

Court hits union rights

Anna Pha

On September 2, the High Court handed down a decision which further restricts the already limited legal rights of trade unions to take industrial action and undermines the scope of enterprise agreements. It could render unenforceable many important provisions of existing enterprise agreements, or even render invalid the agreements themselves. The decision sounds a warning to unions. It tightens an already extremely restrictive and oppressive piece of legislation which has forced individual unions to hold back on struggle and manoeuvre their way around its most objectionable features.

The decision outlaws industrial action on social, political, environmental and broader economic issues.

Future court challenges may determine the full implications of the High Court's interpretation of the *Workplace Relations Act*, unless the Act itself can be rendered inoperable or by trade union actions.

Not surprisingly major employer bodies and the Howard Government are jubilant and the legal profession also has good reason to celebrate.

The case dates back to the negotiation of a new enterprise agreement with Electrolux in 2001. One of the union claims was for a compulsory "bargaining agent fee" to be paid by all future employees who did not become union members but who would be beneficiaries of the union's negotiations. The claim also involved payroll deduction of that fee by the employer, Electrolux.

During negotiations the unions

took industrial action – which they believed to be legally "protected action" – in support of their claims. Electrolux took the unions to the Federal Court claiming the action was not "protected" because the proposed agreement contained a clause that was not "pertaining to the relationship between an employer and employees". The allegedly offending clause was the one on bargaining agent fees.

"Protected action", which gives those involved a certain degree of legal immunity, is limited to action by workers "supporting or advancing claims" in respect of an enterprise agreement at the time when it is being negotiated. (Section 170ML) (It does not, for example, cover action to enforce the provisions of an agreement or solidarity action with other workers.)

The Act specifies that the contents of an agreement must "be about matters pertaining to the relationship between an employer and employees". (S 1170LI)

Over the years the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) and the courts have in the main adopted a fairly realistic interpretation of what constitutes "matters pertaining to the relationship between an employer and employees".

A Full Court of the Federal Court had previously found in favour of the unions at Electrolux. The Howard Government has since, with the help of the Australian Democrats, passed legislation prohibiting the inclusion of bargaining agent's fees in certified agreements and permitting the removal of such clauses in existing agreements.

Continued on page 12



US alliance endangers Australia

The bomb that exploded outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta last week, killing and wounding innocent people, was an abhorrent act and the direct result of Australia's participation in the US-led war on Iraq. The Howard Government and its backers are denying this in the face of all logic and evidence.

A web site has posted an unverified claim attributing the bombing

to Jemaah Islamiya, but whoever did it the reason is clear – the US, along with Australia, Britain and a few others are carrying out a war and occupation that is opposed and in many cases despised the world over.

When earlier this year Federal Police Commissioner Bill Keelty, obviously on the advice of intelligence sources, stated that Australia's participation in the war made it a more likely target for a terrorist attack, the Government moved swiftly to make him publicly retract his statement.

This is because it would be political poison for people to conclude that the Government's warmongering alliance with the Bush administration is threatening Australia's national security and endangering its people.

Election damage control has been put in motion by the Government, not only by denials but through right-wing commentators promoting the idea that terrorists make attacks with the goal of bring down governments.

As an example, they point to the

downfall of the Spanish Government of Jose Maria Aznar after a terrorist bomb attack on a commuter train just prior to a national election. Aznar in fact lied to the Spanish people – who were already incensed that he had committed the country to war in Iraq – about who was behind the attack.

It was the people who voted Aznar out, in a landslide election. The new government withdrew Spanish forces from Iraq and was applauded internationally for it.

The Howard Government is also beating its chest, saying it won't have its foreign policy dictated by terrorists. But the root cause of acts such as the bombing in Jakarta is that the USA is dictating Australia's foreign policy. This subservience and commitment to America's global strategies, which includes endless war, is the reason for Australia's growing pariah status in the eyes of the international community.

Australia should withdraw its troops from Iraq, and the first step in that direction will be by voting Howard out on October 9.

We have moved!

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

Due to the move and unexpected delays
we regret there was no *Guardian*
the last two weeks.

**Kicking the
"Watermelons"**
- p2

**Vanuatu expels
Australian Federal
Police**
- p3

**Election-time
"cures" for Medicare**
- p5

**Challenges facing
China's unions**
- p6

**New York: 500,000
take to the streets**
- p9

The Guardian

No 1198

September 15, 2004

Give priority to services, not tax cuts for the wealthy

So, the Government now has "money to burn" according to the latest Treasury report on Australia's financial situation. The surplus is estimated to be almost \$10 billion for the 2003-2004 financial year. It is claimed that company tax payments, "reduced welfare outlays" and "good economic management" are responsible for the record surplus. At the same time there is a conspiracy of silence by the two major parties as to where all this money is really coming from.

The wealthy have been given tax cuts and the rate of company taxation is lower than ever. The truth is that money is pouring into Treasury from the iniquitous GST – the Goods and Services Tax. It is often a silent and unseen imposition contained in the price of almost every purchase.

The Government even collects several times on the same items. The Communist Party has bought some second-hand furniture for our new office. Although GST was paid when it was bought new, we pay GST again on buying it second-hand. If we were to sell in the future we would be obliged to charge GST yet again. It is true that businesses are able to claim it back from the tax office but wage and salary earners have no such opportunities.

The GST has slewed the whole tax system, imposing a huge new tax-take on wage and salary earners.

One reason that both major parties are silent about the GST is the cover-up device by which all the money raised from the GST is handed over to the states. However, it is collected by the Australian Tax Office and this payment to the states has allowed the Federal Government to save on Federal payments to the states from other revenue.

While the Labor Party initially opposed the GST it is now silent and has no plans to scrap it should it win government. Yet that must be done when the whole tax system is restructured to reduce the huge tax burden imposed on the working people and their families.

The second major issue is the refusal of the Government to spend much more of this "money to burn" on public health, education and housing – three major areas which are being steadily eroded.

There is no justification for any shortage of teachers and the consequent large class sizes that still prevail in many schools. There is no justification for a shortage of nurses and trained doctors to relieve the chronic situation public hospitals. Many more schools and hospitals could be built and equipped using only a small fraction of the almost \$8 billion treasury surplus this year. There is no justification for the huge university fees being imposed on students and the financial difficulties facing many university administrations.

We are now told by both the Labor and Liberal Parties that they will establish a special fund into which the huge surplus will be paid to finance the presently unfunded superannuation entitlements of public servants. But this surplus is the property of all Australians not just one section and it should be returned to the working people and their families in the form of improved services for education, health and housing in particular.

For years both major parties have been pursuing a policy of "small government" which means cutting and privatising public services and responsibilities. It means tax cuts for the wealthy while pursuing the mantra that governments should always balance the budget. The Howard Government has fulfilled that objective but the result is chronic shortages in education, health services and in public housing. Public transport systems are in disarray and have also been run down.

These policies are conscious and deliberate as every possible sector of the economy is opened up for the control and profit of the big corporations. An alternative government committed to serving the interests of the working people is urgently needed. It would give priority to the provision of services rather than tax cuts for the wealthy.

PRESS FUND

Another year is galloping by. We're already more than two thirds down the track, and there's an election at the three-quarter mark – just in case you hadn't noticed. Since the last edition your *Guardian* collective has been hard at work relocating to the new building, installing new equipment, re-establishing work stations etc. We're slowly getting back to normal, but because we've missed two editions we now need your help more than ever in order to meet our Press Fund target for this year. So if you possibly can, please send us a contribution for the next issue. Our sincere thanks go to those who have contributed since our last issue, as follows:

Sophie, in memory of Jack McPhillips \$20

In memory of Bill Whiley from Bob and Joy Brown \$500

B Appleton \$80, J Doyle \$80, K Manski \$62, J Hale \$27, Fred Rouady and Allan Maarbani \$10, "Round Figure" \$11, F Rouady \$20, Don Cartwright \$20, Roy Liu \$10.

This week's total \$840. Progressive total: \$8930.

Kicking the watermelons

Andrew Jackson

With the polls once again showing that nearly 20 per cent of the electorate will vote away from the Coalition/ALP duopoly, the boots are out for the new third-party force that threatens the cosy political balance. The anti-Greens campaign reached a new ridiculous low last week as Deputy Prime Minister declared the Party was "a home for the people who in the 1950s would have joined the communist party".

Mr Anderson's scare-mongering continued: "You ought to be very, very aware, and very, very afraid."

"They are watermelons, many of them green on the outside and very, very red on the inside."

Bob Brown, Greens Senator from Tasmania, shrugged off Mr Anderson's comments as a "greens under the bed" scare campaign. He declared that the Greens were an "avocado" party – green inside and out.

Then, appearing to throw a spanner into the debate Mr Brown added that he was not a communist, but a "reconstructed Presbyterian".

The Greens Party arose out of the environmental movement and for many of its members, while also holding progressive views on many issues, the environment remains the primary political cause.

But there are many others who were attracted to the greens as an alternative progressive force, and for whom economic social justice issues, including workers' rights, are the main agenda. These are the "watermelons" Deputy PM Anderson is referring to.

Many of these Greens Party members recognise that our current capitalist system – dominated by Australian big business and transnational corporations – is directly responsible for the crises in our society, both social and environmental, and call for a major overhaul of our political system.

But ultimately the Greens Party platform does not call for the socialist transformation of society; but for a society built on a "kinder, more people-friendly" capitalism.

This differs fundamentally from the objectives of the Communist Party of Australia and its view that

the socialist transformation of society is necessary to overcome the profiteering, the environmental vandalism and the social divisiveness and deprivation of the monopoly corporations.

So Mr Anderson is wrong. Those who joined the Communist Party in the 1950s to work for these objectives would join the Communist Party today, not the Greens.

However, despite those differences, we share many common aims in trying to improve the conditions

that on many issues the ALP has voted with the Coalition to enact reactionary legislation that the Greens and Democrats have both opposed – such as the "Border Protection", "Mandatory Detention", and "ASIO Powers" Bills; increasing the cost of a medical prescriptions on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme; and the "Gay Marriage Ban".

The ALP has also voted alongside the Coalition to defeat numerous progressive policies that the Greens and Democrats have put

To say, as the Coalition and ALP do, that the minor parties will "hold the Senate to ransom" is deliberately deceptive. The major parties have a vested interest in maintaining the two-party system, and have shown in the past they have no qualms at working together.

of the people, protecting the environment, fighting for peace and justice.

Holding the Senate to ransom

With a "best possible" outcome in the Senate after this election, the ALP and Liberals would hold 32 seats each, the Democrats 4 and the Greens 8. To achieve this, the ALP would have to outpoll the Coalition on a two-party preferred basis in every state, and the Greens would not only have to replace all three Democrats up for re-election, but also steal one seat from the Coalition and Meg Lees and Brian Harridine's nominated successor as well.

A success of such magnitude for the ALP is by no means assured, meaning that a government formed by either major party will most likely require the votes of the Democrats plus Greens to pass legislation.

However, recent history shows

forward, including many environmental initiatives.

To say, as the Coalition and ALP do, that the minor parties will "hold the Senate to ransom" is deliberately deceptive. The major parties have a vested interest in maintaining the two-party system, and have shown in the past they have no qualms at working together to crush any threat to that system. They have the financial backing of – and are completely beholden to – big business, and have corporate mass media as their mouthpiece and propaganda machine.

It will take more than just a vote for left and progressive candidates at the upcoming election to break the two-party system.

It will require long-term dedicated activism to bring about a people's movement, built by hard work and the financial support of workers and progressive people, and by the mass-distribution of media representing the people's voices and interests – such as *The Guardian*. ☺

Fire and New Building Appeal \$10,000

Oh so close!

How close can you get! As the time comes to close the special appeal we are only \$68 off our target of \$10,000. The appeal will not cover all the expenses of moving which are many. The response to our appeal has been tremendous, and your support reassuring. We are now settling into the new premises, still some boxes to unpack, but at least the phones, computers and fax are working. Our special thanks for this last fortnight's contributions to:

Jean Mills \$50; Jim McKenzie \$20; Joan Williams \$40; JJ \$20; Maria Dovana; \$20; V Molina \$50; Vic Williams \$100; Mick Beatty \$50; Red Flag Flying \$40; Norma Shepherd \$100; Bert Appleton \$100; Maritime Branch \$200; MH \$150; A Christoforou \$50; Pt Jackson Branch \$100; Jim Doyle \$20; D Cartwright \$30; Ron Connolly \$50; JH \$50; S Katsineris \$10.

Total this week \$1250 Progressive Total \$9932.



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.

Vanuatu holds to independence, non-interference

Andrew Jackson

Australia's imperialist ambitions in the South Pacific suffered a marked setback this week when the government of Vanuatu announced its decision to expel the Australian Federal Police from the country and close their office in the country's capital Vila.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) has been accused of interference in domestic politics and espionage.

The decision comes after recent national elections at which the new government campaigned on a platform of reducing international influence in the country.

A press statement signed by Vanuatu's Foreign Minister, Barak Sope, confirmed the expulsion: "The Government has decided ... to close the AFP office effective from 15 September 2004.

"The decision was made because Vanuatu already has Australian Technical Advisers who are assisting the Vanuatu police under the Australian Defence Co-operation Program. This decision is to ensure Vanuatu, especially the police and the general public at large, are not confused over the role of the police."

However, during the ensuing diplomatic spat between Australia and Vanuatu further accusations were made by Mr Sope's office, including "spying through tapping telephone calls" and that "sensitive information is being passed back to the Australian Government".

Mr Sope said no formal agreement was made to allow the AFP into Vanuatu. "Vanuatu cannot just turn up in Sydney and set up a police station and spy on Australians. We are putting things straight..."

Fear factor

In retaliation Alexander Downer, Australian Foreign Affairs Minister, has begun to wage a propaganda campaign against Vanuatu with the Australian media airing Government concerns over "the corruption issue", "transnational criminals", "international drug syndicates" and "Chinese triads".

Australia has now threatened to lead an international boycott of foreign aid to Vanuatu: "There's not much point in wasting money on good governance programs and

assisting governments ... if they're going to get into kicking people out on allegations of spying", said Mr Downer.

"We're talking with the Americans and the Europeans and international institutions about this issue in the context of our aid program."

Australia's imperialist push

Australia has made no secret of its plans to dominate the South Pacific, using the mantle of "assisting failed states" to justify its takeover of local affairs.

The right-wing Australian Strategic Policy Institute has been advising the Australian Government on the process, most recently recommending doing away with national currencies and setting up a "South Pacific Dollar", and other rationalisation measures including the scrapping each country's national airline into a single international carrier.

So far the Australian Government has taken complete control over the Solomon Islands whilst retaining the "Government" for public face. Australian bureaucrats head the public service departments; the Australian Defence Force patrols the Solomon's borders and intervenes in local "hotspots"; and the Australian Federal Police "assists" in local law and order.

Under threat of withdrawing all aid, Australia has also forced its "advisors" and Federal Police back into its former colony of Papua New Guinea.

Most recently Australia seized the assets of the "bankrupt" Government of Nauru, and is currently preparing an intervention force for "Failed State Number Three".

Vanuatu must have seen the writing on the wall, and has chosen to maintain its independence rather than end up "Number Four".

Sinister colonial legacy

Vanuatu comprises 80 islands that lay approximately 2000 kms east of Cairns, and has a population of 200,000.

The citizens are known as Ni-Vanuatu (the Bislama term meaning "born in Vanuatu", a corruption of the French "*Né en Vanuatu*"), and as a legacy of its colonial era

the official languages are English, French and Bislama – a pigeon language drawing on the other two (Bis – from the English "Beach", and lama – from the French "la mer").

Colonialism cut a tragic swathe through Vanuatu. Between first European settlement in the late 1700s and World War II, it is estimated that 95 per cent of the population – 950,000 people – were wiped out, either through introduced disease or deliberate slaughter.

Long after slavery had been officially abolished in the British Empire thousands of Ni-Vanuatu were still kidnapped and forcibly deported to work on sugar plantations in Queensland and Fiji under the guise of "indentured labour".

Vanuatu's entire stock of sandalwood was felled for export.

Foreign political intervention reached its peak during the 1970s as Vanuatu negotiated its independence with its British and French joint rulers.

French secret agents and US business interests financed and armed separatists on the northern island of Santo, hoping to foster a civil war and the establishment of a separate pro-French/US republic when independence was formally declared.



Australia plans to dominate the South Pacific

The insurgency was put down with the help of Papuan troops.

Vanuatu, while still heavily dependant on foreign aid, has maintained a degree of independence that has irked foreign powers.

One of the first actions of the new independent government in 1980 was the nationalisation of all foreign-owned land. Vanuatu is the only South Pacific country to belong to the Non-Aligned Movement. ☪

Campaign to make Hardie pay

On September 8 the Victorian Trades Hall Council and the Asbestos Diseases Society of Victoria launched a campaign on the steps of the Victorian Parliament House to bring James Hardie to account over its actions regarding compensation for victims of asbestos.

Rob Hulls, State Minister for Industrial Relations, addressed the group of asbestos sufferers, adding the Victorian Government's voice to the outrage felt by the public over James Hardie's behaviour.

As a part of the campaign, a billboard featuring Frank, an asbestos victim, was unveiled on the corner of La Trobe and Spencer Streets, Melbourne.

Speakers at the launch included asbestos sufferers, some of who would have travelled from as far as the La Trobe Valley to attend the

event. There was also a symbolic laying of flowers to honour the 500 people who will die each year up until 2020 from asbestos.

"We will be utilising every resource we have to bring justice to asbestos victims and make James Hardie do the right thing and bring back the money from the Netherlands", said Trades Hall Secretary, Leigh Hubbard, referring to Hardie's skipping out of Australia.

"In addition to billboards, we will be holding a mass rally on September 15 at the Australian Stock Exchange, the day James Hardie will hold its shareholders' information meeting in Sydney."

According to Jane Staley from the Asbestos Diseases Society of Victoria, asbestos victims are angered by James Hardie's attempts

at the recent NSW Commission to limit access to compensation.

"The last thing people who are attempting to cope with an illness want to do is worry about whether or not they have enough money for their medical bills", said Ms Staley.

"We urge James Hardie to do the decent thing and bring back the money, no strings attached, so that future victims of asbestos can have peace of mind.

Mr Hubbard warned: "If James Hardie gets its way with our political and judicial system and gets the right to limit victims' access to compensation, this will be nothing but a reward for corporate thuggery. We must keep up the pressure, and I urge all people from all walks of life to support us in this campaign." ☪

Pete's Corner



Solidarity with Venezuela in Adelaide

Adelaide's new Venezuela Solidarity Committee held a very successful inaugural function at the Semaphore Workers' Club recently. The Venezuelan Ambassador to Australia Leonel Vivas addressed the gathering of about 80 people and a documentary was screened which depicted the defeat by people's power of the coup attempted against President Chávez two years ago.

The Ambassador spoke about the significance of the victory for President Chávez in the recall referendum of August 15. The approval of the overwhelming majority of the Venezuelan people means that the government will be able to carry forward the various programs (or "missions") put in place in recent years. These have focussed on the problems of poverty and illiteracy.

Mr Vivas described new projects to draw members of the middle classes to support for the Bolivarian Revolution and others to continue



Venezuelan Ambassador to Australia Leonel Vivas

the fight against poverty. He gave a brief history of how the national oil industry was brought under the full control of the Venezuelan Government and its huge earnings were put to work for the benefit of the people.

The Ambassador added his personal opinion about the Bolivarian

Revolution as an example for the rest of Latin America of how social change is possible using peaceful, democratic means.

Many of the people at the function added their name on the list to be advised of future events and a dozen put themselves forward as committee members. ☪

Casino workers win

Star City Casino workers have voted to accept a new enterprise agreement which delivers a pay increase of 9.25 per cent, as well as extra benefits. More than 70 per cent of workers have voted in a ballot at the Sydney Casino – the biggest employer in the CBD – with the overwhelming majority backing the two-year agreement.

The casino division of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU) organises over 2000 members of the union who are table games dealers, room attendants, food and beverage workers, cleaners, security, casino finance and maintenance workers at Star City.

The agreement, which took several months to negotiate, is the fifth enterprise agreement negotiated between the LHMU Casino Union members and Star City.

Key highlights in the deal include:

- New allowance for public area attendants and facilities employees
- Guaranteed training in three major games, in three years, for table games employees providing up to 30 percent pay increases during the life of the agreement
- Option to cash-out a portion of annual leave, and long service leave
- Option for casuals to become permanent
- Two additional public holidays on December 28, 2004 and January 3, 2005 because of Christmas and New Year falling on weekends

- Christmas rosters to take into account the previous Christmas roster

- Improved redundancy scales of payment
- Additional day of bereavement leave to three days
- Free hepatitis vaccinations for high-risk areas.

"LHMU members won paid maternity leave in the last round of negotiations", Tim Ferrari, LHMU Casino Union Assistant National Secretary, said.

"In this agreement we've improved maternity leave rights by introducing continued payment of superannuation at the full-time equivalent rate, while new mothers work part-time for up to two years after their maternity leave.

"LHMU members at Star City are pleased with the package, and look forward to receiving their first wage increase of 4.5 per cent, with backpay to June 1, and then 4.75 per cent from June 1, 2005, as well as the other benefits.

"By the end of the agreement the pay increase on the base rate of pay represents between \$70 and \$114 per week for Star City workers", Mr Ferrari said.

The campaign for the agreement was not without industrial action, with members taking escalated protected action in the form of wearing badges, one hour stop-works, and a 24-hour strike.

Safety and security

The union says that now this enterprise agreement is concluded,

workers at Star City are gearing up for a safety and security campaign.

"In response to the union's push for metal detection, the Casino has recently begun a trial of metal detection wands on an ad hoc basis", said Mr Ferrari. "Workers want to see their lives protected with installation of non-obtrusive metal detection systems in every entrance to the Casino.

"This is about protecting our members' lives, by stopping the entry of guns and knives into the casino as has occurred in other casinos both here and overseas.

He said there are also other serious safety concerns to be pursued, such as safe travel to and from work and a fully smoke-free workplace.

"Our union will also strongly push to protect jobs being replaced with new technology such as electronic table games where the croupier is an animated character appearing on screen, as well as the cashless poker machines that don't require manual payment of jackpots."

The LHMU will now lodge the Star City Enterprise Agreement 2004 for certification with the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. ☘



"They think because they do all the work, they're entitled to some of my profits."

Qantas attacks its workforce

Peter Mac

The airline once considered "Australia's own" is not content with its recently announced plan to establish a 400-strong crew base in London, break the company into eight separate divisions, and contract out its maintenance work overseas. The airline now intends to scrap the existing limit of 370 overseas-based cabin crew, with a view to basing 1000 cabin crew employees overseas after the existing agreement with the Flight Attendants Association expires on December 18.

And in a move that is highly reminiscent of those used by management during the infamous Patrick Stevedores dispute several years ago, Qantas has advised the ACTU that it no longer intends to directly hire employees performing ground work usually carried out by members of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) at Melbourne Airport. Instead it intends to use labour hire firms and overseas employees in most work areas throughout Australia.

Ms Grace Grace, General Secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions, warned Qantas employees that the airline is intent on launching a full-scale attack on its workforce.

She stated: "It is ... the intention of the company to reduce its annual wages bill by approximately \$205 million per year from existing employees, which for award employees will mean a reduction of \$6,833.33 per year per employee."

Qantas is now training domestic cabin crews to handle the airline's

flights to Hong Kong, one of its most popular destinations, and is training certain members of its management to act as strike breakers in the event that international flight attendant staff take industrial action, as seems almost certain.

This tactic is unlikely in itself to defeat such action, but it illustrates just how greedy the privatised Qantas has become, despite its massive profit levels of recent years.

TWU members employed by Qantas at Melbourne airport were the first to be affected by the labour hire move, and have refused to work alongside labour hire employees. In a move that is again strikingly reminiscent of management tactics used in the Patrick dispute, Qantas management then threatened to take legal action and to forcibly remove TWU employees from the Melbourne base.

At a recent meeting, nine unions covering Qantas workers agreed to take joint action, and are considering establishing a single bargaining unit, to defeat the company's plans to attack their wages and conditions.

In a joint statement, the unions recently commented that the company had obviously been preparing its new moves for months. They declared: "We have two options. We can buckle in the face of corporate thuggery or we can show Qantas we are determined to fight for our jobs, our families and our future.

"This action is an attack on all unions and all workers who seek to defend working conditions. We must come together as a movement to support the Qantas workers. An attack on one is an attack on all." ☘

NSW School Cleaners demand justice

More than 2000 cleaners from across the state marched last Wednesday from Hyde Park, down Macquarie St to Premier Carr's office. The cleaners had been on strike for four days as part of a statewide campaign to highlight what schools would be like without cleaners.

They were there to make sure that their concerns about job security were heard right at the top of the Governor Macquarie Tower – where the Premier sits.

"Some of our people travelled overnight from the farthest reaches of the state to let Bob Carr know that what is on the table is an empty offer", said Annie Owens, NSW LHMU Secretary.

Nearly all state schools and TAFE colleges were affected by the strike. Cleaners returned to work this week, following talks with the government and Department of Education and Training. They hope that no further strike action will be necessary.

The NSW Teachers Federation raised concerns that some of the strike-breaking cleaners being brought in by the Department may not have had the normal police clearance checks which school

cleaners now have to have if they work on education department property.

Like offering an empty glass without a drink

"This offer is like someone handing you a glass, but it is empty, there is nothing in the glass to drink", Ms Owens said.

"It's empty because the Government knows that under the current proposals any new contractor could fulfill their obligations by just offering one hour of work to a cleaner who has been working the job for 10, 20, 30 years.

What do the cleaners want?

- An offer of employment from all new incoming contractors (as happened in the last two contracts)
- Maintenance of their hours of work. This should be possible given that the government says it is happy with the cleaning standard and does not see much opportunity for reduction of hours
- No subcontracting, which LHMU members rightly fear will lead to cleaners being ripped off. Subcontracting has never previously been allowed

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

- Contracts let at a reasonable size so companies have proper systems in place i.e. payroll, injury prevention, training, OH&S etc.

As it currently stands, when the contract changes in 2005 there will be no way to ensure fairness over which cleaners retain employment.

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

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

LHMU Cleaners are looking to other union members and the broader community to help them defend their jobs.

Support the cleaners in their campaign by sending a protest message to Bob Carr. Send an email to the Premier by logging onto www.lhmu.org.au/ ☘

CUBA TODAY

Hear Iliana Hernandez

Representative of the Communist Party of Cuba

Iliana Hernandez is a former high school teacher and a member of the Communist Party of Cuba. She has held various positions in other organisations including Head of the Department of Education of the Cuban Young Communist League. In 1997, she joined the Department of International Relations of the Communist Party of Cuba.

Perth

Iliana will speak on the current situation in Cuba and its relations with the Bush Administration
Wednesday 15 September 6:30pm for 7pm start
(Spanish and English)
Unions WA, Level 4, Unity House
79 Stirling Street, Perth
Admission : free

Fremantle

Thursday 16 September 6:30 to 9:00 pm
(In Spanish only)
MUA Building 2 Kwong Alley, North Fremantle
Organised by Australia-Cuba Friendship Society and Communist

Party of Australia

Further info: Lefki Kailis on 9367 2622 or Vinnie on 0419 812872
vinniemolin@hotmail.com

Adelaide

Lunch followed by discussion
Saturday 18 September 1pm to 4pm
Semaphore Workers Club
93 Esplanade, Semaphore
(Cnr Dunn St)
Event will also be a fundraiser to help Cuba with recovery from recent devastating storms
Organised by the Communist Party of Australia & Australia Cuba Friendship Society
Further info: Bob Briton 0418 894 366

Melbourne

Chilean National Day Celebrations
Meet Iliana
Sunday 19 September 3.00 to 5.00 pm
272 Miller Rd, Altona
Pablo Neruda Cultural Centre Stall
Meeting with Unions and Members
Monday 20 September 2pm
516-520 Swanston St, Carlton Sth
Guest of the Electrical Trades Union
Followed by social drink in the Comrades Bar
Dinner, Relax & Talk
Monday 20 September 6.30pm
Universal Pizza
141 Lygon St, Carlton
Visit sponsored by Communist Party of Australia

Election snake oil "cure" for Medicare

Bob Briton

At the same time that Australians were being bombarded with \$20 million-worth of "Strengthening Medicare" ads in the mainstream media, Coalition pollies were sitting on election time plans to gazump Labor's response to the health crisis facing the country. While Howard & Co previously insisted that the "Medicare Plus" package had perfected the popular national health scheme with a range of "safety nets", the latest announcement seeks to further exploit growing public concern over the shrinking number of bulk-billing doctors.

The Libs latest tweak at Medicare has a lot in common with their previous efforts. Like the \$3.3 billion "Strengthening Medicare" package before it, the recently announced \$1.8 billion to be spent over the next four years would have little or no effect on declining bulk-billing rates in country areas. The latest package again sets out to put money in the pocket of practitioners by making it easier for them to increase their fees. The Government is taking practical steps to win the support of GPs – who they used to count as natural allies – and hood-wink battling Australians that it will be cheaper or even free to visit the doctor.

The Howard/Abbott scheme would increase the Medicare rebate

would be \$21.80. Nobody would expect that doctor to forego that \$21.80 in order to bulk-bill patients. At best it would reduce the patient's out-of-pocket costs by \$4.50. Many doctors might see it as an opportunity to soften the blow of a further fee increase.

Professor Jane Hall, director of the Centre for Health Economics said that the Howard plan would only affect bulk-billing rates in rare cases "at the margins". Professor John Deeble, the architect of the original Medicare scheme, agrees.

The problem at the core of the bulk-billing question is that the Medicare rebate and the schedule of fees have not kept pace with increased costs incurred by GPs over the past 20 years. It has been calculated that a standard visit would be set at between \$40 and \$50 had those indices kept pace with inflation. Neither of the major parties is showing any sign of tackling the question of proper indexation of the Medicare rebate and scheduled fees.

Fees will rise

Professor Deeble expects fees to rise under the Coalition plan. So does the Doctors Reform Society. So does GP and former Liberal adviser Paul Fitzgerald: "If these [extra] fees are not indexed, then of course doctors' fees will rise over time and they will eat up the difference", he told *The Australian*

requiring relatively frequent services from a range of specialists like radiologists. If a patient pays more than \$300 in any year for these services, the Government agreed to pay 80 per cent of all subsequent charges for doctors' services.

The costs are uncapped. Specialists could charge thousands of dollars in the biggest open-ended rort ever and taxpayers would foot the bill. It is a recipe to destroy Medicare – costs will blow out and provide the government with the excuse to means test Medicare.

Warnings that this was a recipe for fee increases were ignored by Howard et al, who knew what they were doing all along. It is the same old story with their latest plan to "rescue" bulk-billing. The Coalition has no qualms about spending large wads of public money when it suits its purposes.

Labor focus on bulk-billing

Labor's policy is strongly focussed on bulk-billing. It also promises to increase the Medicare rebate to 100 per cent of the scheduled fee but only for bulk-billed GP visits. Recognising that the scheduled fee is not set at a realistic level, Labor has vowed to pay additional sums to GPs meeting bulk-billing targets. The payments, ranging from \$7500 to \$22,500 per annum, are for doctors who bulk bill between 70 and 80 per cent of their patients. The incentives increase according to whether the GP is in practice in the metropolitan area, in an outer metropolitan or major regional centre or a rural/remote setting.

All up, the Labor changes mean that the Medicare rebate increases by \$6.30 per patient for a doctor in a big city, \$7.80 for one in the suburbs or a regional centre and \$9.60 for a GP in a rural practice if the targets are met. Again it is unlikely that big changes in the number of doctors bulk-billing their patients will flow from the ALP policy, either.

Neither of the major parties wants to tap the funds currently committed to the 30 per cent Private Health Insurance Rebate. The cost of the PHIR has been put conservatively at around \$2.5 billion per annum, and will rise in future years. The diversion of these funds to raise the Medicare rebate to appropriate levels would fix the bulk-billing problem and leave money over to address some of the other problems facing our public health system. That course of action, however, would require the political will to tackle the power of big business and finance capital. ☘



The costs are uncapped. Specialists could charge thousands of dollars in the biggest open-ended rort ever and taxpayers would foot the bill. It is a recipe to destroy Medicare

by \$4.50 from the current \$25.70 to \$30.20, which is also the scheduled fee for a standard consultation. If the patient is bulk-billed, the increase will be paid to the doctor. If not, the amount will assist the patient in paying the doctor's bill.

The claim that the rebate is to be boosted to 100 per cent of the scheduled fee will lead many to believe that a visit to the GP will not involve a charge.

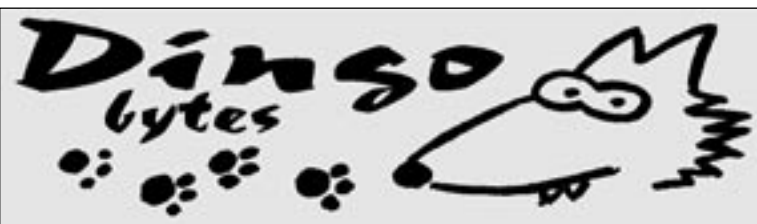
However, in the same doctor's surgery that Howard chose to make his carefully crafted announcement, a standard consultation costs \$52. The gap between this fee and rebate from Medicare is \$26.30. That is, the patient is \$26.30 out of pocket for the standard consultation.

If the rebate were increased to the scheduled fee of \$30.20, the gap

Financial Review last week.

In the same article an indication was given as to the real beneficiaries of the Howard Medicare package. Shares in two major companies owning large medical practices rose by healthy margins after the announcement. Shares in Primary Health Care – which runs 21 medical consultancies – rose 33c overnight to \$6.35. Independent Practitioner Network shares stacked on 3c to close at \$9.18 last Thursday.

The same tactic of "fixing" Medicare by benefiting the big players in the health industry was applied with the "Strengthening Medicare" package first announced late last year. In that case, among other measures, a "safety net" was supposedly put under patients



It appears that NSW CityRail has forked out \$84,736.72 in taxi fares in the last financial year as a way of transporting passengers whose trains were late or cancelled. Rail Corp, the company now in charge of the NSW train network, defended the policy saying, "it is often more cost effective to use taxis rather than buses". Taxis are also more readily available than buses. But internal taxi authority sheets showed that taxis are travelling distances of more than 100 kilometres in one trip to drop off passengers, with one fare between Maitland and Scone in the Hunter Region costing an estimated of \$250. Figures show that the most of the taxi expense was incurred at the height of the train driver shortage crisis in March.

A food study commissioned for the Australian Sports Commission has found that declining physical activity is to blame for the rising child obesity rates rather than diet. But obesity experts are outraged by the report. There is little evidence to show the amount of physical activity of Australian children has changed and that dietary intake has increased dramatically over the past two decades, according to Dr Tim McGill of the NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition at the University of Sydney. But guess who sponsored the research for the report. Wait for it. Coca-Cola.

More than 21 business and community leaders went back to school around Sydney as part of a Principal for a Day Program. Among them was Telstra CEO Ziggy Switkowski who would do to the public education system what he's doing to Telstra i.e. privatise it. Another of the 21 was singer turned ALP politician Peter Garrett who became a principal who dumped his principles at Matraville Soldiers Settlement Primary School where students asked him, "Do you shave your head with a razor or are you actually bald?" Garret had a "no comment". He's in the swing of his new job already.

Rapacious, money-grubbing owners of private childcare centres are turning the service into a super-profit monopoly. ABC Learning Centres was merged with its main rival the Peppercorn Management Group, without a whimper from the toothless consumer watchdog, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. The merger creates a childcare company that is responsible for looking after more than 780 childcare centres Australia-wide. ABC's net profit for the last financial year was \$81.6 million, a net rise in profit of 77 percent from last year.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: Is the corporate drug monopoly. In order to fend off criticism that the Free Trade Agreement will undermine the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and force up the price of medicines, the pharmaceutical industry body Medicines Australia have joined with the Australian Council of Social Service and other health organisations to investigate the "cost barriers" confronting the poor and chronically ill. Sickening, isn't it?

LATER

I see him across the road sitting on the railing along the edge of the footpath.

He's with the kid who lost his arm on a building site, the empty sleeve of his jacket pinned up near the shoulder.

I wave and cross the street but he doesn't gesture back, just watches me cross through the traffic.

He has a posture that makes you think he lopes when he walks. He puts out his hand for the piece of paper without saying anything.

I hand it to him, a doctor's certificate for his parole violation no-show at the local area police.

He goes to put it in his pocket but he's wearing those uniform issue trousers from the chicken take-away where he works. They have them made without pockets.

For an instant I see him as a stranger would: lanky, looking on me with a mixture of mockery and suspicion, like the rest of us holding back barely restrained impulses.

His grin is crooked from the time he came off his bike over the handlebars. We part company. "Later" he says.

Tom Pearson

China's unions take on the challenge of change

During a visit to the People's Republic of China in July, **Marilyn Bechtel** talked with trade unionists at the enterprise, city, provincial and national levels, to learn how they are helping workers meet the challenge of economic restructuring going on in China today. This is the first of two articles; the second will deal with the situation of China's migrant workers.

It has been a quarter century since the policy of "reform and opening up" began to be implemented in China, featuring restructuring of state owned enterprises (SOEs), and opening the economy to domestic and international capital. This complex path is a central feature of what the Communist Party of China (CPC) calls "building socialism with Chinese characteristics".

It is viewed by the CPC as the only practical way to jumpstart economic development under the very difficult conditions of a developing country with a huge population and a large diverse land mass, facing extreme poverty and devastation from war as well as from world capitalism's unending efforts to overturn the Chinese revolution.

Far from being a "free-for-all", the overall economic picture is influenced through macroeconomic controls such as monetary policies, investment growth, credit and taxes. Nor has the private sector taken over — currently about two-thirds of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) comes from the publicly

force has been slashed under pressure of new technology and plant closings.

New strategies

Like trade union movements in many countries, US and Chinese trade unions are each having to develop new strategies to uphold their workers' interests under the new conditions.

However, while US workers' wages have stagnated or declined in the last decade and vacation days have decreased, in China during the same period the average worker's wage rose 40 percent, the work-week has been cut and vacations are lengthening.

I talked with trade union leaders in four different cities — Shenyang in the north-east, Ningbo and Hangzhou in eastern China, and the capital, Beijing. Specifics varied from region to region, but the overall picture was similar — a significant gap between the number of workers seeking jobs and the employment opportunities available to them, massive programs to



China's unions are developing new strategies to uphold workers' interests

year the north-east had slipped to nine percent.

The Communist Party of China's 16th National Congress in November 2002 laid the basis to re-develop the region so it can again play a major role in China's modernisation process. Revitalisation was given additional impetus at the CPC's October 2003 Central Committee meeting.

Revitalisation

The process involves upgrading technology to contemporary standards, restructuring SOEs, encouraging development of joint public-private and private ownership, and bringing in more domestic and overseas investment.

The goal is to restore the region's full industrial potential

have found new jobs in SOEs, while others have gone into information technology — where pay is about equal to the SOEs — or into lower-paying service jobs.

(Though he did not cite a specific figure, Liaoning Province's Labour Bureau said some 750,000 workers were laid off in Shenyang in 2003.)

Wu outlined a series of measures with union involvement to aid the unemployed. Among them: job agencies that train workers, upgrade their skills and help them find jobs; programs matching workers' skills to available jobs; and small interest-free loans to workers wishing to start their own businesses.

Nation wide, provisions for laid-off SOE workers include temporary income support for the newly jobless, unemployment insurance, and a minimum living standard guarantee for those who don't find adequate new employment.

Tong Qing Feng, Vice President of the China Institute of Industrial Relations in Beijing, told me that while the process varies by region and by industry, workers basically have three years in which to be retrained at re-employment centres.

After that, the social security minimum living standard kicks in for those who do not find a new job. However, Tong said that the social security provisions have been implemented unevenly so far because of a shortage of funds. He said the Institute is optimistic that the peak of layoffs has been reached and they will taper off soon.

Training

An example of a long-established SOE that has found its footing in the new environment is the Shenyang Blower Works. Founded in 1934, long before the revolution, the plant at first mainly made coal cars. Now it makes centrifuges, turbines and other precision equipment for the petroleum and chemical industries. The plant employs 2700 workers, half of whom are skilled technical workers. This fall [spring time in Australia] they will move to brand new, state-of-the-art facilities.

Trade union vice chair Zhang Jiashu told me that before their employment starts, all shop-floor workers receive technical school training.

When they join the plant's workforce, they are trained for their particular job. Training is continuous, and many workers earn certificates of competency at various levels. Competitions among the workers provide added incentive to hone skills.

The economic picture is very different in densely populated Zhejiang Province, south of Shanghai, where accelerated development including building up private enterprise has been emphasised since the 1990s.

During a meeting in the city of Hangzhou, provincial Trade Union Federation leaders said over 90 percent of SOEs in the province have been restructured. Though the employment environment in Zhejiang is more stable than in other areas, problems still exist, they said.

Besides SOE workers laid off during reorganisation, jobs must be found for farmers who have lost their land, a rapidly growing number of college graduates, and migrant workers drawn to the bustling region.

Through combined efforts of the trade unions and government, over half a million new jobs were created last year, and a similar number is planned for this year, the unionists said, but despite this great effort, a substantial gap remains.

In the province, 75 training facilities offer some 650 classes. Programs now feature exams for skills certification. Training is done to enterprise specifications, and workers are referred to those enterprises when they finish.

Every city and county also has at least one centre to aid workers who experience unusual difficulty in finding new work. These centres advocate with the government on policy matters, serve as employment agencies, aid workers in difficult life situations, and offer advanced technical and professional training.

In a period when China's great economic progress has benefited virtually all Chinese while at the same time regional inequalities and unemployment remain to be overcome, the country's trade union movement is playing a major role for progress as it strives to uphold workers' rights under new and evolving conditions.

People's Weekly World

The country's trade union movement is playing a major role for progress as it strives to uphold workers' rights under new and evolving conditions.

owned sector.

Especially since the start of the 1990s, the shift from a stress on state planning, with lifetime employment for urban workers, to one permitting much greater operation of markets has accelerated the country's economic growth and brought improved living conditions to most Chinese.

At the same time, however, the process has brought layoffs and unemployment to millions of workers as SOEs reorganised to boost productivity and competitiveness.

In that period, north-eastern China and other old heavy industry centres have gone from industrial heartland to "rust belt", while laid-off workers have faced the need to upgrade skills, learn new technologies and, often, to prepare for entirely different lines of work. Even in eastern China, where rapid industrial growth has been a national priority for years, similar processes are taking place.

In the US, millions of workers and their communities have faced similar challenges, as the work-

retrain and re-employ workers displaced in the reform of state-owned industries, and new emphasis on pre-employment training and on-the-job upgrading of skills.

Though these programs are far from solving problems for all displaced workers, the avenues they offer have helped millions to find new jobs and to stabilise their employment situation.

In the years just after China's 1949 socialist revolution, Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang — the north-eastern provinces once called Manchuria — were the main national centre of heavy industry, producing the country's first steel, machine tools, locomotives and aeroplanes. Under the centrally planned economy of that period, enormous resources from all over the country were channelled into the region and, in turn, its products were distributed nationwide.

However, as emphasis on central planning was reduced, the region lost its cutting-edge position. Once providing 17 percent of China's industrial output, by last

by the year 2020. As of July, the National Development and Reform Commission had approved investments in 160 projects in the area, totalling about 66.6 billion yuan (US\$8 billion).

During conversations in several cities, union leaders described the union's responsibilities to uphold workers' rights during restructuring. In SOEs, the chair of the workplace trade union, elected by representatives of all the workshops, is usually a member of the top administrative staff or, in reorganised enterprises, a member of the board of directors.

This assures union input as reorganisation is discussed. The Workers' Congress of elected representatives must discuss and ratify restructuring and employment plans before they can take effect.

Lay-offs

While in Shenyang, I talked with Wu En Tao, Vice Chair of the China Shenyang Federation of Trade Unions. He said about 30 percent of workers at the city's SOEs have been laid off. Some 20 to 25 percent

Who are the Cuban Five?



Fernando González



René González



Antonio Guerrero



Gerardo Hernández



Ramón Labañino

They are five Cuban men who are in US prison for simply defending their country of Cuba from terrorist acts by extremist right-wing groups in Miami. They were sentenced from 15 years to two life sentences.

They never harmed anyone, yet they are in prison while the anti-Cuba extremists whom they tried to stop are walking freely in Miami. How did the five Cubans try to stop them? By monitoring the terrorists' actions and informing Cuba of impending attacks by those extremist groups.

The five Cubans are Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, René González and Fernando González. They were taken into custody by US authorities on September 1, 1998. They were convicted in US federal court on June 8, 2001 in a politically-charged trial: the US Government claimed they were engaged in espionage on US military bases and threatened

"national security"! The espionage charge – and related charges – are a complete fabrication. In 14,000 pages of transcript, no espionage evidence was ever introduced.

The five Cubans were strictly involved in monitoring the actions of terrorist right-wing groups in Miami. These groups – such as Omega 7, Alpha 66, Brothers to the Rescue, Brigada 2506, and Comandos F4 – have caused the deaths and injury of hundreds of people in Cuba and other countries. Some of their leaders were directly implicated in conspiring to try to prevent Elián González from returning home to his father in Cuba.

For more than 40 years, anti-Cuban right-wing groups in Miami have engaged in countless terrorist activities against Cuba, against Cuban-Americans and anyone who calls for a normalisation of relations between Cuba and

the US. Those organisations were established with the financing, training and backing of the CIA in the early 1960s. Their sole aim was to sow terror and violence against the people of Cuba, after they had successfully ousted hated dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959 and began to build a new society.

For example, notorious anti-Cuba terrorists Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles conspired in the planting of two bombs on a Cubana Airlines plane on October 6, 1976. In the horrific explosion that occurred mid-flight from Barbados to Cuba, 73 innocent people died.

Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles are long-time CIA agents trained in assassination and sabotage. After a few years in prison, Bosch was allowed to re-enter the US in the 1980s. When the Justice Department moved to deport him in 1989 for a series of violent actions, then-President

George HW Bush pardoned him. Today, Bosch lives in Miami freely, although he is responsible for the deaths of over 80 people.

Because of the repeated failure – and indeed refusal – of the US Government to act against known criminals whose sole aim is to bring death and destruction to the Cuban people, Cuba found it necessary for

its self-defence to send in these five brothers to prevent future attacks by monitoring the groups' actions.

Gerardo, René, Antonio, Fernando and Ramón are innocent and should be free. Their actions required a great deal of sacrifice and personal risk to infiltrate such organisations. They are heroes, not criminals! ✪

Support the call for their freedom

Sign and circulate the petition
www.freethethefive.org/pdf/petition

Learn more about their case at
www.freethethefive.org

Contact the US National Committee to Free the Five
freethethefive@actionsf.org

Book review:

Ramblin' Man: The Life and Times of Woody Guthrie

By Ed Cray

W W Norton & Company, 2004 Hardcover, 384 pp

Bruce Bostick

Since first "discovering" Woody Guthrie over 30 years ago, I've devoured everything about him. I listened to – and loved – his music. I read all the books about him. I even watched that horrid film that Hollywood made about him, *Bound for Glory*.

Woody was the great "traveling troubadour". He became almost like the wistful legend of the IWW organiser Joe Hill, who will "always be there whenever working folks fight for their rights".

Woody, however, was a real man: a tough, gritty, skinny, little Dust Bowl refugee who wrote and sang the songs of common folks, songs that lifted the spirits of people beaten down by the corporations and the banks.

Even today, Woody's songs continue to boost people struggling against injustice, for a better life. While this tough little man is a true hero, an almost mythic figure to many of us, I often wondered who the real Woody was. After reading Ed Cray's *Ramblin' Man*, I wonder no longer.

Ramblin' Man is the first piece I've seen on the real Woodrow Wilson Guthrie, born in 1912 in Okemah, Oklahoma. For those who want to read of Woody the legend, this is not your book. However, as I read *Ramblin' Man*, another Woody came alive, this one with warts, shortcomings and personal

problems like all of us, but a much more real-life Woody, struggling – like all those around him – against the massive impersonal, and truly evil, power of raw capitalism during that awful period of the 1930s that we have come to call the Great Depression.

Instead of being swept aside by this tide of brutal history, Woody saw the possibility of a better life and was driven to fight to get there.

**His guitar carried the slogan:
This machine kills fascists!**

Cray's book traces Woody's life from his early days in Okemah, where his father was a rough-and-tumble speculator and politician, through an early marriage, to Woody's travels (first to the West Coast and later to New York and elsewhere), to his rise as one of the premier people's musicians of the 1930s.

It describes the insanity that his mother fell into and the death of his young sister in a fire caused by his mother's infirmity. These were

events that Woody carried as scars throughout his life.

The book gives the reader a feeling of being with Woody as he travelled to California to find "his people", the Oklahoma refugees, "Okies", who'd fled the loss of all they had in the horrible dust storms of the early '30s.

Deeply angered by the mistreatment of working people he witnessed, he became radicalised. It takes us with Woody when he sang,

with Lefty Lou, at a radio station in Los Angeles and how he came in contact with African American people for the first time. Learning that his use of the N-word was offensive, he vowed never to use it again.

The book traces Woody's joining up with the Communist Party, his long friendships with actor Will Geer and Cisco Houston, and his later travels to New York where he met Pete Seeger, Leadbelly and many others, including the Almanac Singers. It covers his time

in the Merchant Marines, in the war against Hitler, when his guitar carried the slogan, "This machine kills fascists!"

For much of his life, Woody was haunted by the fear that he might be carrying the gene that caused his mother's insanity. That fear was horribly confirmed when he succumbed to the ravages of Huntington's Chorea, a horrible degenerative disease that gradually stripped Woody of his talents and abilities and led to his death at age 55 in 1967.

Party membership

Cray's book is a fine contribution to Woody's story. There is one area, however, in which his work comes up short. That is Cray's use of numerous quotes to show that Woody "wasn't really a member" of the Communist Party USA. Cray treats the CPUSA in a respectful manner, and acknowledges the role of communists in the building of the great people's movement during the '30s and '40s.

Therefore, I found it somewhat ridiculous and out of character that Cray felt he should publish quotes from others about Woody's "not really" being in the Party at the same time he is writing that Woody wrote hundreds of "Woody Sez" columns for the *Daily Worker* and that he stood with the CPUSA during every twist and turn of political events during that terrific period.

For me, the only quote that



Woody Guthrie

should matter is Woody's when he stated, "The best thing I ever did was join up with the Communist Party!" (p. 150)

Even with that one flaw, this book is one that will make a great many new friends for our brother and comrade Woody. These new friends will know a newer, much fuller and richer Woody, one with flaws, like you and I, who rose above them and took us up with him.

People's Weekly World ✪

Fifth anniversary of East Timor's independence vote

Statement from East Timor Action Network

Five years ago, the people of East Timor, defying intense intimidation from the Indonesian security forces and their militia proxies, voted overwhelmingly for independence. We celebrated that historic vote.

Outraged, we mobilised as Indonesia capped over two decades of murder and mayhem by systematically destroying the country. Today, the physical scars of that destruction remain visible and the cries of the East Timorese people for justice go largely unanswered. More than two years after independence, East Timor's freedom struggle remains far from complete.

The UN must heed the call of East Timor's people for the international community to take the lead on issues of accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity by setting up an international tribunal.

Five years later, the East Timorese people still crave justice and full control over their natural resources, and the Indonesian military continues to commit gross human rights violations with impunity.

Last week, the UN Secretary General told the Security Council that "those responsible for the serious crimes committed in 1999 must be held to account, and it is essential that justice is seen to be done in these cases". The recent

acquittals on appeal of Indonesian security officials reminded the international community yet again that Indonesia's ad hoc court on East Timor is a sham. Will international pledges of justice also be hollow?

The violence in 1999 was a systematic assault not only on East Timor, but on a UN mission. The UN must heed the call of East Timor's people for the international community to take the lead on issues of accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity by setting up an international tribunal. This tribunal must have the resources and clout to credibly prosecute the top Indonesian officials responsible for organising the most brutal and heinous of crimes against the people of East Timor, beginning with Indonesia's invasion on December 7, 1975.

We urge the Australian Government to respect the sovereignty and resource rights of East Timor by promptly and fairly negotiating a permanent maritime boundary between the two countries. Resource-sharing agreements, while providing the new nation with much needed funds, are not a substitute for recognition of East Timor's rights under international law.

Australia should return the more than US\$1 billion they have stolen so far from oil fields that are twice as close to their impoverished neighbour. East Timor should not be forced to concede what is rightfully theirs to Australia.

We call attention to the US Government's role during the 1999 referendum period and throughout the illegal Indonesian military occupation of East Timor. A full accounting of US knowledge and actions during this time is essential if future crimes are to be prevented.

In 1999, mixed signals from the Clinton administration encouraged Indonesia's campaign of terror. When the US unambiguously cut off the Indonesian military in early September, Indonesia quickly agreed to honour the vote and to withdraw.

In Aceh, West Papua and else-



where, the Indonesian military continues to use the same brutal tactics it refined in East Timor, often directed by the same commanders. The Bush administration's current efforts to step up training and other assistance to Indonesia's security forces have only encouraged more violations and legitimised continued impunity throughout the archipelago.

We call on the Bush administration to halt its drive to engage the Indonesian military. We call on the US Congress to ban all assistance to this savage force.

For information on ETAN and East Timor, visit www.etan.org ✪

Iranian party demands end to repression

Amidst recent reports of escalating repression by Iran's intelligence services against the country's progressive forces, including the use of physical assault, kidnapping, and torture against those defending democratic rights and freedom of expression, the Tudeh (People's) Party of Iran has called for the regime of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to come clean about the mass execution of political prisoners during what it calls "the National Catastrophe of 1988".

In August and September of that fateful year, following the end of the theocratic government's adventurous and reactionary war against Iraq, the regime unleashed death squads against imprisoned "staunch defenders of the people's rights", the Party said in a statement marking the 16th anniversary of the massacres.

Thousands of prisoners were killed, including hundreds of leaders and members of the Tudeh Party and other progressive groups, after they were tried a second time

by kangaroo courts widely condemned as bogus by international human rights groups.

The goal of this brutal massacre, the Party said, was to purge the country of some of its most talented and distinguished fighters for justice – party leaders, public figures, intellectuals, workers and students – and to create an atmosphere of terror "to prevent a social explosion against the regime's devastating policies by the masses who had come to the end of their tether".

The Tudeh Party denounced the official "16-year silence" about this savage crime, and said, "only by bringing the planners and perpetrators of this horrific crime to justice ... can we prevent such crimes from being committed again in the future".

It added, "The experience of the last 16 years has shown us that the judiciary of the Islamic Republic, along with the intelligence services under the direct supervision of the supreme leader, are the greatest threat to the human rights of the citizens of our country".

In connection with the 1988 massacre, the statement demanded that the ruling regime officially disclose the names of the murdered victims, that it release the execution dates and burial sites to grieving family members, that it state the reasons for the re-trials and the names of the officials who presided over them, and that it state the charges for which the prisoners were executed.

Looking at today's situation, the Party called for "a broad front made up of all anti-dictatorship combatants and the intensification of the struggle throughout the country ... [to] achieve the dissolution and radical transformation of these bodies along with other fundamental changes necessary for the establishment of freedom and justice in our country".

The Party is appealing to progressive forces around the world to bring pressure upon the United Nations to investigate the huge crime committed by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Full text of statement available at www.tudehpartyiran.org ✪

Israel's Nazi-style attack

Earlier this month the Israeli occupation forces destroyed a mosque and two housing blocks, leaving hundreds of Palestinian homeless and wounding others during an intense Nazi-style operation in Khan Yunes, in the south of the Gaza Strip.

The troops, supported by tanks and military vehicles, entered the Khan Yunes refugee camp and the Al-Namwasi neighbourhood, where they immediately fired missiles on civilian buildings and a mosque.

One of the housing blocks caught fire and the mosque was destroyed, while the aggressors moved on to two recently constructed five-story buildings, part of an Australian project, and evacuated the 30-plus families living there.

The residents were taken to the patio of a school and in a matter of seconds their houses were destroyed, while troops opened fire on the local Nasser hospital, which

suffered severe damage, including the destruction of a lab.

"The children were crying and screaming. The army didn't give us any opportunity to grab anything, they just told us to get out", testified Ali Khalaf-Allah, a tenant in one of the buildings.

Explosives experts then placed charges in the two buildings and demolished them.

The Murbarak hospital likewise suffered severe damage due to the large-scale attack in which ambulances were not allowed to attend to the wounded, as soldiers blocked their access.

Israeli troops also entered the Dir el Balah (Palm Convent) in the central part of the Gaza Strip where they eradicated a huge expanse of cultivated areas, destroyed many homes – as they had done a few hours earlier in Rafah – and converted a large number of buildings into military observation posts.

Granma ✪

Cuba has highest teacher ratio

President Fidel Castro has highlighted the virtues of the education system in Cuba, the nation with the highest ratio of teachers per capita in the world: one for every 36.8 inhabitants.

Invited onto television program *Roundtable* last week, the Cuban President highlighted the advantages of the Cuban educational system, which is completely free, and the use of audiovisual and computer programs at the various levels of teaching.

"Knowledge does not take up any space", he commented, an allusion to the educational possibilities that the Revolution guarantees to Cuban children and youth in comparison with other nations.

He pointed out that capitalism cannot do what Cuba is doing

because as a system it is not designed to bring education to the majority. "What sentiments can a savage, egotistic society poisoned by all means possible have?", he asked.

Fidel described the 2004-05 school year, inaugurated last week in the capital Havana and attended by more than 2.8 million Cubans of all ages, as a new stage.

The start of the new school year just three weeks after Hurricane Charley hit the west of the island was likewise qualified as a feat by the Cuban President.

The cyclone seriously affected the Havana provinces and Pinar del Río on August 13, leaving four dead and losses of more than one billion dollars.

Granma ✪

US: Over 500,000 call for regime change

On the eve of the Republican National Convention, before the first lie could come out of the speakers' mouths, over half a million people took to the streets of New York on August 29 to condemn the policies of the Bush administration. The varied contingents seemed to merge into one massive people's contingent with the same message — defeat Bush.

The march was initiated by the United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) coalition. Leslie Cagan, UFPJ national coordinator, said the protesters were gathered to counter the Republican message of "war, greed and hatred".

While Republicans tried to heckle the river of humanity that flowed past Madison Square Garden by shouting "Four more years" the huge crowd answered back, "Four more months!"

The militant spirit and unity of the marchers to reject the Bush agenda was also apparent when marchers booed while passing a giant television screen broadcasting Fox News and then cheered as the screen showed a news report with Senator John Kerry, the Democratic

— took place across the city August 28 - September 1.

At press time, 100,000 union workers and their supporters were rallying at a protest organised by the NYC Central Labor Council for good jobs and health care.

Motivated by many concerns, the protestors' anger was directed mainly at Bush's war on Iraq, pro-rich and pro-corporate policies, and attacks on democracy.

Looking to use the September 11 terrorist attacks for political gain, GOP convention speakers heaped praise on NYC's emergency workers. Yet, Mike Potter, a retired firefighter from Newburgh, NY, told the *People's Weekly World* that, while Bush and the GOP praised firefighters and police for their heroism on September 11, the administration's policies and budget cuts hurt first responders. Firefighters and police are picketing at the convention because Republican Mayor Michael Bloomberg refuses to sign decent union contracts.

At a press conference, New York City Council member Margarita López blasted the Bush administration for lying to the American



Protestors' anger was directed at Bush's war on Iraq

policies saying they are causing more grief and terror. She said of the 1000 US soldiers and 20,000 Iraqi civilians who have died, their "families are grieving, just like mine is still grieving". Rockefeller's sister died in the attack on the World Trade Center.

Kelly Dougherty, a founding member of the new organisation, Iraq Veterans Against the War, demanded the return of all troops from Iraq and criticised the administration's cuts in veterans benefits. She said that the soldiers "are abandoned once they get home" and called US foreign policy "imperialistic and war-mongering". Dougherty served in Iraq in a National Guard military police unit.

Demonstrators poured into New York from throughout the country, including from Bush's own state of Texas. Among them was Marian Avalos of Dallas, one of a group of 50 who came with North Texas for Justice and Peace. The group formed right after September 11 to "promote peaceful solutions through justice, not war" and to fight against racist attacks and protect civil liberties, she said.

While for the most part the demonstrators were peaceful and disciplined, the police had arrested 1500 persons at press time. Some of

those arrested were engaged in provocative activities, but others were arrested for peaceful protests.

The New York Civil Liberties Union director Donna Lieberman said in a statement that her group's observers "reported heavy handed actions" by the police.

Arnold Karr, from Columbia *People's Weekly World* ✪

The militant spirit and unity of the marchers to reject the Bush agenda was also apparent when marchers booed while passing a giant television screen broadcasting Fox News

Party presidential candidate.

The huge march was not the only protest aimed at countering the right-wing propaganda emanating from the GOP convention. Numerous marches, rallies, acts of civil disobedience, conferences and cultural activities on issues of unemployment, health care, peace, education, civil, labour and women's rights — to name a few

people about Iraq. It's "the same way they lied to us", when they told New Yorkers not to worry about toxic contaminants in the air in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks. López' district lies within blocks of where the Twin Towers stood.

Terry Rockefeller, of September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, assailed Bush's war

Panama releases anti-Cuban terrorists

On August 26, Mireya Moscoso, not quite done with her term as President of Panama, pardoned four jailed terrorists. To the cheers and warm embraces of hundreds of like-minded Floridians, three well-known criminals returned home to US soil, the very home, of course, of war against terrorism. Apparently the other released prisoner, Luis Posada Carriles, not a US citizen, was dropped off in Honduras.

The quartet was arrested in Panama City in late 2000 and charged with preparing to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro while he was attending an Ibero-American Summit. Panamanian police found 33 pounds of explosives in their possession and lots of guns.

Convicted in April 2004 for "endangering public safety and falsifying documents" in a plot that could have killed Castro and hundreds of students at the University of Panama in a big explosion, they were each sentenced to seven to eight years in jail.

Under Panamanian law, par-

dons may not be granted until any remaining judicial proceedings have been completed. An appeals process had still been in the works when the prisoners were set free. There is speculation that Colin Powell's recent visit to Panama may have had something to do with the pardons.

Cuba broke off diplomatic relations with Panama August 26 and Venezuela has withdrawn its ambassador. President-elect Martin Torrijos has announced that he will try to repair relations with Cuba. Panamanian students and labour activists have been protesting the release.

The freed prisoners have a long history of terrorist activity. Posada Carriles was CIA-trained, involved with the bombing of a Cuban jetliner in 1976 that killed 73 people, and associated with Oliver North in supplying the Nicaraguan Contras. He told the *New York Times* that he was responsible for a 1997 series of bombings in Havana.

Gaspar Jiménez served six

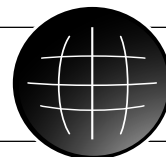
years in a Mexican prison for the attempted kidnapping of a Cuban diplomat and the death of his bodyguard. He escaped to safety in Florida. He was also charged in a 1976 bombing attack on Miami radio announcer Emilio Milián, who lost his legs.

Pedro Remón went to jail in 1986 for trying to kill a Cuban UN diplomat and for helping out with the murder of Félix García Rodríguez, another Cuban UN official.

Guillermo Novo was tried for his part in the 1976 murder in Washington of the former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier. He won an appeal of his murder conviction, but, convicted of perjury, he spent four years in jail.

Julia E Sweig, a Cuba expert with the Council on Foreign Relations, comments, "These are bad guys. ... It is the most preposterous violation of what this administration stands for."

People's Weekly World
Newspaper of the CPUSA ✪



Global briefs

EQUATORIAL GUINEA: The plot to overthrow the government of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema has a US connection. South African authorities have arrested Mark Thatcher, son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in connection with the plot. Plot leader Nick du Toit, an alleged South African mercenary now on trial in Libreville, the country's capital, told the court he was introduced to Thatcher in July 2003 by Simon Mann, another alleged coup plotter. The plot to replace Nguema with an exiled opposition leader was exposed in March. Shortly before du Toit spoke, Thatcher, a businessman, was arrested in Capetown by South African police and charged with involvement in the plot. Equatorial Guinea, a small nation on the Gulf of Guinea, has significant oil reserves. The US administration is paying increasing attention to this region, with high-ranking Bush administration officials having paid recent visits.

INDIA: A massive rally of the youth of the country in Delhi is being organised for 3 November by the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI). The action is based on four main demands: the right to work; the filling of all job vacancies; for a national youth policy; and a national sports policy. Secretary of the DYFI, Tapas Sinha, and its all-India president K N Balagopal Tapas Sinha said that government policies over the past ten years had given rise to a massive unemployment problem. Demands include an end to privatisation and ensuring the right to work and education for all.

SUDAN: Washington's threat of sanctions against Sudan over the Darfur crisis is part of a US plan aimed at destroying the government in Khartoum as it did in Iraq and Somalia, a senior Sudanese official said last week. "Sudan is not afraid of the threat of sanctions by the United States, which is using the crisis in Darfur to weaken and destroy the government of Sudan in a similar fashion in which they devastated Iraq and Somalia", said Angelo Beda, Deputy Speaker of Sudan's parliament, at a news conference in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. The US intervention in Somalia in 1993 ended in humiliation for the invader. The UN Security Council gave Sudan 30 days to disarm and prosecute Arab Janjaweed militia or face unspecified sanctions. The deadline expired on August 30.

NETHERLANDS: Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was described as "an intellectual" and "a moderate" by the first defence witness at his war crimes trial. Former Belgrade University law professor Smilja Avramov described Mr Milosevic as an "accommodator" who had tried to prevent the break-up of the former Yugoslavia by peaceful means. She also said the former Yugoslav leader, 63 — a former law student of hers — was an excellent student in his youth.

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
74 Buckingham Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

email: guardian@cpa.org.au



Governments of gore

John Howard yaps behind the US and British Dogs of War while his faithful warmongrel, Larry Anthony, obsesses with the vital events of our time – the Casino/Murwillumbah railway and the Ocean Shores sports field – in an attempt to blinker us from the effects of the criminal policies of the HoWARD regime.

The illegal invasion of Iraq has now cost over 1000 US military lives and many thousands of Iraqis have been killed. Vast areas of Iraq are irradiated with aeons-lasting depleted uranium (DU) which is thought to have boosted US 1991 Gulf War veterans from the initial 7035 wounded to the now 518,739 on medical disability.

US forces on Australian bombing ranges are no doubt busy irradiating our north with DU right now.

Perhaps the Minister for Youth and Children's Services will never know the full extent of the Iraqi civilian radiological casualties and perhaps will never visit the children's cancer wards.

He probably shares former US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright's view that the death of half a million Iraqi children from sanctions was "... a very hard choice, but we think the price is worth it".

As a direct result of our participation in the war on Iraq we have become a terrorist target of choice, fuel prices have escalated and the \$1 billion of our taxes spent so far could have provided \$100,000 degree scholarships, for example, to get 10,000 doctors into rural areas.

Conscription bills have been passed already in the US and, if the Howard gang wins power, we won't be far behind.

A concerted anti-war effort can send Larry into political limbo and this could just oust Howard "the lying rodent".

News of this could well affect the US and UK elections as Australia joins Spain in getting rid of the governments of gore.

Let us all think global but vote local in this crucial election which will decide if law will prevail over war.

Gareth Smith
Byron Bay, NSW

Terrorism, international security and democracy

With the 9th September, 2004, detonation of an explosive device outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, following on from the attack on the school in Beslan, the Madrid bombing in March 2004, the war on Iraq in March 2003, the bombing of the Sari Club in Bali in October 2002 and the attack on the Twin Towers of 11th September 2001, one should be forgiven for asking whether the war on terror is making the world a more secure place and whether democracy is growing or diminishing as a consequence.

Asserting, as do political leaders and candidates for political office

that these are the works of barbarians and that they will not give in to acts of terrorism belies two quintessential consequences of the upheaval that this is causing – the world is becoming a more insecure and less democratic place with power being concentrated into fewer and fewer hands (usually corporate and fascist).

In those parts of the world where they feel the power to make decisions over how they wish to live their lives is slipping from their grasp, they react in any way they can.

So long as the West continues its war on/of terror together with the social, cultural and economic marginalisation of those groups of people who do not agree with their worldview, the only questions people in the West need ask themselves is, where and when is the next catastrophe going to be.

Richard Titelius
Ballajura WA

Cyprus: UN should stay

I am deeply concerned having read recently that the UN is sending a team of experts to review the operations of the UNFICYP, its peacekeeping force in Cyprus. The UN says the aim of the review is to assess its size and its composition. The announcement of a review has provoked speculation that drastic reductions or even a withdrawal could take place. This force has been one of the most successful and productive of the UN's peacekeeping operations and at this delicate time of the peace process in Cyprus is still needed.

Fifteen Australian civilian

police form part of the composition of this force. While maintaining a peacekeeping force is expensive, the Cyprus Government largely contributes to the costs of the operations.

It would be both wise and most supportive of the reunification efforts if the UN did stay on in Cyprus for some time yet, especially at this crucial and sensitive period.

The UN force should be maintained until the situation in Cyprus shows a marked improvement, for example a goodwill gesture on the part of Turkey, like withdrawal of most of the Turkish occupation army.

The Cyprus Government is against any changes to UN mandate or any reduction in the 1200-strong force, which has been on the island for 40 years mainly patrolling the 180km long Green Line buffer zone. Other than maintaining the ceasefire line, the UNFICYP also carries out other important activities, including facilitating bi-communal events, assisting the Committee for Missing Persons and other humanitarian activities.

The Cypriot Foreign Minister George Iacovou said, "The facts on the ground have not changed because there are still 36,000 Turkish soldiers with heavy armaments and mines in the north, as well as the enclaved persons". He further added that these were the reasons the UN was on the island in the first place.

While the Cypriot Government and people are working hard to promote the reconciliation process and seeking ways to resolve the Cyprus conflict, unnecessary pressure and instability does not assist the situation. As the Cyprus government spokesman Kypros Chrysostomides stated, "The abnormal situation continues. The presence of the

occupation army continues. So the presence of the peace keeping force as defined by the Security Council seems to remain necessary."

The Cypriot people can and will resolve their differences. Let's hope that genuine peace and a comprehensive solution comes soon to Cyprus. Then the UN can leave the island. Until then Turkey and its occupation is still the key problem.

The UN and the international community should be putting pressure on Turkey to withdraw its army and take actions to create the right conditions for a settlement. Until then the UN role is desired and should be encouraged to stay a little while longer.

Steven Katsineris,
Hurstbridge, Vic

Gullibility

Some people claim that FAHRENHEIT 9/11 fans are a coalition of the gullible.

I wonder how would they describe the fans of the Coalition of the Willing (to do the killing) in Iraq?

These are the people who were also willing to believe that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (read weapons of mass deception!) after UN inspectors said they were not there.

This is the reason why a small group of nations supported the unelected President of the US to be involved in a totally unnecessary war.

How many innocent Iraqis have to die before some people see what is happening? Do any of these people remember what happened in Vietnam?

Andrew (Andy) Alcock
Forestville, SA

Culture & Life

by
Rob Gowland

"Victims of communism"

I feel sorry for them, as I am sure you do, too. I mean, there they are, swarming all over the former Soviet Union, expending great efforts to teach the people there the ways of capitalism and it seems the people are not grateful.

I am talking about the US and EU-trained "aid workers" who are trying to "help" the people of the various former Soviet Republics to set up small businesses and establish cottage industries as a remedy for the economic disaster that came with the overthrow of socialism.

The European parts of the former USSR are overrun with (mainly US) evangelical Christians. For their part, the former Soviet Central Asian republics are inundated with Islamic proselytisers.

Islamic or Christian, however, they are equally determined to help the victims of "Godless Communism". Pumped up with propaganda about capitalism being the necessary concomitant of freedom and democracy, they must be peeved indeed to discover that the people in the former USSR do not fit their stereotyped ideas of what "victims of Communism" should be like.

The *Far Eastern Economic Review* recently ran a very revealing article on this subject, as it applies in Khorog, a mountain town of

25,000 people in Tajikistan near the Afghan border.

The writer of the article, one John Bonaccolta, tries his best to give a positive spin to the present situation there, but he cannot disguise the fact that what he's describing is pretty dire.

However, he is clearly so committed to the idea that any form of capitalism, no matter how bad, must be preferable to socialism, that he seems oblivious to the fact that his article is full of inadvertent admissions of how much better things were under the Soviet system.

He tells us that, "thanks to the centralised Soviet education system", over 99 percent of the population is literate. Of course, he prefaces this with the daft comment "no doubt the Soviets were more concerned with creating a subservient local population than with fueling local culture".

Yeah, that's how you keep people subservient: teach 'em to read and write so they can have access to information and ideas!

Without noticing the contradiction, Bonaccolta then tells us that "the legacy of Soviet education is striking – in this part of Badakhshan in the Pamir mountains, almost everyone, it seems, is an artist, a writer or a musician".

It would be difficult, in any case, for them to be much else. Bonaccolta notes that after the overthrow of socialism in the USSR, financial support for the sciences in Tajikistan fell to one twenty-fifth of what it had been.

He also quotes a European Commission aid worker: "I don't know of any colonial power that brought such cultural opportunity to the far corners of its empire, to the smallest villages." Perhaps that is because the Soviet Union was not in fact a "colonial empire".

Bonaccolta quotes a local artist, Yorali: "Life was very good here during Soviet times. Now the only people who live above subsistence [level] work for aid organisations or traffic drugs, and that's only about ten percent of the population".

Religious people in this region tend to be Shia Ismaili Muslims, whose spiritual leader is the Aga Khan. Most aid workers in the region seem to work for the Aga Khan Development Network which is trying to win back for Islam the ground it lost in Soviet times by "coming to the rescue" now.

As a local university student tells Bonaccolta: "Without the Aga Khan we would all be dead. There would be nothing to eat". But our journalist has to admit that the Aga Khan's pockets are not very deep when compared with "the old Soviet machine".

Nothing daunted, the helpful Aga has set up the Mountain Societies Development Support Program (MSDSP) to, typically, show the locals how to earn a living in the new circumstances.

One of the MSDSP's workers, with the suspiciously non-Islamic name of Sarah Robinson, complains that "teaching such cultured, highly educated people that they need to work to live is a challenge".

This remark, incidentally, gives a very interesting spin on what life must have been like in Soviet times: apparently, under socialism, you did not have to work in order to live.

In dealing with the Soviet era, Bonaccolta typically refers to Tajikistan as "this distant corner of Moscow's empire". He cannot hide his dismay, however, at the way the inhabitants of this "distant corner" are today appalled by the type of jobs the MSDSP is trying to persuade them are the way of the future.

HE CAPSIZED WHILE WALKING ON THE WATER.



People trained as doctors, engineers and artists are understandably not impressed by suggestions that in the capitalist future they can drive a cab or try to scratch a living by tilling Tajikistan's wretched soil (only five percent of the country's land is actually arable!).

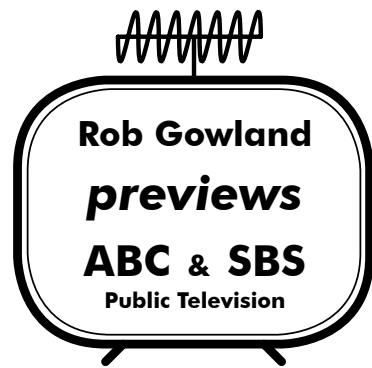
Sarah Robinson bemoans the locals' unwillingness to embrace opening a business: "They view commerce as dirty". This too is probably a Soviet hangover!

Bonaccolta concludes his study of people in one part of the former

Soviet Union "struggling to cope with life in the real world" by quoting one of those whose present work is demeaning to him. He is Hazim, an architect "reduced to driving jeeps for the few visitors to the area".

Referring to Soviet times, Hazim says: "At least then we could study in Moscow or St Petersburg [Leningrad]. We could wake up in the morning and just go – none of these borders and checkpoints.

"And we always had enough to eat." ☺



Sun September 19 ~
~ Sat September 25

Television is ideally suited to doing stories about elaborate confidence tricks. (Think *Mission Impossible*). A fast pace, a flurry of action and plenty of visual distraction allows television programs to gloss over the plot illogicalities that are the hallmark of this type of show.

The elaborate cons depend on a succession of coincidences, inside information or specialised knowledge the con-artists could not possibly have, and on no one ever asking the questions demanded by commonsense.

But why carp? These programs are never meant to be taken seriously. They are like jokes: for a joke to work, the characters in it have to do and say just the right things. So it is with programs about confidence tricksters.

There are also conventions about this type of program: the victim must get what he or she deserves. No one wants to see a program about little old ladies being done out of their life savings or their engagement ring.

That, however, is what most real life cons are about. In the TV con, the victim is usually greedy or a crook; our sympathy is safely with the con artist.

So it is in the new series *Hustle* (ABC 8.30pm Sundays). The series is about a gang that specialises in "the long con" (elaborate confidence tricks played for big stakes). In fact, a con could hardly get more elaborate than the one in the first episode.

The con artists are played by Adrian Lester, Marc Warren, Robert Vaughn, Robert Glenister and Jaime Murray.

The program contains all the usual plot holes, but the main irritant is not logical but stylistic: for

some misjudged reason in a program relying on the suspension of disbelief, the director has the main protagonists – while setting up the con – look directly at the camera and either wink or otherwise "mug".

Of greater curiosity, and more successful, is the freezing of screen time at the moment when the victim (the "mark") is taking the bait and committing to the bogus "deal", while the con artists discuss the options available to the victim (in the first episode while coffee slowly pours out of the mark's suspended coffee pot like thick molasses).

Intellectually, this series is pure pulp fiction, but the suspense is well maintained and the whole thing is done with a certain panache.

According to the *Cutting Edge* program *From China With Love* (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday), the FBI must be one of the dopiest outfits around. The program, from the PBS *Frontline* crew, allegedly details the career of Katrina Leung, "a prized FBI asset for 20 years, supplying information on China which made its way to four American presidents".

Now Leung has been arrested and accused of actually being an agent for China and her FBI handler JJ Smith has been accused of helping her.

It gets worse: after they were exposed, the FBI supposedly allowed her to return to the field and allowed JJ to continue as her handler. Is that the way to run a counterespionage operation?

I no longer trust anything from *Frontline* anymore; they are too close to the White House and the State Department. If you wanted to stir up a "China Threat" to replace the "Soviet Threat", this is one of the organisations you would use.

The brilliant cod "amateur documentary" *People Like Us* starts a repeat season this week (ABC 10.00pm Tuesdays). Written and directed by John Morton, the series stars Chris Langham as hopeless TV reporter Roy Mallard.

Mallard causes understated mayhem in the life of the people he's filming (played by a splendid line-up of British acting talent), while the series guys the solemn BBC approach that Mallard strives for.

This week's episode looks at a small town newspaper. Mallard's wrap at the end is typical, as he observes how a collection of disparate fragments becomes, through



Adrian Lester plays "Micky Bricks" in *Hustle* (ABC 8.30pm Sundays)

some strange alchemy known only to journalists, a newspaper that is "greater than the sum of its total".

As a public broadcaster, the ABC should be above the disseminating of codswallop and unscientific nonsense. But it is not.

With the collapse in the funding of science (accompanied by an increase in the funding of technology instead), scientific journals and television programs (especially those from the US) have had to go after popularity to survive.

In the US, however, science is under extreme pressure to embrace the ruling class's view of the world, as a place that is full of "complex mysteries" far beyond our comprehension. It is subject to every kind of phenomenon, from flying visits by aliens to the continuing prevalence of witchcraft.

The enjoyable fantasy of TV programs like *Charmed* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or movies like *Harry Potter* is subtly promoted by the ruling class as a vision of reality. This in turn spills over into popular science programs which increasingly support notions of "ancient magic", unseen energy fields, pyramids with mysterious powers, and so on.

In short, the bourgeoisie is using its control of the mass media and market forces to slowly but deliberately impose a metaphysical view on people in lieu of a materialist one.

And so we have the nonsense that surrounds crop circles, exemplified in *Unsigned Circles* (ABC 9.30pm Wednesday).

My neighbour has a very large fairy circle of mushrooms on her lawn at the moment. However, I no more believe it is the work of fairies than I think aliens from outer space caused it.

There are lots of people who think that "crop circles", circular flattened areas in wheatfields etc, are the work of aliens or non-human intelligences with gifted design skills or even the great carp at the basic level of existence on whose back our level of existence rests (when the carp blows bubbles they rise up through the various levels until they cause a circular ripple on the surface, hence crop circles).

Not slow to seize an opportunity, capitalist entrepreneurs have established an industry providing tours would you believe to famous crop circle sites. These are proving very popular with Americans especially.

Curiously, they were not seriously affected by the revelations a couple of years ago that the majority of famous crop circles were the deliberate creations of a mischievous group of scientists!

In promoting *Unsigned Circles*, the ABC happily repeats absurd and patently fallacious claims that "the areas within the flattened crop circles have been found to emit an electro magnetic energy that interferes with camera batteries, flying equipment up to 500 metres above ground and even causes intense headaches for those in close proximity".

It quotes a British author who says "the energy is a positive force and crops affected have subsequently grown more efficiently and strongly after they straighten". And so and so on.

Not a trace of the scepticism that is the mark of a true scientist. Not a trace of scientific method. Even common sense is abandoned as the ABC unashamedly records "the growing realisation that the world we live in is infinitely more complex and mysterious than we could ever have imagined".

Sydney

Bougainville Exhibition Revolution – Evolution

until 25 September
Tripod Gallery
262 Abercrombie St, Redfern
Ph 02 9804 7632 0409 226 428

Oil paintings by Marilyn Havini
Photomedia by Taloi Havini

Subscribe to **The Guardian**

12 MONTHS: \$88 (\$80 conc.) 6 months: \$45 (\$40) 3 months: \$23 (\$20)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POSTCODE: _____

Pay by Cheque Money order
to: Guardian Subscriptions
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, Australia

or by credit card: Bankcard Mastercard Visa

Card #

Amount: _____ Expiry Date: ____/____/____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

The Guardian

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: **Anna Pha**

Published by
**Guardian Publications
Australia Ltd**
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by **Spotpress**
105-107 Victoria Rd
Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment
is taken by **T Pearson**,
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Sydney

Politics in the Pub

Every Friday night 6pm – 7.45pm
Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills
(across from the Chalmers St exit and Devonshire St tunnel at Central Station)
Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

September 17
EAST TIMOR OIL: WHAT ARE THE LONG TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT POLICY?
Sr Susan Connolly, Mary McKillop Institute of East Timorese Studies
Dr Tim Anderson, Political Economy Uni Syd Uni, Aid Watch activist

September 24
AUSTRALIA TODAY: PUBLIC APATHY VERSUS MORAL VOICES
Bruce Petty, Cartoonist, filmmaker
Richard Broinowski, Adjunct Professor Sydney Uni., former diplomat and General Manager Radio Australia, Author *Fact or Fission - The Truth About Australia's Nuclear Ambition*

**October 1
Long Weekend**

October 8
THE NEW EUROPE – RELEVANCE FOR AUSTRALIA
Winton Higgins, Visiting Research Fellow at
Institute for International Studies UTS
Geoff Dow, Reader in Government, Uni Queensland

Inq: Pat Toms 02 9358 4834 pbtoms@bigpond.com; Janet Fischer 02 9398 8891;
PO Box 325 Rozelle NSW 2039; Win Childs Fax 02 9660 6554
www.politicsinthepub.org

Education alternative for the people

Solemn pledges to do more for health and education are the major party's stock in trade. However, as the decades slip by and in spite of all the "new" programs and funding formulae, the quality of these basic community services continues to deteriorate.

Public services built up over generations in the area of health and education have suffered terribly under the destructive influence of the privatizing, "user-pays" policies of the various neo-liberal governments at state and federal level.

The forthcoming Federal Elections present us with an occasion to consider the current situation, what "fixes" the major parties are proposing and setting out a realistic people's alternative for comparison. In coming weeks, *The Guardian* will be analysing the offerings from the major parties as part of its election coverage. In this series of articles, we will be setting out the broad policy direction the CPA is advocating in the most important areas.

The guiding principle and aim of the Communist Party's education policy is the provision of free, universal and secular public education. The CPA supports the concept of lifelong learning and not only for the purposes of training for employment. Education, whether it is for work-related purposes or for leisure, has a positive social value in itself through the fuller development of the individual.

The principles of multi-culturalism must be defended in education and the atmosphere of division and racism fostered by current policies overturned. Greater emphasis must be placed on improving the educational opportunities of Indigenous Australians.

The public education system



University of Sydney students send a strong message to the Federal Government

must be strengthened and State aid to non-government schools phased out if we are to produce a highly literate and cultured society.

The Commonwealth now gives around 70 per cent of its funds to private schools and only 30 per cent to public schools. Even when state government funding is added, the fact remains that only 60 per cent of total funding goes to the public schools that educate 70 per cent of the country's children.

In recent years, the big winners in the provision of Federal funding have been elite "Category 1-3" private schools like Trinity Grammar, the King's school, Geelong Grammar and St Peter's Collegiate. The CPA calls for an immediate end to all government funding to Category 1-3 schools.

The Howard Government's funding policies have also encouraged the growth of fundamentalist religious schools. The CPA believes that all children should be able to study the full secular curriculum. It would bring all schools under equal employment and anti-discrimination legislation.

Public money should be used to improve resources, increase teacher numbers, ensure adequate salary increases, and ending contract employment and the exploitation of casuals.

The CPA supports TAFE as a fully funded public system

Today, while many eager and capable applicants are being turned away from our universities, greater numbers of full fee paying places are being made available for the

sons and daughters of the wealthy. Some of these students are paying upfront fees totaling over \$100,000 for their courses.

Less well-off students are saddled with debt as a result of their studies. Taken together, those receiving assistance under the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) already owe the Commonwealth over \$9 billion. Most students will have a debt of at least \$20,000 on graduation.

The CPA would abolish all fees including the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). The Party also calls for the restoration of funding to universities to a level that allows for suitable student-teacher ratios and does away with the need for private sponsorship.

And where will the money

come from for such far-reaching reforms? The Vinson Inquiry, funded by the NSW Teachers' Federation a couple of years ago found that, compared to other OECD countries, Australia is ranked 22nd out of 29 countries when it comes to public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP. At the same time, the Federal Government is committed to huge spending on the military and hand-outs to private corporations.

Putting an end to war-mongering and corporate welfare would more than compensate for the increased spending required urgently in the field of education and elsewhere. Finally, getting corporations and wealthy individuals to pay their share of tax would provide another massive pool of funds. ☺

Court hits union rights

Continued from Page 1

But that did not stop Electrolux, with the assistance of the Australian Industry Group (AIG), appealing to the High Court. In its September 2 decision, the High Court upheld the employer appeal by a six to one majority. It found that the action taken by Electrolux workers was not "protected" because of the inclusion of the bargaining agent's fees. The court found that:

- The AIRC could not certify (make legally enforceable) agreements containing clauses that go beyond the employment relationship (enterprise agreements must be certified by the AIRC to be legally enforceable)

- "Protected action" can only be taken in support of claims pertaining to the employment relationship

- Bargaining agent fees

do not pertain to the employment relationship.

In other words, the action taken by Electrolux workers in 2001 in support of a new enterprise agreement was not "protected action". This leaves the unions, officials and workers exposed to damages.

Justice Michael Kirby, the loan rational voice, rejected the claim saying that "it was not about the matters pertaining to the employment relationship. Anyone who thinks otherwise, in my respectful opinion, must have paid no attention to employment controversies in Australia over the past two decades."

The Court appears to have adopted an extremely narrow interpretation of what constitutes an employment relationship. It certainly does not reflect the reality of the workplace or employer-employee relations in practice. It is very much along the lines of

right-wing employer and Howard Government treatment of trade unions as "third parties" who have no rights to "intervene" in workplaces.

Certified enterprise agreements, like federal awards before them, were stripped back to "20 allowable matters" by former Workplace Relations Minister Peter Reith. The enterprise agreements that followed took up many of the provisions removed from awards.

Now we are faced with a possible scenario of enterprise agreement-stripping if employers decide to pursue this decision to its limits. A great deal will depend on whether the Howard Government is returned, and by the response of the trade union movement.

When former Reith stripped awards back to "20 allowable matters", he removed all but the most basic provisions relating to wages and working conditions. The only avenue left to unions to gain more

comprehensive, legally enforceable, rights and conditions such as those previously found in the centralised award system, was through (certified) enterprise agreements.

This decision, by no means the first by the Court restricting trade union rights, is based on a very narrow interpretation of the Workplace Relations Act – very much in line with Reith's ambitions.

Legal sources and employer organisations are raising questions about the validity of clauses such as those on the use of contractors, trade union training leave, right of entry, the requirement of employers to pay into certain external funds (such as union sponsored super schemes).

There are even suggestions that agreements with invalid clauses are themselves invalid.

There are many uncertainties. At this stage no one knows how employers will respond to this decision and how it would be interpreted by the courts and Commission.

Unions have found it extremely difficult to function under the Act. Now the trade union movement will need to do much more than find ways around particular laws.

Regardless of who wins the elections on October 9, it is time to mount a massive struggle to defeat the Act itself.

Any encroachment on the ability of trade unions to take industrial action undermines the strength of the union movement. The unity of action by trade unions is the source of workers' power, the principle means that workers have of standing up to bosses and defending their own interests.

The right to strike – and the choice or when and over what – is a basic trade union right. Governments and employers who attempt to place restrictions on, or outlaw the right to strike must be confronted by the full might of the trade union movement. ☺



Communist Party of Australia

Website: www.cpa.org.au
Email: cpa@cpa.org.au

Central Committee:
General Secretary: Peter Symon
President: Hannah Middleton
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
Sydney District Committee:
Rob Gowland
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833

Newcastle Branch:
303 Hunter St
Ph: ah 02 4926 1752
Wollongong Branch: Leanne Lindsay
PO Box 276 Corrimal 2518
North Illawarra Branch: Janice Hamilton
16/26-30 Hutton Ave
Bulli NSW 2516
Ph: 02 4283 6130

Riverina:
Geoff Lawler
PO Box 1016 Wagga 2650
Ph: 02 6921 4316 Fax: 02 6921 6873
Melbourne Branch:
Andrew Irving
PO Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall
Lygon St Carlton Sth 3053
Ph: 03 9639 1550 Fax: 03 9639 4199

Website: www.cpa.org.au/guardian/guardian.html
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

West Australian Branch: Vic Williams
5B Jemerson St Willagee Perth 6156
Phone: 08 9337 1074
Brisbane Branch: David Matters
PO Box 2148 Salisbury East 4107
Ph: 07 3398 9623
South Australian State Committee:
Marie Lean Rm 5, Lvl 1, 149 Flinders St,
Adelaide 5000 Ph: 08 8232 8200

The Guardian