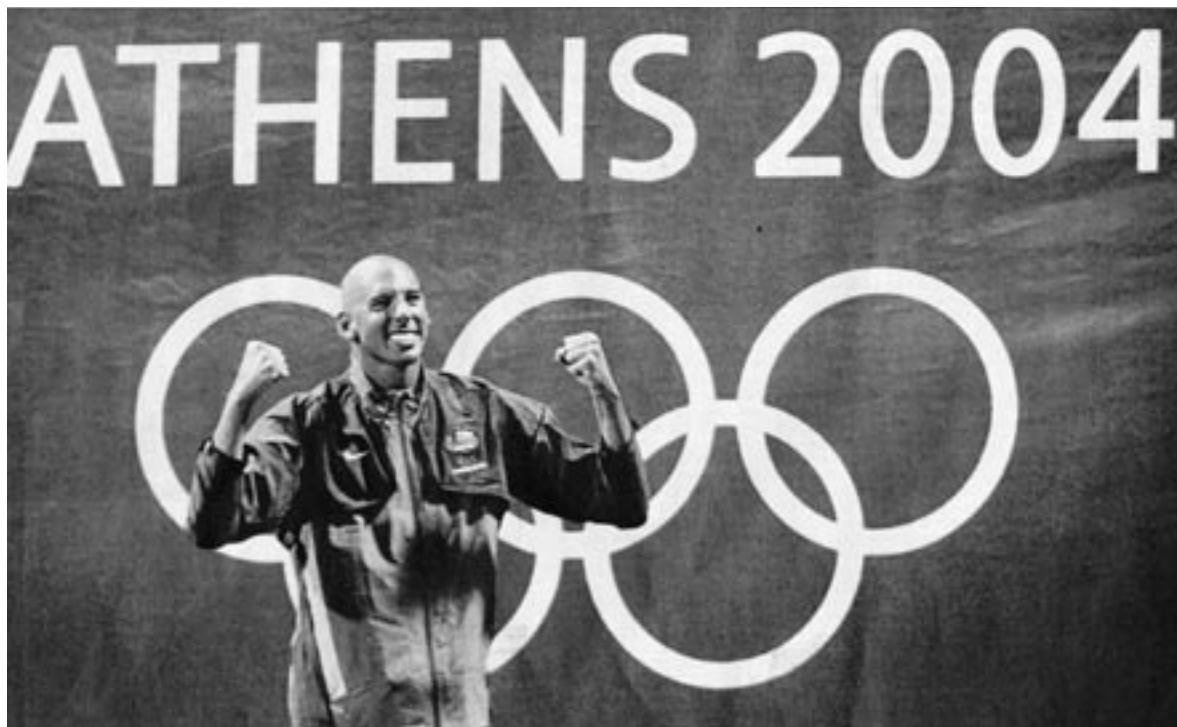
by tired, oxygen-deprived muscles, accumulates more slowly in their blood. Accumulation of lactate leads to fatigue and diminished performance of muscles. They have higher levels of an enzyme that breaks down lactate. As a result it is calculated that they are able to save about eight percent energy per kilometre – a huge advantage at the highest levels of competition.

The Kenyans have their counterparts from the other side of the continent – West Africa. Scientists are trying to unravel why athletes whose ancestors come from the region have emerged as the world's fastest sprinters. Initially almost all of them represented the United States (descendants of those forcibly brought to the country to work in plantations 200 years back), but now represent a number of other countries like the UK, Canada,

Much of the increase in performance in the modern era, came from improved techniques. In developing countries, this advantage has tapered off, even disappeared. But the improved performance is being pushed by ever narrower margins.

Jamaica, France, and others. Today, they monopolise virtually all the short distance running events – 100 metres, 200 metres, 400 metres, the 100 and 400 metre hurdles. They hold 35 percent of all top 900 times in the running events, concentrated entirely in the sprints.

An even more staggering statistic: all of the 32 finalists in the last four Olympic men's 100-metre races are of West African descent. The last time a person with an ancestry from outside that region set the men's world record in the 100 metre sprint was in 1960! The answer to this phenomenon also possibly



The way athletes use oxygen differs

Performance



lies in the physiological advantage that athletes from this region have because they have a higher proportion of type 2 muscle fibres, that is, the fast twitch fibres.

Are we then suggesting that genetics determines the level of performance in modern athletics? Not really. Genetic make up may provide a slight advantage to a group that share certain physiological characteristics that are beneficial in a certain sport. But this advantage is extremely small – and expresses itself only if the advantage is nurtured.

Thus, while it is now being argued that Black sprinters have that critical edge, they were not a significant force in world athletics before the '60s. It is only when the conditions of Blacks in United States and other northern countries improved that they started dominating the

Doping first started with the use of synthetic hormones called steroids that help build muscle mass. It soon spread to include other drugs specific to the demands of a particular sport. It included drugs that help eliminate tremors in disciplines like archery and shooting, drugs that help lose water to reduce weight suddenly in disciplines like weightlifting, etc.

Testing for such substances was introduced in the 1972 Munich Olympics. Since then it's been an even game. As testing techniques have developed drug cheats try to stay a step ahead by introducing drugs that are more and more difficult to detect because they mimic the effects of naturally occurring hormones. The huge problem of doping has put a major question mark on a number of records that are being set today.

... in performance, especially in the early part of ... from improved nutrition and improved training ... ed countries the advantage of these two factors ... appeared. But they are now coming into play in ... ormance by athletes from developing countries.

sprint events. Even today those who live in West Africa, and would presumably have the same advantage, do not do well at the world level. So environment and training do play a very important and critical role in the expression of the physiological advantage that people may possess.

Modern day gladiators

Unfortunately, no discussion on Olympics and records can be complete today without mentioning the bane of doping – the use of artificial performance enhancing substances.

Sadly, we are increasingly seeing a world population marked by regression towards physical sloth and mediocrity that amuses itself by watching a very few extremely genetically gifted, technically trained and sometimes artificially enhanced "gladiators". The Olympic movement's biggest challenge today is to make sure that it is a measure of true human endeavour. Further, that it provides every woman and man a fair chance to compete on a level playing field.

From *People's Democracy, Newspaper of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)* ✪

Obituary

Ron Gray 9.2.1925 – 13.8.2004

Persistent campaigner for peace, socialism and the environment

Bob Briton

Ron Gray will be best remembered by the wider community as the quiet but incredibly energetic force behind a long, long list of activities in support of peace and disarmament over many years. He was half of a dynamic activist partnership with Irene Gale and together they had built up a national and international reputation for thoroughness in building a broad-based peace movement. It will be hard to get used to going to rallies and other peace functions in Adelaide and not seeing Ron busily attending to several tasks on behalf of the movement.

Ron came to Australia from the UK and found work on the coalfields at Leigh Creek where he maintained machinery for the open cut mine operated by the ETSA electricity utility. In Adelaide he worked at the powerhouse on Torrens Island. He was soon president of his union's rank and file committee and, according to fellow Australian Peace Committee member Don Jarrett, "on every committee known to a union member".

He led a successful campaign against the use of asbestos in his workplace. He was the first rank and file vice-president of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, a delegate to the United Trades and Labor Council and active on that body's International Committee. His last paid position was with the health and safety unit of ETSA. "If you can't control them out on the job with the rank and file put

them in the office", as Don Jarrett observed.

Ron joined the Socialist Party of Australia (now the Communist Party of Australia) in 1972 and steadily built up a *Guardian* round that was part of his tireless efforts at networking. When he retired this work intensified. Ron threw himself into voluntary work with the peace movement. The consistency of his commitment was remarkable.

A recollection from Irene Gale's daughter Linda, made during her dedication at Ron's funeral last week, will sound familiar to many of his friends: "Visits to Ron and Irene's place always carried a fairly high chance of being roped into a project. There would be trees for life seedlings to thin out, or newsletters to fold, or layout and printing to be done. A visit around Christmas or New Year was fraught with danger, since you might find yourself conscripted into the arduous task of filling hundreds of tubes of soil and planting the seeds of yet another crop of native trees and shrubs destined to help revegetate farmland.

"But such visits have always been something to look forward to. Along with the shared work would come laughter, intelligent conversation, and a wealth of knowledge across a huge range of subjects ... and a glass of good red wine."

Members of the Peace Committee will also recall Ron's good-natured (though firm) reminders whenever their subscription fell due.

Ron was firmly behind the deci-

sion to send a delegate from the APC to the Campaign to Ban Land Mines, its participation in the global Abolition 2000 movement, the maintenance of contacts concerned with commemoration of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and many activities in support of human rights like those of Refugees Week. The important thing to note with Ron was that he didn't just "support" an activity or movement, he wasn't there "in spirit", he was there in person doing his utmost to ensure its success. He carried out his many duties whether they took him down the road to Adelaide's Victoria Square or Parliament or to a protest among the flies and dust outside the US spy base at Pine Gap.

He did all of this in spite of his health problems. I never knew that he had to deal with emphysema while going through his life's packed agenda.

Bertolt Brecht would have had comrades like Ron in mind when he penned his memorable words: "There are those who struggle for a day and they are good. There are others who struggle for a year and they are better. There are those who struggle many years, and they are better still. But, there are those who struggle all their lives: These are the indispensable ones".

Ron was truly among the indispensable ones.

Ron was married to Evelyn Heron (deceased), partner to Irene Gale, father of Sally, Susie and Rob, stepfather of Roger, Jenny, Stephen, Linda and Owen, grandfather of 20 and great-grandfather of three. ✪



Congratulations flood into Venezuela

Messages of support, congratulations and joy continue to flood into the offices of the government of Venezuela and popular organizations after the victory of President Chávez in the recent recall referendum forced on the country by the opposition.

Below are some extracts from these messages from workers' organisations around the world:

"We send our warm and fraternal greetings to the youth of Venezuela who triumphed in the ref-

tion. The Bolivarian Revolution is giving inspiration to all progressive people." – **Central Committee, New Communist Party of the Netherlands**

"We encourage the Venezuelan people to continue their struggle and to defend the result of the referendum. This is an important result in our common anti-imperialist struggle and a great inspiration to the peoples of the world and the struggle for democracy, national independence, sovereignty and social emancipation." – **Communist**

"Your success will also, we are sure, become an example for the people of many other countries who are also striving for liberation from capitalist and imperialist shackles." – Communist Party of Australia

erendum on August. This is another great result for the progressive and democratic forces of the Bolivarian Revolution and another crucial defeat for the reactionary opposition and the imperialist intervention." – **Youth of the Communist Party in Denmark**

"We wish to congratulate the people of Venezuela and all progressive struggling forces for the victory of the popular forces.

"We see this victory as an example for all people the world that fight for national independence, sovereignty and social emancipa-

Party of Denmark

"In this moment of exultation for all the people and youth in Venezuela, Latin America and the world that fight for the social progress, against imperialism we salute particularly the JCV (Communist Youth of Venezuela) and the JMVR (Youth Movement of the Republic of Venezuela) as well as all the forces that are committed with the defense of Venezuelan sovereignty, democracy and social conquests." – **World Federation of Democratic Youth** [which sent observers for the voting]

"Our Party, confirming its solidarity position translated into the presence of a member of the PCP's Central Committee in Venezuela, warmly greets the workers and the Venezuelan people and wishes them the best in their intervention and struggle for the consolidation and advance of the revolutionary Bolivarian process." – **Communist Party of Portugal**

"Chávez became famous especially because he directly declared, that the national wealth belongs to all the people and not only to a few of capitalists. By this he reached the sympathies of the whole communist movement, but he also reached a lot of enemies between the economic elites in homeland and in the world." – **Communist Party of Slovakia**

"The impact of the victory is not confined to the Venezuelan people or the Latin American alone. It is also a boost for the entire anti-imperialist crusaders world over. This victory further confirms the growing trend of resisting the economic neo-liberalism propounded by the US imperialists and their stooge financial agencies and institutions. It heralds loudly and clearly that there is an alternative to economic neo-liberalism and that can win the support of the toiling masses and tillers." – to President Chávez from the **Communist Party of India**

"With this decisive result in the referendum which was held democratically and fairly according to international observers, the right-wing opposition should cease its efforts to topple the popular govern-



Supporters of the government take to the streets

ment headed by Chávez. The United States of America must realise that the people of Venezuela will not tolerate any activity which infringes their sovereignty and democratic rights." – **Communist Party of India (Marxist)**

"It is a momentous event that will enable your Government under the wise and courageous leadership of Hugo Chávez, to continue the revolutionary process of enlightenment, education, health care, housing, participatory democracy and much more.

"The very high voter turnout is

not merely a product of the polarisation that has taken place to some extent in society but also a recognition by millions of Venezuelan people that at last they have a real stake and a real chance of building a better and freer life.

"Your success will also, we are sure, become an example for the people of many other countries who are also striving for liberation from capitalist and imperialist shackles." – **Communist Party of Australia** in a message to the Venezuelan Ambassador to Australia, Leonel Viva. ☺

Statement from the World Federation of Trade Unions

Call for international solidarity with Palestinian political prisoners on hunger strike

Over 7000 Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli prisons began a hunger strike on August 15 to protest against the inhuman conditions in Israeli jails, the brutal repression by the jail authorities, the gross violations of their basic human rights and to put an end to their unfair and illegal imprisonment.

The atrocities and acts of oppression against the Palestinian prisoners include:

- Arbitrary and indiscriminate beating of prisoners in their cells, in prison courtyards and during transportation to and from prisons

- Subjecting prisoners to solitary confinement for excessive periods of time, for months and even years

- Arbitrary imposition of financial penalties on prisoners for minor infractions, arbitrary revocation of visitation rights and extended confinement to cells as punishment for minor infractions such as singing or speaking too loudly

- Confining children with adult prisoners and political prisoners with criminals

- Withholding or delaying medical treatment and the provision of medication to sick detainees

- Severely restricting the category of family members entitled to visit prisoners thus denying visitation rights to other close family members

for a 45-minute visit

- Conducting humiliating strip searches of visiting family members even though they are usually separated from the prisoners by a full glass barrier as well as a wire mesh barrier

- Providing such poor visitation facilities that prisoners find it difficult to see or hear their loved ones

- Maintaining prisoners on near starvation diets that are insufficient to sustain health

- Applying rules concerning items that prisoners may receive from their families arbitrarily and inconsistently, on the whim of the guards, with each visit

- Withdrawing study privileges that in the past allowed prisoners to continue their high school or university studies through correspondence courses

As the Committee for the Families of Political Prisoners and Detainees in the West Bank has pointed out, the treatment of Palestinian prisoners in Israel violates both international and Israeli laws, as well as rules governing the administration of Israeli prisons.

The WFTU appeals to trade unions and democratic organisations all over the world to observe September 4 as an International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian Prisoners and urge the UN and Member Governments to compel the Israeli authorities to end the brutal repression unleashed on the Palestinian political prisoners and to release the prisoners immediately. ☺

The WFTU appeals to trade unions and democratic organisations all over the world to observe September 4 as an International Day of Solidarity with Palestinian Prisoners

- Arbitrary and indiscriminate firing of tear gas into prisoner's cells and prison courtyards and intimidation of prisoners by guards entering their cells with guns

- Humiliating strip searches of prisoners in full view of other prisoners and guards each time they enter or exit their cells

- Arbitrary denial of travel permits to family members of prisoners living in the West Bank or Gaza so that they cannot travel to the prisons to see their relatives

- Imposing conditions on travel for family members and obstacles that result in travel of a few hours being prolonged to 16 or 17 hours

India

Communists consolidate rural gains

The Tripura state committee of the Communist Party of India (M) has called on its branches to step up their political and organisational drive to consolidate the ongoing support of political forces throughout rural Tripura in favour of the Left Front. This support was reflected in the massive mandate the Left Front received in the elections to the state's three-tier panchayati raj held last month.

At the same time, the Party has decided to involve the people in the process of more transparently implementing the development programmes of the panchayat bodies, and to gear up the political, ideological and organisational drive against extremists.

Right now, the Party is making efforts to rally the people behind the 11-point charter of demands for the August 25-31 campaign, to be followed by massive state-wide, anti-imperialist programmes on September 1.

Reviewing the July 18 panchayat polls in Tripura, the party extended revolutionary greetings to the people for giving a massive mandate to the Left Front on the one hand, and trouncing the Congress party on the other.

This time, the Left Front has won a larger number of seats than in the 1999 panchayat polls. The party also hailed the outstanding

pro-active role of women in favour of the Left Front in this vital electoral battle.

The party statement said the Left Front government and the Left Front-led panchayats were able to massively mobilise the people in rural Tripura, by virtue of the implementation of pro-people development programmes. The Congress party's undemocratic activities and its muck-raking, anti-Left slander campaign, with the all-out assistance of a section of press, failed miserably to mislead the state's politically seasoned rural electorate. They are now even more alienated from the people.

The outlawed extremists, too, chipped in by carrying out a few killings as part of the conspiracy to trigger terror and turmoil with a view to disrupting free and fair polls. But everywhere the people's alertness and extensive security arrangements foiled the extremists' bid to disrupt the polls.

At the same time, the CPI(M) reviewed the Left Front's loss of a few incumbents this year due to organisational deficiencies, and has decided to take appropriate political-organisational measures following a further round of review later.

It also called for organisation of meetings and rallies against imperialism and war on September 1. ☺

Iraq's communists urge political solutions

Susan Webb

The military confrontation in Najaf needs to be resolved politically, through dialogue, Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) spokesperson Salam Ali told the *People's Weekly World* in an August 14 interview. That position was echoed two days later by 1300 delegates at Iraq's national conference in Baghdad. They voted to send a delegation to Najaf to negotiate an end to the fighting.

The conference delegates represented a cross-section of ethnic, regional, political and religious groups, women's groups, trade unions, tribes and notables. National guidelines specified that women were to make up 25 percent of the

Party held campaign training sessions for its members, Ali said. "We told them, 'Sit with other people, not just among yourselves. Talk to people, talk about your family'."

The ICP now has 90 public offices throughout the country, an "amazing" expansion of the Party in the past year, after decades of repression, Ali said. In fact, the Party is resisting efforts to open additional offices, he said, because it wants party members to focus on being involved in mass activity among the people.

Ali underscored the importance of the national conference as a step toward real sovereignty. In order to end the US occupation, he said, "We have to have a legitimate Iraqi government in place".

hard-line approach of interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi shows the hand of the US, Ali noted. He said Allawi has reverted to "old ways" in which a highly centralised tiny group is calling the shots – his National Security Council, consisting of the defence and interior secretaries and a national security adviser, closely associated with the CIA.

Moqtada al-Sadr has definitely drawn support among the marginalised, Ali said. But Sadr's "Mahdi army" is a sectarian, extremist Islamic movement without any clear program, Ali said. Sadr's slogans and demands change constantly, he noted. By engaging in violence Sadr has "alienated large sections of people who would otherwise sympathise with any movement that stands up to the occupation", Ali said. Most Iraqi people feel violence is futile and is paralysing the country, he said. "People are waiting, hoping the fighting will subside."

The ICP opposes resorting to violence to end the US occupation, and aims to resolve Iraq's problems through the political process, Ali said.

The national conference which opened August 15 is part of the process approved by the UN Security Council that includes a census and voter registration this fall, elections in January for a transitional government, drafting of a constitution, and election of a new government by the end of next year.

Conference delegates were to elect a 100-member interim national council that will exercise a degree of oversight over the current interim government headed by Allawi. The interim government has only "one main job – preparing for the elections", Ali said. The council will have authority to review government decrees, annul them by a two-thirds majority, and approve the national budget for next year.

More importantly, however, the conference and the council it elects, with all their limitations, will "provide a platform for political dialogue", Ali said. This is important for the development of the political process in a country that lacks a recent democratic tradition, he said.

People's Weekly World ☪

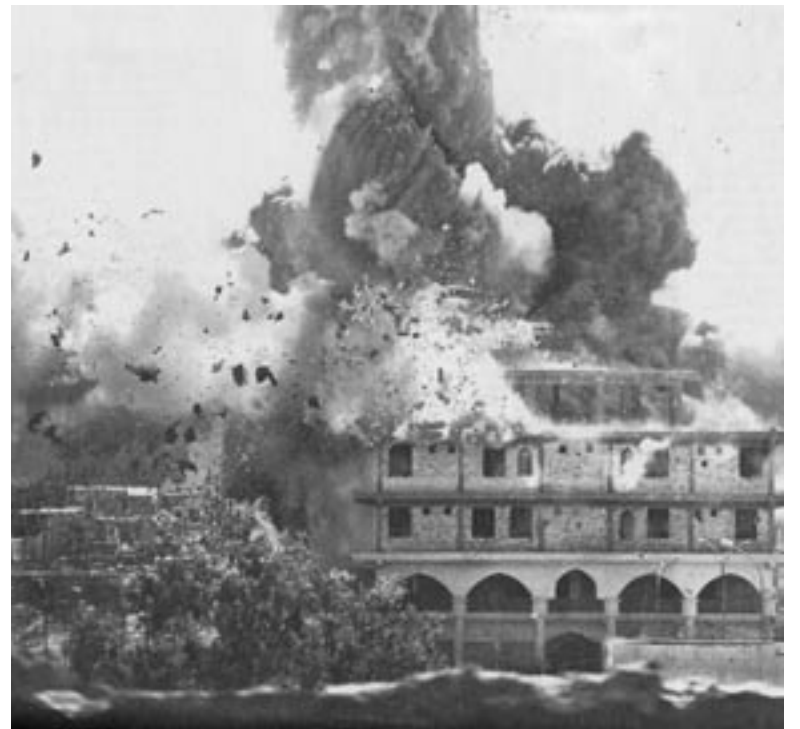
One US tactic, he suggested, is to "fragment the Islamic camp, weaken Islamic groups, and strengthen the hand of groups close to the US".

delegates. Most delegates were elected at conferences in Iraq's 18 provinces. Indicative of the developing political culture, Ali noted, a progressive woman was among 13 delegates elected by the more than 100 overwhelmingly male, Islamic participants in one meeting in Baghdad's impoverished Al-Thawra (Revolution City – US media call it Sadr City) district.

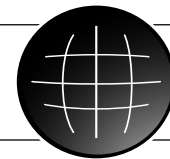
"This is a unique experience for us. This is the first time [in decades] we are campaigning", said Ali, a member of the ICP central committee, speaking by phone from London. The security problems and lack of democratic political experience contribute to fear of participation, especially for women. The ICP is working to overcome this. The

The deteriorating security has raised concerns about possible postponement of national elections set for January. "That would serve the narrow political agenda of some forces to obstruct, and thereby to perpetuate the status quo and the occupation", he said. "There is deep concern about the fighting in Najaf. It is being used to sabotage the political process, to effectively paralyse life in some parts of Iraq".

The US Government is now operating "more deviously, behind the scenes", to maintain control over Iraq's security forces and its economy, Ali said. One US tactic, he suggested, is to "fragment the Islamic camp, weaken Islamic groups, and strengthen the hand of groups close to the US". The recent



Murderous tactics – the US bombs Najaf



Global briefs

USA: Treasury Secretary John Snow said last week that his department was in the process of reviewing the many comments it had received over its new, tighter policy on Cuba travel. The rules took many by surprise when they went into effect on June 30. Snow said it would be inappropriate to say whether the rules might be changed, but said people's comments would be "well-considered in the final actions that are taken." He said the new regulations, which in part limit Cubans visiting family on the island to once every three years, rather than every year, were being taken to "weaken the Castro regime."

ARGENTINA: In the face of sharp disagreements between Argentina and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), on August 8 the Argentine Government decided to temporarily suspend negotiations with the international financial organisation, which is putting on pressure on issues that do not concern it, according to the Government. As Economy Minister Roberto Lavagna stated, it is about unacceptable interference in Argentina's internal affairs via which the IMF is insisting that the issues pending with private creditors must be resolved first. Only then, it argues, will it be possible to reach an "understanding" on renegotiating Argentine goals concerning its external debt. That stand will not be tolerated, Lavagna stressed. The big "creditors" include the private debt of major corporations, including national and foreign individuals and companies from Europe, Japan and the United States.

INDIA: A joint meeting of central trade unions and all India federations/associations and employees and workers in bank, insurance, railways, central and state government offices, departments, telecom, postal, defence, petroleum and other sectors took place in New Delhi this month to demand the Government address serious economic and social questions. These include extra funding allocations for social security for the workers in the unorganised and agricultural sectors, effective enforcement of all labour laws relating to minimum wages, social security benefits etc in all sectors (including contract workers), and the revival of the public sector.

COLOMBIA: Three new killings of union leaders by the Colombian Army were reported this month by Colombia's ANNCOL news agency. Hector Alirio Martinez, head of the National Peasants Association, Leonel Goyeneche, a leader in the United Confederation of Colombian Workers (CUT) in Arauca, and Jorge Prieto, a leader in the National Association of Hospital Workers, were under the protective measures program of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission when they were murdered by members of the Reveis Pizarro Battalion of the Colombian Army. The human rights organisation Humanidad Vigente said two other leading unionists – Samuel Morales, president of the CUT in Arauca, and Raquel Castro, a member of the Arauca Teachers Association – were detained in the same operation. Human rights organisations are calling for urgent protests to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe (auribe@presidencia.gov.co), denouncing the murders and demanding release of the two detained unionists.

Why Puerto Ricans were celebrating

José A Cruz

The defeat of the US Olympic basketball team by the Puerto Rican team was cause for great jubilation in Puerto Rico. The loss by a lopsided score of 92-73 was declared "historic" by the press because the US has lost only three times in all the Olympic Games and this was its first loss since adding professional players in 1992.

Why such a celebration? It doesn't necessarily mean a medal for Puerto Rico. In reality, it means much more. Despite being a colony of the US, the victory said, "We are a nation." It became a source of national pride, even for those who do not aspire to independence for Puerto Rico, which the US took over from Spain as a prize during the Spanish-American War of 1898.

In Puerto Rico the right-wing leaders who want this island nation to be annexed as a state by the US

define Puerto Ricans as an ethnic group within the American nation. An overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans has rejected this position. The annexationists work to destroy anything that smacks of a separate nation, from changing the school menus from Puerto Rican cuisine to American, to changing the official names of municipalities into English. Behaving as a nation in sports is no different.

In Puerto Rico "sports independence" doesn't only mean not having either the government or the political establishment of your own country interfering with athletics, it also means having one's own national sporting life free and separate from the colonising country – the United States.

Puerto Rico organised its own Olympic Committee in 1948, but it wasn't fully recognised by the International Olympic Committee until 1958. The Olympic Committee

of Puerto Rico (COPR) has demonstrated a strong sense of independence from US pressures and control. The COPR participated in the 1980 games held in Moscow, despite a US boycott of the games.

Recently a legislative committee in Puerto Rico proposed that the University of Puerto Rico's sports programs disaffiliate from the National Collegiate Athletic Association because of rule changes that would prohibit Puerto Rican college students from playing in Puerto Rican sports leagues.

For Puerto Ricans, participating in international athletic events is an affirmation of their own nationality, as much as when the Puerto Rican sports authorities (or literary, educational, and economic agencies) protest US State Department denials of visas to Cubans to prevent them from taking part in Puerto Rican activities.

People's Weekly World ☪

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Schools in need

I have written this letter to expose the unreasonable manner in which Duneraig Senior High School's funding is being spent.

The students at the school have to study in a dirty environment riddled with bent chairs, vandalised tables – on some of which the tops are removed – and faulty science equipment.

Our school is covered in graffiti, not only in the bathrooms, but also

on the tables, chairs, and in some cases, on the carpeting. The computers we have to use are obsolete, and have outdated software.

Between 50 classrooms, we have 5 DVD players – a ratio of 1:10 – and the others have VCR's with small TV's which are difficult to see from the back of the room.

Although most of these issues are difficult to prevent, they can be repaired, and this leads to my motive in writing this letter. These problems are not being resolved, even though the canteen prices are rising faster than the sun at dawn.

For example, the price of Supashakes™ has crept from \$1.70 to \$2.40 over a four-year period, an increase of 41 percent.

This additional 70c per sale could easily fund school maintenance, yet no change has been seen. Instead, many teachers carry laptops, and three new offices are being added to the administration block.

The society and environment block has also undergone internal renovations, the benefits of these, however, stopping at the staff.

Comrades, I am not implying that the staff are to blame, rather I am trying to prove that the students should have an input via a few representatives, towards the financial situation, rather than the decisions be made by the elite few.

Michael Sarich
Perth, WA

Reconciliation process moving forward on Cyprus

The Cyprus reconciliation process is moving forward as the Cyprus Republic government continues to provide measures to support the development of contacts and economic relations with Turkish Cypriots. Despite the obstacles, contacts between the two communities are increasing and efforts to promote a solution are continuing encouraged by the Cyprus Government's actions towards Turkish Cypriots.

The Cyprus Government has announced a series of new measures regarding the movement of goods and public-use vehicles of Turkish Cypriots to the government controlled areas. The package of measures will exempt Turkish Cypriots from registering or paying VAT when they sell their merchandise in the southern part of the Republic and also grant, free of charge, a temporary driving licence to Turkish Cypriots, as well as temporary road

service to vehicles, which will be valid for one year.

"With the application of these measures, the economic and trade relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots will be developed, which is one of the goals of the government of the Republic of Cyprus", the Minister of Commerce George Lillikas said.

In a recent statement the Cyprus Government spokesman Mr Kypros Chrysostomides said, "the Greek Cypriot side had proven its intentions for a solution to the Cyprus problem and reunification of Cyprus by its policy to reduce military tensions and implement measures for collaborating and working together with the Turkish Cypriots".

The government spokesman also stressed that the Greek Cypriot side was willing to show flexibility in efforts for a solution, but it could not backtrack from the ultimate goal, which was the overturning of the existing situation and the attainment of a "wise and just" settlement to the Cyprus problem.

The government spokesman further pointed out that the measures for Turkish Cypriots aimed at facilitating a settlement through the economic integration of the island and not at creating conditions for crystallising the division.

Cyprus Chargé d'affaires to the UN Andreas Hadjichrysanthou in a letter to the UN General Assembly stressed that though technical in nature these measures, "still have valuable political ramifications, in that they are in line with and contribute to the successful implementation of the EU policy to facilitate the reunification of the island by

encouraging economic integration ... and the improvement of contacts between the two communities".

The EU reaction to the new measures has been encouraging and positive. These measures are in addition to other existing support procedures already in place that mostly serve Turkish Cypriots, but also assist the aims of bringing together the two communities and to improve co-operation.

Like many others I hope these heartening initiatives continue to grow and deepen the trust and unity of the people of Cyprus.

The success of which will serve the common objective of the reunification of the country.

Steven Katsineris.
Hurstbridge, Vic

The good things we do?

Today I received a letter from Amanda Vanstone.

She says, "We should not allow the debate about failed asylum seekers who arrived unauthorised by boats to detract from Australia's generous and compassionate refugee program".

Amanda, if you use solitary confinement, indefinite detention, intimate body searches, tear gas as part of the way we treat asylum seekers, then of course it will take a little of the gloss off any good things we do!!!

Are we helping Sudanese in order to atone for what we do to Afghans?

Elaine Smith
West Haven, NSW

Sydney

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by Gregory Burke

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This production contains violence, and language that may offend some patrons

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Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

The privileged and the persecuted

Well, I see Britain's feudal remnants have decided to give US voters the benefit of their long years of coping with the vagaries of democracy. Democratic Party candidate John Kerry, according to them, has "royal connections".

In fact, Kerry has more "royal connections" than seems reasonable for one man. According to *Burke's Peerage*, the who's who of Britain's landed nabobs, Kerry is related to all the royal houses of Europe.

Not only that, but he can claim kinship with Tsar Ivan the Terrible, a Byzantine Emperor and the Shahs of Persia. Should he want to, that is.

Burke's have apparently spent months on researching Kerry's antecedents. The bible of the Best People considers the matter to be of some importance, you see.

According to *Burke's* publishing director, the predictably hyphenated Harold Brooks-Baker, royal blood has mystical powers, at least in US elections. "Every Presidential candidate with the most royal genes and chromosomes has always won".

Let's leave aside the intriguing question of what exactly a "royal chromosome" might be, and the worrying thought that having lots of them would presumably produce Downe's Syndrome (mongolism – caused by having 47 instead of the normal 46 chromosomes).

Assuming Brooks-Baker's statistic to be true – and how would such a bizarre claim be checked anyway? – he probably believes

that candidates of blue blood win because they are superior people by virtue of their breeding.

Burke's is, after all, dedicated to chronicling the wedding and bedding of the landed aristocracy of Britain. Its clientele is as much an anachronism as *Burke's* attitude towards democracy.

Snobby attitudes to that anachronism, specifically a letter from Ross Barlow in the *Sydney Morning Herald* calling for Mary Donaldson (who married the Crown Prince of Denmark) to be referred to by her proper title, provoked some pungent correspondence in that paper just last week.

Chris Mangan of Singapore wrote on August 17: "I've nothing against the former Mary Donaldson, Ross Barlow. I just don't see why marrying someone she loves leads to her having a title 'she deserves'".

"Some of us do not accept the concept that there are monarchs, together with their legions of hangers-on, and subjects. Hopefully this century will see the extinction of all these regal entities around the world."

I hope the staff of *Burke's* didn't see that; sort of thing likely to provoke heart attacks all round the office.

Debby O'Brien, who signed herself Empress Debby, was even blunter in dismissing Mary Donaldson's royal title.

"The Crown Princess of Denmark or the Double-Dutch Blue-Blood of Wagga Wagga – both just as meaningless to those of us who believe in the equality of all humans, Ross Barlow.

"She no more deserves that title than you or me."

"Wacko Jacko"

The bourgeois media treats the 45-year-old singer Michael Jackson with undisguised hostility, deriding him routinely as "Wacko Jacko". There treatment of him is remarkably similar to the sneering way

they used to treat Libya's leader Colonel Gaddafi.

His screwed up life as an extravagantly paid child star, a classic case of "too much too soon", may explain his reclusive lifestyle, his infantile foibles, and his clear preference for the company of children to that of adults.

However, his apparent preference for cuddling up in bed with 13-old-boys, however innocent it might be, must raise disquieting questions.

Late last year, Leslie Feinberg wrote in US paper *Workers' World*, "Since the late 1980s, Michael Jackson has been the brunt of public ridicule in the media for having an increasingly 'womanly' appearance and complex gender expression".

Despite his curious skin colour these days, Jackson is none-the-less an African American. His vague sexual definition means that he is now a high profile target for both racists and anti-gay elements.

Left-wing activists in the US tend to identify among the bigots the Santa Barba district attorney, Tom Sneddon, who has made a career of pursuing Jackson in the media and in court.

Sneddon first tried to bring charges against Jackson in 1993, acting on a complaint by the family of a young teenage boy. Perhaps significantly, the family dropped their complaint when offered money.

As DA running the investigation, Sneddon went out of his way to demean Jackson. "The singer was reportedly stripped naked and photographed as part of the investigation" (*Agence France Presse*).

On November 18 last year, US gay activists rejoiced when the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled in favour of same-sex marriage. It may have been only coincidence, but the very next day, Sneddon acted on another complaint against Jackson, this time from a 13-year-old boy.

Typically, Sneddon sent more than 70 police – some in flak jack-



Prince Charles displays his chromosome

ets, no less – accompanied by doctors and an ambulance to carry out a 12-hour raid on Jackson's ranch and amusement park.

Jackson was released after posting bail and will come up for trial in January. Activists and the bourgeois media alike anticipate a glorious media circus.

In a statement by the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, the Reverend Jesse Jackson (no relation to the singer) expressed "grave concerns" about Sneddon's handling the case, describing anti-gay jokes made by Sneddon at a news conference on November 19 as "completely inappropriate".

American activists are con-

cerned at both the thrust of both the media and the authorities in the case.

"The plight and suffering of children and teenagers who are subjected to sexual and other forms of abuse cannot be relieved by a reactionary campaign to foment racism, anti-gay bigotry and hatred of gender and sex variance.

"Progressive people need to deny the right wing an opportunity to use the high-profile coverage of the Jackson case as a propaganda weapon against the right of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to teach school, coach sports teams, adopt or gain custody of their children." (*Workers World*) ☪



Sun August 29 ~
~ Sat September 2

Self-styled Australian "media Shooligan" John Safran's last television series was the AFI-award winning *Music Jamboree* in 2002 (awards for Best Comedy Series and Most Innovative Program Concept).

In that series he formed a Jewish boyband and tried to get signed to a Christian record label. His latest series, *John Safran Versus God* (SBS 8.30pm Mondays), described as an eight-part "rummage through the mosques, temples, churches and chicken coops of the religious world", continues in the same vein.

In the first episode he goes to London to see an extremist Islamic cleric notorious for the number of Fatwahs he has issued and tries to get him to issue a Fatwah against Australian television personality Rove.

In a later episode he goes to Mormon capital Salt Lake City and door-knocks on behalf of atheism, causing Mormons to be impolite to him.

Saffran's style could be described as sub-Michael Moore, but he lacks Moore's vision or perspective. Where Moore tries to make you laugh and think, Saffran seems only interested in laughs.

Whether you find his activities wry, outrageous or ludicrous will probably depend on your personal taste. For me, it was all a just a bit too derivative.

Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) is a procedure that allows IVF (Invitro Fertilisation) couples to screen embryos for genetic disorders.

PGD, and the opposition to it, is the subject of this week's *Insight: Generation Next* (SBS 7.30pm Tuesday).

Robert and Jenny Davies are the parents of healthy new baby Isaac, thanks to PGD technology. Robert suffers from a kidney condition.

"It's a disease that has profoundly affected my family, killing off essentially 50 percent of my family ... so we selected a healthy embryo in terms of that disease and in so doing, we've stopped the generation of that disease down the future generations."

It seems incredible that there could be opposition to such a scientific breakthrough, but there is, mainly from people who think we are "playing God" by using it. To back up their position they resort to dire warnings about "Nazi style eugenics" and even argue that preventing genetic disorders "disadvantages" other people who have those disorders.

British professor Lord Robert Winston, well known for the acclaimed BBC series *The Human Body*, defends the new procedure.

"To enforce a particular system of parenting on people where there is a genuine handicap, where they are already possibly bringing up a genuine handicapped child, or seen a child die, it's extraordinarily demanding to suggest that really they should perhaps comply to an ideal of parenting which actually you may not share because you've never been in the situation of having that genetic defect in your family."

SBS originally screened the two-part documentary *The World According To Bush* over two nights in mid-July. They are repeating it this week on one night (SBS Tuesday Part one 8.30pm and Part two 10.00pm).

The program covers such things as the business connections of the Bush "dynasty", the close ties between the Bush family and administration and Saudi Arabia, and how Bush's own religious beliefs and ties to the Christian right shape his presidency including his foreign policy.

Prescott Bush, the current



Bush has close ties with the Christian Right

President's grandfather, invested money for the Nazis during World War II. Trading with and for the Nazis is the basis for the Bush family fortune (and this is the guy who prattles on about patriotism).

One of Prescott Bush's companies even operated mines in Poland using inmates of nearby concentration camps as forced labour. Today, the Vice President's wife sits on the board of the giant arms firm Lockheed Martin, a company which receives lavish US federal government contracts.

George Bush senior works for the Carlyle Group, a notorious private equity house which handles nearly US\$16 billion in investments. Charles Lewis, director of the Centre for Public Integrity, points out that the majority of its activities are linked to the defence sector. Bush senior is therefore working for an American military contractor during a period when his son, the President, conducts a war.

Historian Joseph Trento observes that Saudi Arabia spends more money in Washington than almost any other government. Ex CIA analyst Robert Steele comments, "we have essentially been whores, political whores for the Saudis for the last 40 years".

In a report to the Defence Policy Board, analyst Laurent Muarwicz described Saudi Arabia as America's

most dangerous opponent in the Middle East and active at every level of the terrorism chain. When his report was leaked Muarwicz lost his job.

The program examines the de facto alliance between the Christian right and the Israeli lobby. Adviser to Ronald Reagan, Michael Ledeen claims that a higher percentage of American Christian evangelicals support Israel than do American Jews.

Analyst Robert Steele compares the propaganda efforts of the current administration to Goebbels. He claims that even while people were still dying during the September 11 attacks White House officials were calling a serving general to tell him to "pin it on Iraq".

Ex-chief weapons inspectors Hans Blix (of the UN) and David Kay (from the CIA - the Iraqis always said the weapons inspectors were disguised CIA agents) criticise how the Bush administration pursued the fictional Weapons of Mass Destruction. Kay comments, "the worse thing for a democracy is to suppress the truth in the interests of an election".

Soundtrack To War, shot, recorded, produced and directed by George Gittoes, is a horrifying peek into the cultural desert that is the mentality of the US Army. Screening on *The Big Picture* (ABC

8.30pm Wednesday), Gittoes' film takes the soldiers' taste in music as the key to exploring their approach to their "mission".

With nothing to fight for, these troops must be "pumped up" to go into action. For this they rely on heavy metal and rap, often hooking up CD players to the intercom systems of their tanks and APCs so that they go into battle with the lyrics to "Let the Bodies Hit the Floor" ringing in their ears.

And, as these soldiers readily admit, when they're pumped up they will kill "anything that moves".

The film reveals a strange dichotomy. While the minds of many of the US "grunts" seem to be near bottomless pits of ignorance, making them perfect soldiers for imperialism, others are frank in their denunciation of the war and of US motives for being there.

In between talking about music they observe that the Iraqi people "hate us and want us to leave. We shouldn't be here."

Many of the spontaneous rap performances by battle-weary US soldiers captured on film by Gittoes were used in Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

For the most part, however, this look at the US Army reminded me most strongly of the Nazi Wehrmacht. Which is no doubt the aim of the Pentagon. ☹

Fremantle

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Pre Election Discussions

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The Fremantle Club 15 Bannister Street, Fremantle

The organisers come from various groups and across a broad political spectrum

Thursday 2 September: Education Policy implications in the curriculum
Thursday 9 September: Health Policy and future costs and methods
Thursday 16 September: Economic Policy is there a better alternative?
Schedule assumes October 9 election

Please contact any of the below if you wish to speak on any subject
Brian Jenkins 08 9528 1864 jenkins@inet.net.au
Bill Plowman 9450 3588 35 Edgewater Road Salter Point

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

Politics in the Pub

Friday 6pm - 7.45pm Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills

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

September 10
The Sudan crisis - a legacy of post colonialism
Andrew Vinson Dir. Middle Eastern & Nth African Studies Macq Uni
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Venezuela: Now to strengthen the Revolution

Bob Briton from *The Guardian* spoke with the Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Leonel Vivas, in Canberra last week about President Chávez's resounding victory in the recent recall referendum. The Ambassador spoke optimistically about a period of reconciliation that would allow the Revolution to pursue its goals and overcome poverty and bring peace and security to the people.

Guardian: Could you tell our readers what is the latest information with regard to the recall referendum?

Leonel Vivas: The latest information that I have is that recognition of the referendum result is growing around the world. Even the US Government has already recognised the victory of President Chávez and many other countries and heads of state have recognised it. All the international observers that were watching the process in Venezuela have already backed the result. The situation is very calm with no problems to speak of. So, overwhelmingly, the country is in tranquillity and has accepted the result.

Of course the opposition – as is always the case in my country, I don't know why, perhaps because they do not have a clear political alternative – some of their leadership are saying that the government of President Chávez has committed a fraud. That is stupid, really. They had been saying for many months before the referendum that they would back the result. All the leadership was saying that they would back the result if the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Carter Foundation verified the result. Now, in a very clear way, the OAS through its Secretary General Mr Gaviria and President Carter on behalf of the Carter Foundation have said that the referendum was conducted in a very honest, transparent and democratic way.

I have just been reading on the internet that the OAS, the Carter Foundation, the Venezuelan Government and the National

Elections Council have agreed to conduct an audit of 150 polling stations picked at random throughout the country. They are going to recount the votes and compare them with the result obtained by the computerised voting machines into which the people entered their "No" or "Yes" vote. At the time of voting, after having pushed the button to enter your vote, the machine gives you a statement (a "papeleta") saying that you have voted this way or that. You can check this and then you put it in the box at the polling station.

So there is to be a physical confirmation of the computerised result. The government has said to interested authorities that you will be allowed to audit any polling station you like because we know that the result that the National Elections Council released is valid. In two days time there will be this comparison of the results. President Carter has said that we are going to do that audit only to satisfy the demands of the opposition and that he expects that, after we have done it, that they will need to accept that there was not any fraud.

G: After the results of the audit are in, does the government expect more problems from the opposition?

LV: No, I don't think so. The government believes that there is only this stupid accusation of fraud outstanding. The government is prepared to confront any problem of public order. So no, the government is not expecting more problems in Venezuela.

The most important thing for the people and the government is



President Hugo Chávez addresses pre-referendum rally

to have a period of peace in order to carry out its programs. After this referendum, there should be a degree of tranquillity in the country with not too many worries to do more and more to overcome the difficulties facing the Venezuelan people.

All over the world, there will be a greater acceptance. Already, that I know of, many governments and heads of state have made clear their acceptance of the result and have congratulated President Chávez. The last one was the government of the US.

G: Now that President Chávez has been consolidated in his position, what new projects are planned, what new goals are being set for the revolution?

LV: There are two main goals. One is to deepen the Bolivarian Revolution, which means that the government will be striving every day to consolidate the revolution. In the months and years to come the main goal remains to overcome poverty. We have a high rate of poverty of around 75 per cent.

The second goal is to consolidate Venezuela's institutions – for instance in the justice system with the right to personal security – and to create more jobs. Unemployment in Venezuela is still very high. By the end of the year we want to have put an end to illiteracy.

Another important goal for the government is to penetrate, in the political sense, and to gain the support of the middle class. The government knows, President Chávez knows, everybody knows that the government needs far more support from the middle class than it receives now. The government is going to implement several programs in order to win their support and I believe, at the end of the day, the majority of the middle class will support President Chávez. For the time being, the majority

of this sector of society is against the government. The government is conscious of this situation and will be acting to win this very important support.

Into the Neighbourhoods

In Venezuela we already have in progress many projects or "missions" to strengthen the revolution. For instance, the "Barrio Adentro" [Into the Neighbourhoods] Plan [which seeks to address the health, education and other needs of the country's poorest neighbourhoods], the Robinson Mission [aimed specifically at illiteracy] and the Mercal Mission that has been established to sell foodstuffs to the poor at half price. That mission is particularly important to our country.

The overriding mission to address poverty in the country and the most important strategic plan of the government is called "Vuelvan

ing place in Venezuela right now, in relation to the countries of Latin America or to any country in the world – but especially to the countries of the third world – is that it is possible to carry out a revolution in a peaceful and democratic way.

Until the Bolivarian Revolution, even the great thinkers thought that a social, political and economic revolution in any country in the world was only possible through means of violence. I don't use the term "violence" in any pejorative sense. I believe it can be justified if it means finding a way to revolution but the Bolivarian Revolution is a unique example of how to make a revolution in a peaceful, democratic and participatory way.

For me this is very important because in Latin America we always have the danger of intervention from the US. However, it is very difficult for the US when it says that democracy is the best way for any country to organise itself and that

It is possible to carry out a revolution in a peaceful and democratic way.

Caras" (Turning Faces Around). It is called this because previous governments had their back turned to the people and were facing and paying attention to the powerful sectors in society. We don't know when it will achieve its goal of overcoming poverty but the object is to do this as soon as possible.

G: What lessons do you think the people of the region (and, for that matter, the world) could draw from this recent experience of the Venezuelan people?

LV: In my personal opinion, the most important example of the Bolivarian Revolution that is tak-

since the times of Ancient Greece and Aristotle that democracy is the best political system. Now the people of America and Latin America know that it is possible in a peaceful and constitutional way to make a revolution.

They know that political life is more open, more participatory and, in the broad sense, democratic than the United States. The President of the US is elected by a small minority of the American people. The President of Venezuela is elected by virtually all the Venezuelan citizens of voting age of 18 years or older. ☺

Adelaide

Solidarity with Venezuela!

A meeting to mark the recent achievements of the people of Venezuela and to establish a solidarity organisation in Adelaide

Speaker: Mr Leonel Vivas

Ambassador to Australia of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

A documentary will also be screened
Refreshments available, entertainment

Saturday 4 September, 7pm
Semaphore Workers' Club
93 Esplanade, Semaphore (Cnr. Dunn Street)

For more information, contact
Bob 04 1889 4366 bobbrit@planetmail.com
or Juan juangarr@hotmail.com

Authorised by the organisers of
the interim Venezuela Solidarity Committee/Bolivarian Circle



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