

## ELECTION 2004

# AN ALTERNATIVE IS NEEDED

which will :

- 1 Defend and extend Medicare as a public health system with universal bulk billing
- 2 Support trade union and workers' rights
- 3 Take Australia out of the warmongering alliance with the USA
- 4 Fully fund public education
- 5 Provide for the environment and sustainability
- 6 Maintain Australia's sovereignty and independence
- 7 Develop friendly and peaceful relations with other nations
- 8 Recognise the rights of Indigenous Australians
- 9 Scrap the Free Trade Agreement with the US
- 10 Reverse the privatisation of publicly-owned assets and services



On October 9, the CPA recommends a vote for left and progressive candidates who put people before profits, who value the public sector and the welfare system. (See page 2)

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# The Guardian

No 1201

October 6, 2004

## Kyoto ratification but Howard Government defiant

The decision of the Russian Government to ratify the Kyoto protocols last week and, thereby, provide sufficient signatories to bring the treaty into force, will be warmly welcomed by all who are genuinely concerned about the environment and the future of humanity.

The Russian decision puts pressure on the US and Australian Governments which continue to stubbornly refuse to ratify the treaty.

Howard's Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, dismissed the Russian decision declaring that it would not alter the Howard Government's decision not to ratify.

The Australian Government's cry is always the possible loss of jobs in the coal and energy industries. There is no real concern for the loss of life already being caused by pollution and the calamitous cyclones, floods and droughts or for the millions more who will suffer as the consequences of climate change intensify.

Their policies are a result of extreme shortsightedness and criminal behaviour by politicians such as Howard, Bush and others, whose lust for profits for the few blinds them to all other considerations. They are also a consequence of the Howard Government's decision to tag along with the US on so many foreign policy issues.

If it were only the issue of global warming and its consequences, that would be serious enough but there are also the issues of the invasion and occupation of Iraq, adoption of the US policy of pre-emptive strikes, support for Star Wars, the war on terrorism with its clear anti-Muslim orientation, stubborn support for the pro-Zionist Israeli government and disregard for the interests and rights of the Palestinian people, its aggressive attitude towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its adoption of the notion of "failed states" and "rogue states" to mention a few examples.

This subservience to the interests of the US is determining the Howard Government's foreign policies. At the same time, there is a division of responsibility between Australia and the US in the South Pacific region that is creating the first signs of an anti-Australian sentiment in the region. This is to be seen in the long-running dispute over oil exploitation rights in the seas between Australia and East Timor.

There are allegations coming from Vanuatu over the activities of two Federal Police officers stationed in that country who are accused of spying. Why are they stationed there? Vanuatu is not a "failed state", the excuse used for intervention elsewhere. What would Australian authorities say if PNG, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, Indonesia and other countries of Asia and the Pacific decided to send their police officers to oversee what is going on in Australia or to instruct Australia's police how to do their work?

The present occupation of the Solomon Islands is a "big brother" act which has resulted in hundreds of Solomon Islanders being jailed at the command of Australian police stationed there. While some Solomon Islanders might welcome Australia's presence it is also likely that a strong resentment towards Australia will emerge in time.

No matter how much the Howard Government denies the charge of colonialism this is the right name to give to Australia's policies towards its smaller and weaker neighbours.

The huge boost to Australia's military hardware and troop numbers and Howard's open declaration that Australia would "unhesitatingly" intervene in the affairs of other countries is a warning to all countries in the region that the Government's talk of pre-emptive strike and the massive military build-up is aimed at them. There can be no other interpretation. The build-up has nothing to do with the defence of Australia as no country in the region can possibly pose any threat to Australia's territory.

The defeat of the Howard Government next Saturday would go some distance towards adoption by a new government of a less aggressive foreign policy while giving more emphasis to friendly, and we hope, equal relations with all our regional and Asian neighbours.

On the other hand, the re-election of Howard would be seen as an endorsement by the Australian people of Howard's pre-emptive strike policies. It will increase the Howard Government's arrogance towards our neighbours. It will make it very likely that new wars will be promoted which can only have very bad long-term consequences for Australia.

# Beat the dodgy preference deals A message from the NSW Greens

**The major parties are making dodgy preference deals. If the deals work then The Greens' John Kaye will not be voted into the Senate.**

This is a warning to the progressive community in NSW. The balance of power in the Senate could be won by right-wing religious fundamentalists or other conservatives because of unprincipled preference deals by the ALP and Democrats. Voting Greens in the Senate is the safest way to ensure that this does not happen.

Both the Democrats and the ALP have preferred Liberals for Forests ahead of The Greens in the Senate in NSW. The Greens can still get John elected, but only by maximising their primary vote.

The Democrats have preferred the Christian Democrats

Fred Nile and right-wing religious fundamentalists Family First ahead of The Greens.

The ALP have split their preferences with one third of the value of an ALP above-the-line vote going to Fred Nile ahead of The Greens.

The Greens made principled preference decisions that went to progressive small parties, the Democrats and then the ALP before the Coalition and the right-wing parties. A vote for The Greens is a safe progressive vote.

For John Kaye to be elected to the Senate, The Greens need 14.3 percent of the vote. As the preference flows to the Greens have been reduced, The Greens must now maximise their primary vote. I advise Labor and Democrat voters to vote below the line on the voting

paper. An above-the-line vote for either of these parties risks electing a right-wing religious fundamentalist senator and/or Glenn Druery from Liberals for Forests.

The safest vote is to vote for The Greens above the line. But if you don't want to do that, then vote below the line, but you have to fill in every square and make sure you put The Greens second. Be Careful! A few errors and your vote is invalid!

The Senate is likely to play a key role in stopping legislation that damages human rights, privatises Telstra or weakens environmental protection.

**For more detail on preference allocation visit:** [www.aec.gov.au/election2004/candidates/pdf/gvt/2004NSWGVt.pdf](http://www.aec.gov.au/election2004/candidates/pdf/gvt/2004NSWGVt.pdf) ☺

# End the lies Show Howard the door!

**More than 500 people rallied in Perth to hear speakers and march through Northbridge to protest against Australia having troops in Iraq.**

Ben Taylor, Aboriginal elder, in welcoming the people to Noongar, said his people were refugees in their own country, and that he had faced 50 years of racism. He called on the meeting to work to force Howard out.

Jo McDonald, state Assistant Secretary of the CFMEU, condemned the Howard Government's Royal Commission into the building industry. He pointed out that it cost \$65 million, enough to build two hospitals. Not one charge has been laid.

He condemned the jailing of Victorian unionist Craig Johnson, who had won excellent conditions for metal workers. Joe called for an end to the Howard Government.

The Greens WA Senate candidate, Rachel Siewert, said, "We have had enough of lies, enough of refugees behind bars, children behind barbed wire, and a third of Aborigines living in poverty." Under the Howard Government, she said, workers' rights were constantly undermined. She called for refugees to be welcomed with open arms.

About a thousand people gathered in Adelaide's Victoria Square last Sunday to protest the lying and spin-doctoring the Howard Government has used to cling to power since 1996. Kaurna Elder Veronica Brodie gave the crowd a welcome to the traditional land of her people. She took the opportunity to pass on some of the shameful facts from the not-so-distant past about the treatment of Aboriginal



Photo: Anna Pha

people and the involvement of successive Liberal governments.

At Parliament House Brian Deegan – independent candidate for Downer's seat of Mayo – kicked off the afternoon's long list of Howard Government's lies from the "never ever" GST to the "fair trial" promised to David Hicks to the "four star" accommodation forced upon refugees in detention. NOWAR activist Stephen Darley went into further detail of the WMD lies used as a pretext for the invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq. Brian Noone of the Greens contributed to the account as did speakers from no nuclear waste dump groups, refugee and student organisations.

In Sydney 3000-4000 people rallied at Town Hall Square and after listening to speeches marched to Belmore Park for a concert. Greens, Democrat and Labor candidates and other prominent figures addressed the rally. Midst their diversity, there was one common theme: "Howard out".

Speakers reminded everyone of the lies regarding refugees and "children overboard", the war and illegal occupation of Iraq, the "never ever" GST, the Free Trade Agreement, the environment and much more.

Other rallies were held over the weekend in other cities around the country and in some regional centres. ☺

### PRESS FUND

By the time you read this you'll either be primed up to cast your vote in the federal elections, or you'll already have done so. While the major parties splash millions of corporate dollars around trying to buy votes, *The Guardian* has, without a single corporate dollar, continued to bring working class news and analysis on the elections and other national and international news. You can show your appreciation by sending a contribution to the Press Fund. We offer our sincere thanks to the following, for their contributions this week: "For Donna" \$20.

Justin Arnold \$25, Larry G (Tasmania) \$100, R Girvan \$5.

This week's total: \$150. Progressive total: \$9330.

### Fire and New Building Appeal – Over the top!

In yet another welcome contribution to the Fire and New Building Appeal a collection by the Melbourne Branch of the Party has added \$620 in Memory of Jack McPhillips, bringing the total to \$11,304. We have said it before but say it again – this is a magnificent response to the Party's appeal and indicates that the Party can draw on a lot of support and goodwill.

The contributors from Melbourne are:

Friends of the KKE \$380; Andrew Irving \$100; Joe Statts \$20; Pauline Mitchell \$10; Romina Beitseen \$50; Savvas & Mary Lioupas \$40; Bill Akamatis \$20.  
Grand total: \$11,304

Don't forget the Open Day at the new premises 74 Buckingham Street, Surry Hills on Sunday afternoon from 12 to 5 pm on October 17. All welcome.

# Medicare Gold or a gold mine?

Anna Pha

**When Labor leader Mark Latham and shadow Minister Health Julia Gillard launched Medicare Gold last week, they told older Australians what they wanted to hear: "Australians aged 75 and over who need hospital treatment will no longer have to choose between extended waiting times in a public hospital and rising private health insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs in a private hospital."**

**"Medicare Gold builds on the strengths of Medicare", they said.**

"Our oldest citizens have served our country well, and it is our responsibility to ensure that they have the best quality of life possible by giving them access to hospital care without large out-of-pocket costs and without long waiting times."

This is exactly what Medicare and the public hospital system should be offering older Australians – but not just older Australians, **all Australians** – and it would if the public hospitals were not so desperately underfunded.

### Years of underfunding

The Howard Government has systematically set about destroying Medicare through such means as underfunding, and subsidising private health insurance to the tune of almost \$4 billion per annum through such means as the 30 percent private health insurance rebate.

Despite the billions of dollars in government subsidies and fear campaigns and other measures to drive people into the private system, the overwhelming majority of Australians prefer public hospitals.

They are better equipped to provide medical services than private hospitals – especially for the aged and in emergencies. Fear of waiting a year or more in pain for a procedure or even months for cancer surgery, has driven many older people into private health insurance that they cannot afford and would prefer not to have.

Now, according to Labor, "Australians aged 75 and over will no longer need to purchase private health insurance hospital cover."

A Federal Labor government

would directly fund their hospital care, bypassing the States. The payment would be "in accordance with agreed national fee schedules for different types of services, operations and treatments at both public and private hospitals." That is, patients will be given a choice – private or public and the government will pay.

So, if there is a waiting list at a public hospital then a private hospital becomes an attractive option or, more likely, a necessity, and the government will foot the bill. Sounds a great deal.

Not surprisingly the private health insurance companies are thrilled by the policy statement. The aged as a group are much higher users of hospitals, and as Latham points out, **"this will produce a large benefit for private health insurers"**.

"Australians aged 75 and over make up 5 per cent of the private health insurance pool, but receive 23 per cent of hospital benefits paid out by private health funds."

Latham suggests that the cost of private health insurance will fall by at least 12 percent as a result. This is on top of the 30 percent private health insurance rebate which "will remain in full". So the private health insurance companies have a guarantee that they will also continue to receive their buckets of gold!

### Welcome

At the same time as bailing out those over 75 years for the insurance companies, the Latham plan also provides a stream of gold for the private hospitals.

"Although only 6 per cent of the population, they [over 75s] account for 18 per cent of all admissions and 32 per cent of all patient days in hospital."

Private hospitals, many with empty beds, welcomed Medicare Gold, after a few negotiations and guarantees about what they will be paid. To participate, private hospitals must opt to be in the system. The government's schedules will offer a basic level of care – much along the lines of a managed health care system.

"... people will be free to choose extra amenities in public or private hospitals such as private rooms, or to be admitted to private hospitals

that do not participate in *Medicare Gold*, with fees that are higher than the agreed schedule."

"This may result in some out of pocket costs", says Labor's policy statement – but the 30 percent private health insurance rebate would apply.

In effect, the policy amounts to the government carrying the cost of private and public health insurance under a managed health care system. Patients using the private system will be able to take out "gap" insurance to cover out-of-pocket expenses in a private hospital.

There are no guarantees that most of the \$2.9 billion being invested will not go straight into the private hospital system. The waiting lists will still be there – but when a doctor gives a patient the choice of wait months in pain or go into a private hospital tomorrow – as so often is the case – then the previously unaffordable private option becomes more attractive and feasible.

### Aged to go private

Latham proudly declares that "Medicare Gold delivers on Labor's promise of making private health care more affordable and better value for money".

As the aged go private, it will "free up public hospital beds for other Australians" and thus ease the pressure on public hospitals.

This, says Latham, "is a major structural improvement to Labor's Medicare system". Is it?

Instead of using the available billions to properly fund Medicare for all Australians it is pouring more money into the private hospital system. That is not an improvement of Medicare.

Could the pressure on the public health system be eased by other means? Yes it could! If a fraction of the billions of dollars used annually to pump prime and keep the private system afloat were redirected to the public hospital system then Medicare could be restored to its full glory as a public national health insurance scheme with universal coverage and access **and no fees for hospital care, not only for the over 75s, but for all.**

### What is Medicare?

The essential features of a fully restored Medicare would be:



- A public health system based on fully financed public hospitals
- Universal access according to need
- Universal bulk billing with no fees for services
- Central funding by government through a progressive tax system according to ability to pay.

This is what Australians want, not more money thrown at the private system. And certainly not more cuts or underfunding of the public

hospital system which could follow.

If the Howard Government is returned on October 9, there is no doubt that it will set about the further destruction of Medicare.

If Labor is successful, the private health system will also receive a considerable boost at the expense of Medicare.

The struggle to preserve Medicare will continue irrespective of who wins Saturday's election. ☸

### Pete's Corner

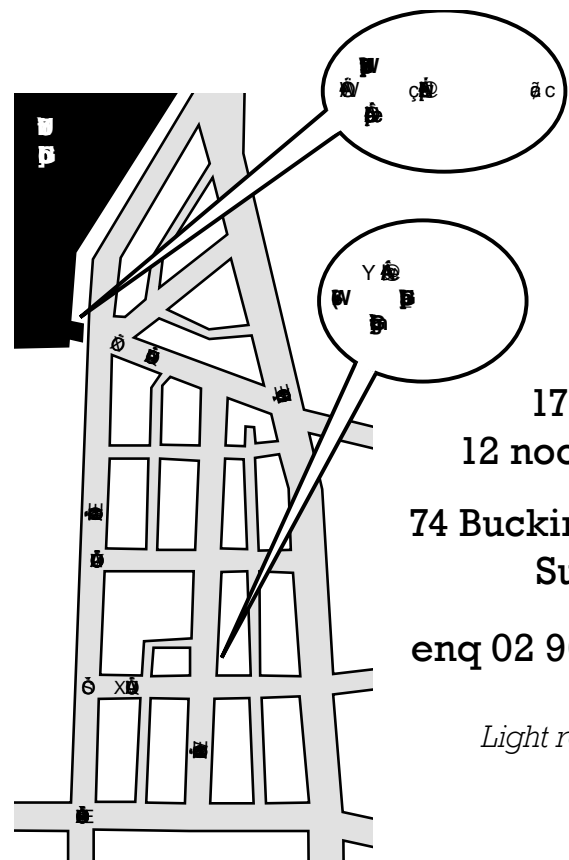


## Open Day

Sydney

**Communist Party of Australia**

invites Party members, friends and supporters to **visit our new building**



Sunday  
17 October  
12 noon – 5 pm

74 Buckingham St  
Surry Hills

enq 02 9699 8844

Light refreshments provided

# Liberal IR promise: an even bigger whip hand for the bosses

Bob Briton

The Libs would have won a lot of bosses' hearts last week. First there was the announcement that a re-elected Coalition would see to it that workers forced into being contractors for jobs would be excluded from the provisions of the *Workplace Relations Act* (WRA) and protection under state industrial relations (IR) systems (see front page of *The Guardian* of last week). Then came another election policy with the cynical title *Flexibility and Productivity in the Workplace: the Key to Jobs*.

Among the goodies on offer to the bosses from Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews are:

- \$12 million-worth of help to small business on how to stitch their workers up in non-union Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs – individual work contracts)
- The option for employers to extend the term of AWAs from three years to five years
- "Harmonising" of federal and state industrial relations law to ensure lower federal standards apply
- Denial of union right of entry to workplaces
- Tightening of the *Trade Practices Act* noose on "secondary boycotts" or sympathy strikes
- A renewed pledge to exempt small business from unfair dismissal laws and lifting their obligation to make redundancy payments (the Libs happily point out that small business now employs almost half of Australia's private sector workers)

Employer outfits like the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry have criticised Howard for not announcing a single, national industrial relations scheme and for not further reducing the number of "allowable matters" in awards from 20 to just six (!).

However, on this occasion Howard is advising his backers to have a bit of patience. "You defend the industrial relations gains you have made and you push the boundaries out as far as possible", he told the media last week. There can be no doubt that a Coalition government would press ahead to give the bosses all the items on their wish list as soon as possible.

Andrews is saying that the Commonwealth does not even have the constitutional powers to collapse the states' industrial relations systems into a single federal one. This is not strictly true. The Howard Government has already looked at the Commonwealth's corporations power to try to undermine the states' IR systems in its previous attempts to exempt small business from unfair dismissal laws.

Howard knows that if he were to leave the IR matters of only small, unincorporated businesses to the states to deal with, they would probably wind up their bureaucracies and hand the responsibilities over to the federal body. If re-elected, this could well be the device a Coalition government uses to take what the bosses, the right-wing think tanks and (until very recently) Howard himself have described as the next major hurdle towards industrial relations "reform".

## "Simplifying" the system

In the meantime, the Libs have set themselves the task of "harmonising" and "simplifying" the IR system. "Simplifying" was also the term used to describe the stripping of awards back to "20 allowable matters".

A number of recent defeats on the question of unions' right of entry to workplaces has no doubt spurred them into action. In September the AIRC upheld the right of organisers from the Finance Sector Union to enter the ANZ bank to interview labour hire workers about underpaid wages.

In July the Federal Court found that building firm BRG did not have the right to exclude representatives of the CFMEU from its Pilbara site even though all of its workers were hired under AWAs. Justice Robert French rejected the argument of the Federal Government that federal legislation on right of entry overrode state law. The continued capacity of unions to organise workers clearly outrages the Libs.

The potential for unions to upset the AWA appletart must sting, too. Howard is putting a lot of effort into promoting the "benefits" of the non-union workplace. Much of the Libs election campaigning is centred on how real wages have risen and the number of industrial disputes has slumped. However, workers know the real story behind these boasts. The low level of industrial disputes is the consequence of the Federal Government's anti-union legislation and the results of this restriction on workers' right to struggle are plain for all to see.

Last week ACTU President Sharan Burrow gave the PM a reality check with the following stats: 2.2 million Australians work casually, one in two new full-time jobs created since 1996 being casual; around half of all employees (4.1 million workers) earn less than \$650 a week; 64.8 per cent of jobs created between 2000 and 2003 pay less than \$600 a week; part time jobs grew by 32.5 per cent in the same period (more than 600,000 part timers want more work); and unpaid overtime has increased 24 per cent since 1996 (almost a million Australians now work unpaid overtime).

Roe, National President of the AMWU.

"KSB Ajax Pumps decided to threaten the employment of our members for their decision to go to the rally. It issued written warnings to the workers and threatened to sack them if it happened again.

"It is the only manufacturing company in Victoria to do so."

Workers at KSB Ajax struck for 24 hours in protest over the company's refusal to lift the threat to sack them.

"Many members who have worked for the company for decades with an unblemished record are deeply offended that the company have targeted them in this way", said Roe. "We believe that this company has no right to threaten workers with termination for exercising their human right to protest over corporate misbehaviour on asbestos."

The Victorian Trades Hall Council executive unanimously decided to back the workers at KSB Ajax if called upon by the AMWU.

The AMWU has written to the Chairman of the company in Germany, as well as to German trade unionists as part of their campaign.

*Workers Online* ☼

## Sack threat for asbestos victims

Workers at a German multinational in Victoria became the latest victims of the ongoing James Hardie debacle after being threatened with the sack for protesting against the asbestos giant.

The news comes as legal pressure mounts on James Hardie bosses after US based CEO Peter Macdonald stood down last week.

German multinational KSB is taking disciplinary action against 45 Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) members working at Tottenham in Victoria, because they participated in a protest rally against James Hardie.

KSB Ajax Pumps had demanded that they machine asbestos without protection in the past, according to employees. Workers asked for asbestos protective equipment at the time but were denied it by the company.

AMWU members employed by KSB Ajax pumps stopped work and joined thousands of workers at a rally to protest against James Hardie's attempt to limit compensation rights of those exposed to asbestos.

"The workers and the union gave the company plenty of notice that they would be attending the protest demonstration", said Julius



"All they think about is money..."

While it is true that industrial action to protect workers' interests has fallen to the lowest levels on record (in part due to unions avoiding penal provisions of the WRA), despite the fact that the bosses have gone all out to take advantage of the current IR climate to lay the boot in.

A study by Dr Chris Briggs from Sydney University has found that between 1999 and 2003, 57.5 percent of the industrial action lasting longer than 20 days was initiated by the bosses. Of these employer lockouts, 25 percent were aimed at getting workers to agree to pay cuts and another 15 percent were to get workers to sign individual contracts. Most of the lockouts were in manufacturing.

Kristen van Barneveld of the University of Newcastle has tipped a bucket of cold water on claims that workers' wages are going through the roof under Howard. Kristen found that AWAs were less likely to contain provisions for wage rises during the life of the agreement and, where rises were possible, were more likely to be productivity-based than in enterprise agreements. Wage levels are more likely to fall below


the award over the life of an AWA – hence the bosses' excitement about extending their term from three to five years.

## AWAs one-sided

On the question of "individual" treatment under an AWA, the researcher concluded "most of the benefits which had been achieved through the introduction of AWAs were one-sided, with employers achieving wages and hours of flexibility at the expense of employee entitlements."

"Protecting, securing, building" is the Libs' bold election slogan. However, the fine print reads differently for workers – it is not their interests that are going to be secured and built upon.

While a lot of the detail on how the Coalition intends to tighten up the TPA and let small business out of their obligations to workers has not been revealed, it is clear that Howard intends to keep going down the same industrial relations path that has led to the disastrous consequences described by the ACTU President. A lot hangs on the vote of October 9. ☼



**A new CPA badge**  
with the official CPA logo in yellow outlined in black on a red background. Light weight, 3 cm x 1.5 cm, iron stamped, soft enamel with plating & butterfly clutch on back.

Cost: \$5 each plus \$1 p&p/ packing. For CPA branches ordering 20 or more badges, the cost is \$4 each plus \$4 postage and packing.

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*Melbourne ACFS invites you to the brilliant film*

## SACCO and VANZETTI

The US ruling class has always found judicial murder a convenient device to suppress those who are trouble-makers for the system, and to intimidate others. Joe Hill, Sacco and Vanzetti, and the Rosenbergs, all were judicially murdered to protect the State and its secrets. The ruling class has developed to a high art the use of circumstantial evidence, planted evidence, false identification, racism and political terrorism.

On May 5, 1920, two Italian radicals, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were arrested and brought to trial, revealing obvious frame-ups. International protests developed.

Despite obvious illegalities and continued world-wide protests, Sacco and Vanzetti, still protesting their innocence, were judicially murdered on August 23, 1927.

**20 November 7.30pm**  
**Unitarian Church, 110 Grey St, East Melbourne**  
**Cost: \$15/\$12 – Supper provided**

Further information: Joan Coxsedg ph 03 9857 9249  
Australia-Cuba Friendship Society

# Centennial Park sell-out

Andrew Jackson

**Sydney's glorious Centennial Park may soon be managed by a private corporation and operated on a user-pays basis if a scheme being considered by the NSW Government goes ahead.**

Spread across 385 hectares of inner-Sydney, Centennial Park is enjoyed by 14,000 walkers, joggers, cyclists and horse-riders a day, and is home to an astounding array of native flora and fauna including four remaining pockets of original native bushland.

The Park is currently majority government-funded, managed by eight government-appointed trustees, and the 65 staff are NSW public servants. The park – like other government institutions such as museums, galleries and libraries – accepts financing from both public and private sponsors, and some areas of the park are available for temporary lease for private events and functions.

Under the new management scheme being considered a not-for-profit corporation will set up to manage the finances and upkeep of Centennial Park. Local residents will be forced to “buy in” to the scheme with a compulsory levy, that will qualify them to elect a board of directors and vote on major decisions. Local businesses and other private corporations will be encouraged to play a much greater role in park sponsorship and management.

The proposal is based on the management model of New York's Central Park, and is the brainchild of Professor Ed Blakely who is Chair of an “Expert Reference Panel” convened to advise Bob Carr on Sydney Metropolitan Development.

Who is this Professor Blakely? He is an American and when appointed to the position was lauded

as being “involved in the reconstruction of New York after 9/11”.

## Buy what you already own

With an astounding display of doublespeak, Professor Blakely excitedly explained the scheme: “The community can play a role in all of this, the community can actually help pay for its own assets. For example, the community can lease back a park”.

Professor Blakely compared the idea to the strata levies paid by owners in apartment blocks. (Strata levies cover the upkeep and ongoing expenses of common areas such as stair wells, driveways and gardens).

The distinction Prof Blakely did not make is that apartment owners also have common ownership and exclusive use of those areas.

If residents in the suburbs surrounding Centennial Park are forced to pay an upkeep levy they would no doubt have the expectation of special privileges regarding park usage.

Even a “not-for-profit” corporation will see it as only fair that an entry fee be then charged to all park users to help the corporation maintain the park (excluding the local residents of course, as they now “own” the park).

If the scheme goes ahead it would not be surprising if other suburbs then claimed the “right” to manage their own parks – particularly in the exclusive Eastern and Northern harbourside suburbs, where residents have the cash and would, no doubt, like to deter the hordes of outsiders who flood in on weekends and holidays.

## Stop the rot!

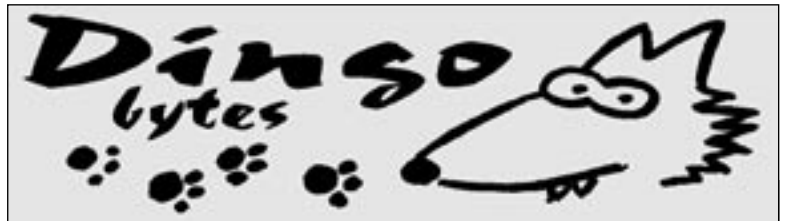
The Australian people have said time and time again they object to the privatisation of public assets, yet



it remains an ideological pillar of both Liberal and Labor party policy.

And so they tout Public/Private Partnerships – the private, and usually for-profit, management of publicly owned assets – as a preferable option to full privatisation. (When what they really mean is that it is their preferred option over fully publicly owned).

Residents of Sydney must send a strong message to Professor Blakely and the Carr Government: We already own Centennial Park. We already pay for its upkeep through local and state taxes. And if we already own it, then by definition we don't need to “lease it back”. **If you object the idea of user-pays parks send a message to Bob Carr and Ed Blakely using the form at [www.metrostrategy.nsw.gov.au](http://www.metrostrategy.nsw.gov.au) and clicking on “Your City, Your Say”.** ☘



The Queensland Government has introduced legislation, the Summary Offences Bill, which will hit the State's most vulnerable and marginalised people – people with impaired capacity, and the poor, homeless, young and Indigenous. The legislation follows the introduction of public nuisance laws last April, which have seen the number of prosecutions for trivial behaviour, such as swearing, yelling or waving one's arms, increase by 200 percent. The new Bill will reinforce those laws. The Rights in Public Spaces Action Group (RIPS) warns that the police are already targeting Aboriginal kids and other vulnerable people and that many of those charged are homeless, poor and young. RIPS' Scott McDougall points out that the new Bill makes no effort to address the causes of homelessness or poverty.

# Fox on the rampage again

Peter Mac

**Four years after the Carr Government virtually gave away the immensely valuable old Sydney Showground site at Moore Park to Rupert Murdoch's Fox Studios, corporate interests are planning to profit from inappropriate development of the site.**

In 1997, it was leased for 40 years to a partnership of Murdoch's News Corporation and Lend Lease, for use by Fox Studios. The deal effectively stripped control over the site from its titular managers, the Centennial Park Trust, whose charter includes the “provision, protection and improvement of public space, consistent with their own plan of management”, and the integration of the Showground into the Moore Park/Centennial Park complex.

The rental was \$2 million, payable over 40 years. However, the payment date was not specified, and the deal proceeded with an initial \$1 per annum peppercorn rental, in return for which the government was obliged to spend \$75-80 million on site works for the benefit of Fox.

The site was to be used for “commercial uses associated with the film, television and video industry”. However, this was not compulsory. There was no requirement that any area within the site would be used exclusively for these purposes,

and since the lease was signed most of the site has been used for entertainment, shopping and restaurant purposes.

And now a sub-lease of the small Bent Street area within the complex has been sold to Colonial First State Property, which proposes to build a shopping centre there, despite the understanding restricting development to film production purposes.

However, the proposal is bitterly opposed by the recently-elected Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore, former independent member for the state seat of Bligh. The courageous Ms Moore has fought a gruelling battle against inappropriate development in Sydney for some 17 years. She made repeated attempts to become Mayor, but was always thwarted, in some cases by boundary changes that altered Sydney's local government boundaries.

The Carr State Government currently controls the Showground site directly, but Ms Moore wants to regain control of it. Because the Carr Government has stripped responsibility for many major sites from local government, it now has a major workload in processing development applications for those sites, including the old Showground.

State Planning Minister Craig Knowles therefore would like to return certain responsibilities to the councils concerned, but he has

indicated he would not relinquish control of the Showground except for minor matters such as signage, minor works and temporary events.

The Carr Government's period in office is littered with huge development deals which reek of corruption in high places, and which it approved despite widespread public objections. None has been more notorious than the showground deal, the outcome of which is a bill of some \$80 million to NSW taxpayers, effective loss of public use of this immensely valuable site for 40 years, and use of the site to impose US culture in its worst possible form on the peoples of the world.

Meanwhile, the local Australian film industry is being stifled by mass production of mindless US blockbuster movies such as those produced at Fox's Sydney studios. The final blow for this industry is expected to come from the infamous US-Australia trade deal, which will ensure no government assistance is provided for the development of local film culture.

It remains to be seen how long Carr can hold out against the combined forces in opposition to his development policies. However, given the huge scale of public resentment that has been generated by these policies, it is extremely unlikely to last beyond the next state election. ☘

A business man with a social conscience may not be such a rare bird, but one that puts actions to his words, certainly is. Ian Melrose spent \$2 million on advertisements during the federal election campaign to raise public awareness of the Howard Government's theft of East Timor's oil and gas. The ads contain useful and damning information, such as Australia withdrawing its recognition of the International Court, the body which would determine who owns the oil and gas in the Timor Straits, so close to East Timor. And that the Government has received \$2000 million in royalties from East Timor's resources, and has returned only \$400 million in aid. And that East Timor is a country so poor that eight out of every 100 children die before they are five years old.

We have a Government that is deep in denial. It takes no responsibility for anything: the only bucks that stop at its door are the ones you stuff in your pockets. So it was with Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone who has rejected out of hand a report to the UN which says the Government deported at least 35 asylum seekers into “dangerous situations”. The report, compiled by the Edmund Rice Centre and the Catholic University, also says that immigration officials used chemical restraints on deportees, gave them money for border bribes and helped them get false passports.

**CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK:** is the owner of the Ranger uranium mine, Rio Tinto. The farcical nature of the “safety measures” taken by the managers of the Ranger uranium mine in the Northern Territory has been exposed over and over again. The operator of the mine, Energy Resources of Australia, is now being sued by the NT Government over a uranium leak earlier this year which poisoned 149 workers. After the leak the workers drank and washed in water that was contaminated with 400 times the allowable limit of uranium. The mine not only threatens the environment of the Kakadu National Park, but is also arrogantly squatting on the land of the Mirrar people, the traditional owners. The Australian Conservation Foundation has called the government's legal action “the beginning of the end” of Ranger.

# Cuba's ten truths

**In a very strong statement to the UN General Assembly meeting in New York last week the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, Felipe Pérez Roque, denounced the present unjust and dangerous world situation.**

He said in his opening remarks that, "Every year at the United Nations we go through the same ritual. We attend the general debate knowing beforehand that the clamour for justice and peace by our underdeveloped countries will be ignored once again. However, we persist. We know that we are right. We know that one day we will accomplish social justice and development. We also know that such assets will not be given away to us. We know that the peoples will have to seize them from those who deny us justice today, because they underpin their wealth and their arrogance and disdain for our grief. But it will not be always like this. We say so today with more conviction than ever before.

Having said this Cuba will now tell some truths:

**First:** After the aggression on Iraq, there is no United Nations Organisation, understood as a useful and diverse forum, based on the respect for the rights of all and also with guarantees for the small States.

It is living through the worst moment of its already near 60 years. It pales, it pants, it feigns, but it does not work.

Who handcuffed the United Nations named by President Roosevelt? President Bush.

## Withdraw troops

**Second:** US troops will have to be withdrawn from Iraq.

After the lives of over 1,000 American youths were uselessly sacrificed to serve the spurious interests of a clique of cronies and buddies, and following the death of more than 12,000 Iraqis, it is clear that the only way out for the occupying power faced with a people in revolt is to recognise the impossibility of subduing them and to withdraw. In spite of the imperial monopoly over information, the peoples always get to the truth. Someday, those responsible and their accomplices will have to deal with the consequences of their actions in the face of history and their own peoples.

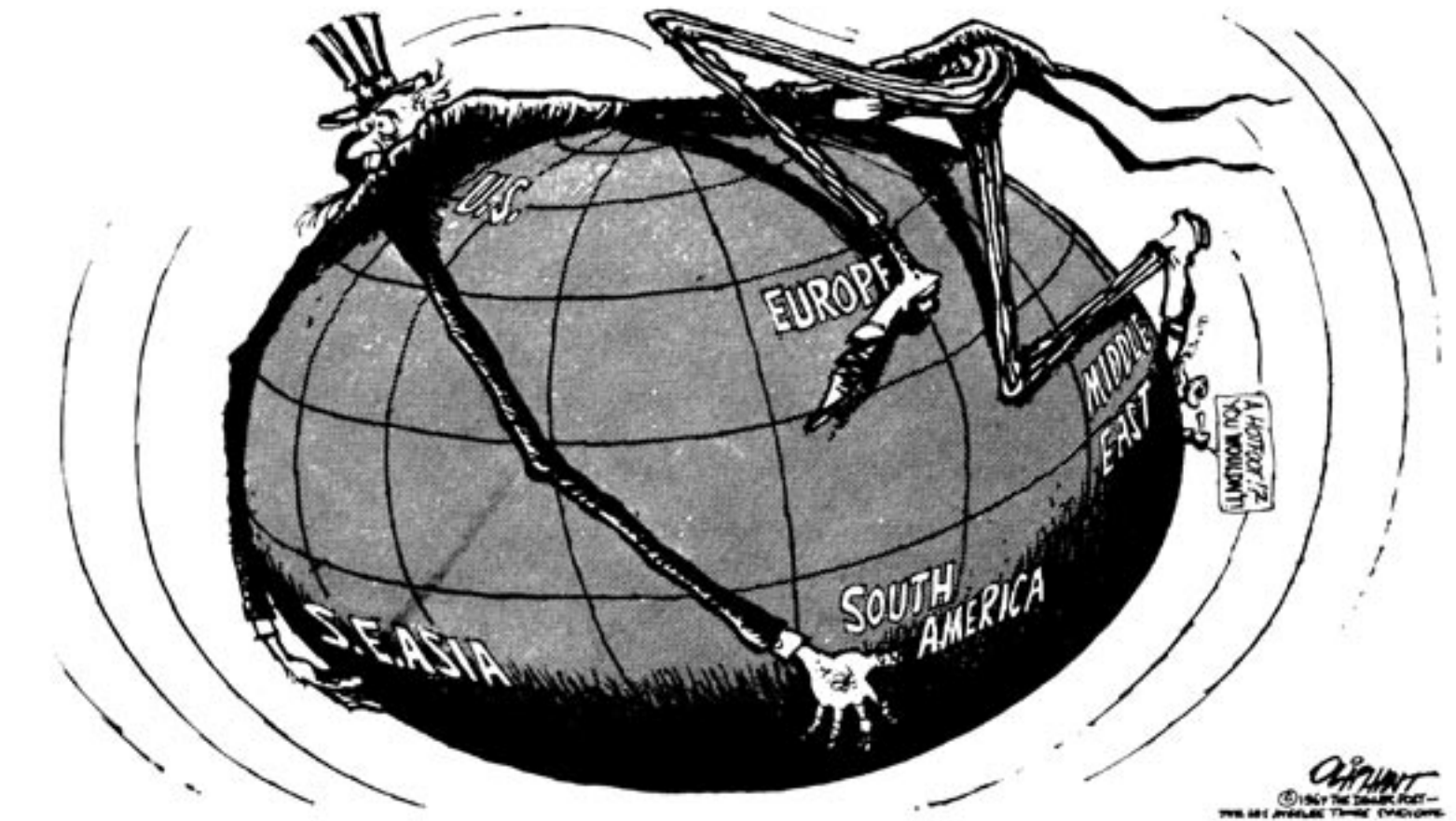
**Third:** For the time being, there will be no valid, real and useful reform to the United Nations.

It would take the superpower, which inherited the immense prerogative of governing an order conceived for a bipolar world, to relinquish its privileges. And it will not do so.

Since now, we know that the anachronistic privilege of the veto will remain; the Security Council will not be democratised as it should or expanded to include Third World countries; that the General Assembly will continue to stand ignored and that at the United Nations there will be more actions driven by the interests imposed by the superpower and its allies. We, as non-aligned countries, will have to entrench ourselves in defending the United Nations Charter, because, otherwise, it will be redrafted with the deletion of every trace of principles such as the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and the non-use or the threat to use force.

**Fourth:** The powerful collude to divide us.

The over 130 underdeveloped countries must build a common front for the defence of the sacred interests of our peoples, of our right to development and peace. Let us revitalise the Non-Aligned



Movement. Let us strengthen the G-77.

## Objectives not accomplished

**Fifth:** The modest objectives of the Millennium Declaration will not be accomplished. We will reach the fifth anniversary of the Summit in a worse situation.

- We endeavoured to halve by 2015 the 1,276 billion human beings in abject poverty that existed in 1990. There had to be a yearly reduction of 46 million poor people. However, excluding China, between 1990 and 2000 extreme poverty rose by 28 million people. Impoverishment does not decline, it grows.

- We wanted to halve by 2015 the 842 million starving people recorded in the world. There had to be a yearly reduction of 28 million. However, there has barely been a reduction of 2.1 million hungry people per year. At this rate, the goal would be attained by 2215, two hun-

Every year, 11 million children continue to die of diseases that can be prevented or cured, whose parents will rightfully wonder what our meetings are for.

- We said that we would pay attention to Africa's special needs. However, very little has been done. African nations do not need foreign advice or models, but financial resources and access to both markets and technologies. Assisting Africa would not be an act of charity, but an act of justice; it would be tantamount to settling the historical debt resulting from centuries of exploitation and pillage.

- We undertook to put a halt to and start reversing the AIDS pandemic by 2015. However, in 2003 it claimed nearly 3 million lives. At this rate, by 2015 some 36 million people will have died of this cause [in addition to the 30 million to-date].

- **Sixth:** Creditor countries and the international financial agencies will not seek a just and lasting solution to the foreign debt.

for the foreign debt. Who is helping who?

**Eighth:** The fight against terrorism can only be won through cooperation among all nations and with respect for International Law, and not through massive bombings or pre-emptive wars against "dark corners of the world".

## Hypocrisy and double standards

Hypocrisy and double standards must cease. Sheltering three Cuban-born terrorists in the United States is an act of complicity in terrorism. Punishing five Cuban youths who were fighting terrorism, and punishing their families, is a crime.

**Ninth:** General and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, is impossible today. It is the responsibility of a group of developed countries that are the ones that most sell and buy weapons.

However, we must continue to strive for it. We must demand that the over US\$900 billion set aside

less than US\$436 billion on a yearly basis – money which is currently used to pay off the debt.

If developed countries complied with their commitment to set aside 0.7% of their Gross National Product as ODA, their contribution would increase from the current US\$68.4 billion to US\$160 billion per annum.

Finally, Excellencies, I want to clearly express Cuba's profound conviction that the 6.4 billion human beings on this planet – who have equal rights according to the United Nations Charter – urgently need a new order in which the world is not left in suspense, as is the case now, awaiting the outcome of the elections in a new Rome in which only half the voters will participate and nearly US\$1.5 billion will be spent.

## Optimistic

There is no discouragement in our words, I must say so clearly. We are optimistic because we are revolutionaries. We have faith in the struggle of the peoples and we are certain that we will accomplish a new world order based on the respect for the rights of all; an order based on solidarity, justice and peace, resulting from the best of universal culture and not from mediocrity or gross force.

About Cuba, which cannot be detoured from its course by blockades, threats, hurricanes, droughts or human or natural force, I will not say anything.

Next October 28, for the 13th time, this General Assembly will debate and vote on a resolution about the blockade imposed against the Cuban people. Once again, morality and principles will defeat arrogance and force.

I would like to conclude by recalling the words spoken right here 25 years ago by President Fidel Castro:

"The noise of weapons, the menacing language, and the haughtiness on the international scene must cease. Enough of the illusion that the problems of the world can be solved by nuclear weapons. Bombs may kill the hungry, the sick and the ignorant, but bombs cannot kill hunger, disease and ignorance. Nor can bombs kill the righteous rebellion of the people".

Thank you very much. ✪

**"Bombs may kill the hungry, the sick and the ignorant, but bombs cannot kill hunger, disease and ignorance.**

**Nor can bombs kill the righteous rebellion**

**of the people."**

dred years after what was envisaged – and only if our species survives the destruction of its environment.

- We proclaimed the aspiration to achieve universal primary education by 2015. However, more than 120 million children, 1 in every 5 in that school age, do not attend primary school. According to UNICEF, at the current rate the goal will be accomplished after 2100.

- We endeavoured to reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate in children under five years of age. The reduction is symbolic: out of 86 children who died per 1,000 live births in 1998, now the figure is 82.

They prefer to keep us in debt; that is, vulnerable. Therefore, even though we have paid off US\$4.1 trillion in debt service over the last 13 years, our debt increased from US\$1.4 trillion to US\$2.6 trillion. It means that we have paid three times what we owed and now our debt is twice as much.

**Seventh:** We, as underdeveloped countries, are the ones that finance the squandering and the opulence of developed countries.

While in 2003 they gave us US\$68.4 billion in ODA [overseas development aid], we delivered to them US\$436 billion as payment

every year for military expenditures be used on development; and

**Tenth:** The financial resources to guarantee the sustainable development for all the peoples on the planet are available, but what is lacking is the political will of those who rule the world.

A development tax of merely 0.1% on international financial transactions would generate resources amounting to almost US\$400 billion per annum.

The cancellation of the foreign debt incurred by underdeveloped countries would allow these to have available for their development no

# The politics of human stem cell research

Don Sloan, MD

**What would make the son of a late Republican President take to the podium of the Democratic National Convention and speak against the present GOP President, someone his father would have endorsed? Or to have his mother, a staunch Republican who frequently broke bread with the most right-wing elements of her party, get on that same handwagon?**

Answer: Stem cell research and its medical, scientific and political implications. Why is this issue so important?

First, a little Science 101. What are human embryonic stem cells? The name says it. They are just that — stems, with the ability to develop into any form of human tissue (in any animal, for that matter).

They are created after the male sperm fertilises the female's egg

heart, muscles, etc. Voilà! A human being is created.

Why "daughter" cells? Because all creation is female until male enzymes exert their power if the sperm passed along the Y, instead of the X, chromosome. Boy or girl, the stem story remains the same.

If scientists had all those stem cells from abortions that have the potential of making new and healthy organs, just imagine their use. When there came a need for a new organ — a heart, liver or pancreas in the case of the diabetic, for example — the stem cells that were programmed to make such an organ could be harvested, the organ created either in the lab or *in situ* (in the natural place) and a healthy organ would be formed, without transplant. The uses are endless. Why then the controversy?

Because of those religious zealots that are using their theol-

## Religious zealots influenced President George W Bush to essentially curtail stem cell research and development

and a full stage embryonic cell, the zygote, is formed. This cell then divides by mitosis ad infinitum until the human body, with all its functions and appearance, is formed.

Those cells divide into two parts and each "daughter" cell has the potential to either remain as yet another stem cell to divide further or, through a complicated system of enzymes and neurological stimuli, the other part matures into all the body's cells — the brain, stomach,

ogy to insist they know for sure that life begins at conception, which fuels their violent antagonism to a woman's choice to terminate a pregnancy. They influenced President George W Bush to essentially curtail stem cell research and development as of August 9, 2001. That means that only those stem cells that were harvested before that date can, with federal funding, be developed into needed human organs.

The catch is that those cells are minuscule and finite in number



compared to those needed for future use and they are quite fragile. As they die off, without replacement, stem cell research for human needs is essentially over. It has been suggested, foolishly, that scientists can use adult cells, with some vague "pluripotentiality" for organ development. That's a big word meaning the cells possess the power of developing in any one of several possible ways but the fact is they just do not have the ability to turn into any sure, safe organ.

So again, why the resistance to this life-saving process? Because, while the right wing has no qualms

about bombing Iraq and killing US soldiers and Iraqi civilians by the thousands, a woman's right to choose is so nefarious to them that even using the aborted tissues of a first trimester termination for such an obvious good does not change

the equation. All just another reason to end the nightmare we are living under with the Bush administration and vote him out of office come November. 2.

"The Nation's Health/Workers' Safety", *People's Weekly World* ☼

## Just imagine

Peter Dana-Olsen

**Recently a story appeared in the Sydney Daily Telegraph of July 31, 2004 with the lead line: "Agent Orange on Green River" and "Ultimate Weapon Against Weed". Now let's imagine this scenario — totally fictitious of course — taking place in one of the offices of the Primary Industries Department. A think-tank is in progress, concerning the elimination of Salvinia, the insidious aquatic weed clogging the Green River.**

**1st Speaker:** We've got to think of other ways to rid the evil aquatic weed on the Hawkesbury ...

**1st Clerk:** How much is it costing now?

**1st Speaker:** Hundreds of thousands of dollars and we can't keep up with it!

**1st Clerk:** It seems to be a simple enough problem ... I've done some research and \$15,000 worth of Agent Orange will fix the problem in short order!

**1st Speaker:** I think he's on to something — what would be the downside of this treatment?

**2nd Clerk:** According to the NSW AG fact, p.7, 6.13, it states, "Following intensive herbicide control programs, the dead plant material can sometimes cause a temporary pollution problem and de-oxygenate the water ..."

**1st Clerk:** then how do we solve the temporary pollution problem?

**2nd Clerk:** The fact sheet says, "by integration of control methods with physical removal of some weed prior to treatment".

**1st Speaker:** But isn't that what we're doing now? We still have to pay for some removal.

**2nd Clerk:** But with this treatment, the pollution can be reduced.

**1st Speaker:** So it can be reduced ... but what happens to the rest of the pollution?

**1st Clerk:** Maybe it just goes away ...

**2nd Clerk:** I'm reading this Agent Orange article in the TELEGRAPH, quoting Hawkesbury Green Councillor Leigh Williams, along with environmental lobbyist Sue Gleeson as saying, "This spray related to the notorious Agent Orange used in the Vietnam War; also known as "Agent Blue"; has not only the potential to pollute the water, but can also cause physical and psychological illness ... Much of our drinking water is drawn out of the North Richmond area, so that would have been contaminated."

**1st Clerk:** What do THEY know ...

**1st Speaker:** Well we certainly can't call it "Agent Orange" so we will use the trade name "REGLONE" ... and most folks

wouldn't associate "REGLONE" with Agent Orange.

**2nd Clerk:** I have a leaflet here, obviously put out by some environ freaks, writing about the problem of the spray that used to be on the Darling River about four years ago. The plant growth accelerated after application of the spray, then the plants died on top of the water, sinking and rotting on the bottom, percolating methane gas, and releasing a whole range of green house gases. It also released nutrients into the water, which encouraged further weed growth ... and if weeds aren't available to absorb these nutrients — the water becomes undrinkable and/or unusable ... so the Darling River ended up neuro-toxic ... along with turtles we found bleeding from their eyes, nose and anus!

**1st Clerk:** BLOODY HELL! Those turtles shouldn't be there anyway.

**1st Speaker:** Well, we should be able to solve those minor problems, so all in favour of spraying say 'AYE'

**1st Clerk:** AYE

**2nd Clerk:** AYE

**1st Speaker:** AYE, too. Then it's settled ... let us bow our heads and spray.

**Of course this scenario could never happen in our present stage of enlightenment.** ☼

## THOSE ASBESTOS BLUES

Yeah, Witternoom — long years ago that town was news ... got me a job nobody told me 'bout blue asbestos blues ...

Money spiders web of death clogged my lungs with every breath Cost too much to use scientific know-how on blue or white asbestos blues.

Lost my child lost my wife maybe I'll lose my hold on life but we won't work in dead men's shoes or sing asbestos blues!

When Hardies giant crossed the Nullabor held the secret ... asbestosis. I accuse

him killing thousands, more thousands more, more related to asbestos blues ...

danger in their products danger in our houses, rooves and fences patched up work clothes hung out to dry — thousands more still die of asbestos blues

Accuse the giant Hardies making illegal billions building products mixed with suicide — Make them pay their victims full compensation Extend the bans of unions, consumers, local councils. Tell your neighbour Get on side make the boycott nationwide! bury asbestos blues ...

Joan Williams



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# Timor-Leste demands fair boundary

**NGOs and other organisations concerned with the future development of East Timor and the well being and security of its people have issued a statement on the question of the maritime boundaries between Australia and East Timor. Their statement says:**

Civil society and people in Timor-Leste, including the NGOs issuing this statement, continue to follow the negotiations between our government and Australia with great interest. We believe that the issues being discussed in Darwin this week are among the most important for the future of our nation.

Based on what we have been able to learn about the negotiations process, we urge Australia to do the following:

1. Respect the national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, negotiating with our government as an equal partner and not belittling us with offers of "Christmas presents". Listen and respond to our national right to establish the boundaries of our newly-independent nation.

2. Although it appears that Timor-Leste's negotiators are considering a "creative solution" which would put off a boundary settlement for many decades, we continue to believe that a permanent boundary, both for the water column and the seabed, is essential for completing our struggle for national indepen-

dence. The boundary should be based on current international legal principles, along the median line between our two coasts, with lateral boundaries decided according to current international law.

3. Return to the international dispute resolution processes for maritime boundaries of the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

4. Do not involve our future in your nation's politics. Over the past six months, we have been disappointed to see Timor-Leste's rights used by Australian politicians for domestic political purposes. Our rights are based on international law and moral principles, not on Australian public opinion polls. We are struck by the contrast between last year, when you refused to meet more than once every six months, and now, just before your election, when you want to meet every week.

5. Respect Timor-Leste's right to develop our resources on a timetable that is best for our people. We are dismayed by Australia's support for Woodside's hunger to extract Sunrise gas as fast as possible.

6. Stop exploration of Laminaria-Corallina and other fields in disputed territory, including issuing of new licenses. Place all revenues received from such fields in an escrow account, to be apportioned between our nations when an agreement is completed.



## East Timor NGO Forum

HAK Association, Haburas Foundation, La'o Hamutuk (East Timor Institute for Reconstruction Monitoring and Analysis), FOKUPERS, LAIFET (Labor Advocacy Institute of East Timor), Timor-Leste Community Radio Association (ARKTL), The Mirror of the People (LABEH), Forum Tau Matan (FTM), Timor-Leste Students Association. ✪

## US sanctions imposed on Russian companies

**The United States has announced the introduction of economic sanctions against Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian companies because it is claimed they delivered missile technologies relating to nuclear weapons to Iran.**

The US administration claims that 14 commercial companies in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, India, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Spain have broken a US law which bans deliveries to Iran of technologies, goods and services, which violate the regime of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The sanctions have been applied for a term of two years.

This is yet another high-handed action by the United States which demands that other countries should

obey laws that have been adopted in the US.

Instead of denouncing this situation the Russian Duma international affairs committee chairman Konstantin Kosachyov weakly expressed the hope that the United States would provide specific evidence concerning the Russian enterprise it accuses of smuggling nuclear technology into Iran.

The White House has used similar sanctions against other Russian enterprises in the past.

"However", said Konstantin Kosachyov, "in not a single case has the US offered our country any proof of the validity of their allegations of violations of the international agreement on the non-proliferation of nuclear technologies.

"If the Americans fail to provide specific proof this time as well,

we will be forced, as in previous instances, to regard these actions by the US as groundless and as a factor in dishonest competition", he said.

## US eyes on Caucasus

The sanctions are part of the US leaders' plans to disrupt and surround the Russian Federation and stir up trouble in the oil rich region of the Caucasus. The US is to massively increase its military aid to Georgia.

About 4000 Georgian soldiers are to be trained and equipped by the US over the next year. Georgia's Defence Minister announced this on his return from talks with US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld in the USA.

They also held talks on "removing" Russian military bases from Georgia. This issue is said to have "topped the agenda". ✪

## Spain

### Thousands strike to defend shipyards

**Around 45,000 people demonstrated in the northwest port of Ferrol, demanding government action to save their local shipyards from bankruptcy and prevent private finance being put into the public sector shipbuilder Izar.**

Talks a few days later produced an agreed framework for fresh negotiations on how to rescue the Izar, while further strikes were called.

At the heart of the sector's problems are EU demands that Izar repay 300 million euros (US\$368.9 million) in aid which Brussels says breached EU competition rules. The

sector is also up against fierce competition from Asia.

The conflict between the employers and the unions is the first major test of industrial relations for Spain's Socialist Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, elected in March.

The Prime Minister has promised to save the yards and the jobs of those who work there - but his Socialist Party backs the restructuring plan.

That support for the revamp has sparked fury in the industry which shed 30,000 jobs after being sub-

jected to three restructuring plans in the 1980s.

Over recent weeks there have been actions at other yards in the north and south of the country with police baton-charging demonstrators.

In the southern city of Cadiz, where barricades were set alight and traffic disrupted, the protest was against plans by SEPI, the Spanish government industrial holding company that owns the docks, to separate naval dockyard activities from the civil shipyards which are to be partially privatised. ✪

## Israeli public sector workers strike

**The International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICTU) has written to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to protest at a series of decrees issued by the government which amount to an all-out attack on the jobs and conditions of public sector workers. The edicts aim set down the means to slash wages and pensions, cancel collective agreements, increase the retirement age to 67 and put union-managed pension funds under government control.**

The decrees will lead to further privatisation of public services, with thousands of public sector workers facing dismissal.

The ICTU's affiliate in Israel, Histadrut, has announced a series of protest and strike actions aimed at forcing the government to rescind the decrees, with some 100,000 local authority workers on strike

since March 31 and 50,000 government ministry employees implementing work bans.

Some municipal workers have not been paid for several months. The attack on the public sector workers is a reflection of the deepening economic crisis faced by the Sharon Government.

The Government's actions, in particular the unilateral cancellation of collective agreements, are a clear violation of fundamental Conventions of the International Labour Organisation, and coupled with a wide range of cutbacks to social security, health and education, will have severe effects on wage earners and those most in need of government assistance.

The ICTU has pledged its full support to the Histadrut in its campaign for the repeal of the decrees. ✪

## NATO signs up for Patriot's replacement

**An international group led by Lockheed Martin Corp has won a \$3 billion contract with NATO to develop a successor to the Patriot missile system. The Medium Extended Air Defense System (MEADS) is designed to be wheeled onto the battlefield by soldiers to shoot down jet fighters, drones and some ballistic missiles.**

Lockheed commenced work on the program in 1999. The Pentagon is developing the system with Germany and Italy, which are contributing 25 percent and 17 percent, respectively, to its cost. The United States is expected to order 48 of the systems, while Germany is expected to buy 25 and Italy 9. France was part of the original program, but dropped out.

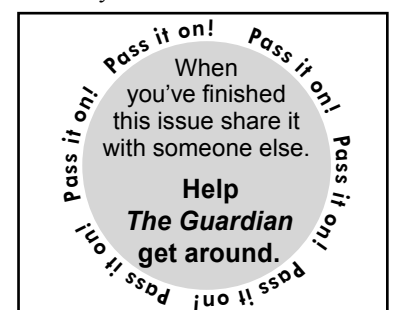
The contract was issued by a NATO unit, NATO Medium Extended Air Defense System Organization, which was created to manage the international program.

The Patriot was designed in the 1960s and 1970s to fight the Soviet Union and is now seen as too heavy to quickly traverse the battlefield, said Jim Cravens, president of Lockheed's team, known as

MEADS International. The Patriot system is based on software that cannot be quickly linked with other weapon systems, he said.

The development phase of the program is worth US\$3 billion. When the company begins manufacturing the system and selling it to other countries the program's value is expected to more than double, Cravens said. "This looks to be a very, very robust program", he said.

It is expected that MEADS will become operational in the US in 2014. The other members of MEADS International are MBDA-Italia, the European Aeronautic Defense and Space Co. and Lenkflugkorpersysteme in Germany. ✪





# Peltier's lawyers seek hidden FBI files

**Buffalo, New York:** An attorney for imprisoned Native American Indian activist Leonard Peltier accused the government September 13 of withholding documents in the case to cover up its own misconduct 30 years ago.

Michael Kuzma asked a federal judge to order the release of all documents from the FBI's Buffalo field office as part of the larger effort to free Peltier, 60, who is serving consecutive life sentences for the shooting deaths of two FBI agents during a 1975 standoff on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Earlier this year, the FBI released 797 of the 812 pages compiled by Buffalo investigators but withheld 15 pages, citing national security and foreign relations concerns. The Buffalo files were sought by Peltier's lawyers in the wake of their discovery, through a related Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, of a heavily excised 1975 Teletype message from the Buffalo office to then-FBI Director Clarence M Kelley. The message pointed to a government informant's efforts to infiltrate Peltier's defence team.

The Buffalo material is among tens of thousands of pages generated by FBI field offices nationwide and being sought by Peltier supporters seeking to have his conviction overturned.

At the time of the 1977 trial, the government turned over roughly 3,500 pages of material to defence attorneys, claiming that this was the full extent of their files. Subsequent FOIA requests by Peltier's attorneys to the FBI over the past two decades, however, have revealed that over 142,000 pages of material were improperly concealed from Peltier and his lawyers. The Minneapolis field office alone has 90,000 pages on the case that Peltier's lawyers have never seen.

The withheld pages from the FBI's Buffalo office, Kuzma said,

may be "the kind of things that would help in an attempt to secure a new trial". They might also result in the outright overturning of the conviction and Peltier's release.

Department of Justice attorney Preeya Noronha told US District Judge William Skretny that the FOIA provides for withholding the 15 pages in question for national security reasons.

Kuzma said the government's explanation for the exemptions to the FOIA was too vague.

Saying the government mishandled the investigation early on, Kuzma charged the true purpose of fighting the documents' release was "to shield further misconduct from the public spotlight".

"The FBI is hellbent on blocking the disclosure of this information and keeping Leonard Peltier in jail for the rest of his natural life", Kuzma said.

Peltier was convicted in 1977 of shooting deaths of FBI agents Ronald Williams and Jack Coler during the reservation standoff and was sentenced to consecutive life sentences at Leavenworth, Kansas. There were no eyewitnesses to the shooting, and ballistics tests, which were deliberately concealed from the court by the FBI at the time, showed the bullets could not have been fired from the alleged murder weapon.

Peltier denies he was responsible. Supporters claim Peltier was framed for the shootings because of his political activism, in particular because of his membership in the American Indian Movement (AIM), an organisation that vigorously defended indigenous people's rights. In the early and mid-'70s, AIM members were targeted by the FBI's COINTELPRO program for harassment. COINTELPRO tactics included disseminating misinformation, levying false charges against individuals, manufacturing evi-

dence, and occasionally assassinating key leaders of targeted groups.

In another court action last November, the 10th US Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver took the government to task over the case while denying Peltier a parole hearing. "Much of the government's behaviour at the Pine Ridge Reservation and in its prosecution of Mr Peltier is to be condemned", the ruling said. "The government withheld evidence. It intimidated witnesses. These facts are not disputed."

Judge Skretny, noting "what appears to be the clearly established government misconduct", said he may opt to privately review the withheld documents in deciding whether to order their release.

"I can't just rubber stamp the claim that the exemption applies here", Skretny said. He did not immediately rule on the request.

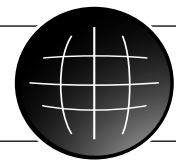
Despite his 28-year-long incarceration, Peltier's spirit remains unbroken and he closely follows current events.

In connection with the Abu Ghraib revelations, for example, he recently told the *World*: "None of this is surprising to me or any of my fellow US prisoners. This stuff goes on all the time in US prisons. As for what happened at Abu Ghraib, they were and are war crimes."

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Amnesty International, the National Congress of American Indians, the Robert F Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Rev Jesse Jackson, among many others, have called Peltier a political prisoner who should be immediately released.

To find out more about his case, visit [www.leonardpeltier.org](http://www.leonardpeltier.org) or [www.freepeltier.org](http://www.freepeltier.org).

*People's Weekly World*  
Communist Party USA ✪



## Global briefs

**CANADA:** Around 1400 steelworkers in Labrador City, have been on strike against the Iron Ore Company of Canada since mid-July, after management refused to budge from its insistence on concessions amounting to about \$7 per hour. The company is owned by virulently anti-union mining giant Rio Tinto. "Rio Tinto wants to strip health care and pensions, freeze wages and introduce a form of psychological profiling of workers on which to base discipline", union spokesman Yvon Clement said in announcing the strike. The strike in the tiny one-industry town of 9000 has had a ripple effect, for example forcing the Sparrows Point mill near Baltimore to contract with Russia for delivery of pelletised iron. Rio Tinto is the target of a global union protest network over its treatment of workers around the world.

**BRITAIN:** Tony Blair has tried to downplay his lies about Iraq's weapons as his government prepares to go to the polls seeking a third term. Admitting his decision to go to war with Iraq had "eroded trust in the government", Blair called on the growing numbers in the Labour Party who oppose him to unite for the elections. So desperate is he that he set out a ten-point third term "manifesto", promising to "provide affordable child care for all", increase law and order measures and deal with the pensions crisis.

**FRANCE:** The future of the Perrier mineral water manufacturer in France is in doubt again after parent company Nestlé rejected a compromise with union leaders over job cuts, saying it did not go far enough. Leaders of the CGT union at Perrier's plant in Vergeze, in southern France, had decided to lift their veto on Nestlé's plans to cut 1047 jobs. But Nestlé refused to accept the compromise unless the union also agreed to help implement its program of voluntary job cuts. Union leaders accused the company of trying to sabotage a deal. "This is just more blackmail and more threats", said Vergeze CGT official Jean-Paul Franc. "It's not acceptable."

**NIGERIA:** The rebel Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, fighting for autonomy of the oil-producing southern delta, has issued a communiqué telling oil companies to shut production and withdraw staff ahead of an "all-out war on the Nigerian state". That threat helped crude oil prices in New York to breach \$50 a barrel for the first time in history. The communiqué singled out Royal Dutch Shell Group and Italy's Agip for what it said was collaboration "in acts of genocide against our people". Shell, with government backing, has a long history of suppression in Nigeria and widespread violations of human rights. Agip and Shell have both denied being in collusion with the military, which fired on rebel positions earlier this month using helicopter gunships.

## Cuban trade with Argentina rises to US\$200 million

**Argentina and Cuba have signed a trade agreement with a commitment to increase bilateral trade to US\$200 million per year, in the interests of Latin American integration and the well-being of the two countries, reports *Prensa Latina* from Buenos Aires.**

Via its Ministry of Health and the Environment and other agencies, Argentina has assumed moves to purchase biopharmaceuticals and medical technology developed in Cuba. For its part, Cuba's ALIMPORT is negotiating the import of foodstuffs under the terms of the contract, which came into force on August 27 and expires in 2007, when it can be automatically extended on an annual basis.

The agreement was signed

at the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the country's Health Minister, Ginés González, and for the Cuban side by Pedro Alvarez, president of ALIMPORT. Subsequently Rafael Bielsa, Foreign Minister of that South American country, and Alejandro González, the Cuban ambassador in Buenos Aires, added their signatures to the document.

Speaking to *Prensa Latina*, Bielsa affirmed that political and trade relations with Cuba have reached their finest point with future possibilities of consolidation. In reference to the agreement he noted that it considerably raises the goals of reciprocal trade and expands the range of merchandise currently being exchanged.

He emphasised that his signature

represents a genuine vocation on the part of both nations to intensify economic links and demonstrates that ties at the political level have also advanced in recent months. He cited the example of the re-designation of an Argentine ambassador in Havana, an event that he personally attended in October 2003 when he travelled to the island.

Asked about the announced visit to Cuba by Argentine President Néstor Kirchner, the Foreign Minister responded that it is to be made concrete in principle in January 2005. Bielsa informed that at this moment the diplomatic missions of the two states are working to formalise the president's visit, "with a tentative date of January next year". ✪

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## Open letter to three Qld MPs

Mal Brough, Peter Slipper and Alex Somlyay, MPs in Queensland

You are our elected representatives and members of the Howard Government. Since 1999 you have actively supported inhumane treatment of people who have come to Australia legitimately seeking protection.

Most of these asylum seekers fled threats of persecution and death from Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq or the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Through your government's fear campaign, you have manipulated public opinion to condemn asylum seekers. You have persisted in misrepresenting these people as "economic migrants", "queue jumpers", "calculating opportunists", "illegal non citizens", even when they have overwhelmingly been found to be genuine refugees.

You have used the Australian Navy inappropriately to threaten and frighten boatloads of asylum seekers even to the point of firing across the bows of the boats and towing them away from Australia. You have ordered the Navy to stand by and watch while such a boat broke up and its human cargo was floundering in the sea before giving permission for them to be rescued, risking their lives and those of navy personnel.

You misrepresented these

people in the "Children Overboard" incident and persisted in this misrepresentation even when you were told the facts about it.

You created the Pacific Solution in your determination to keep asylum seekers from reaching Australian shores. You paid vast sums from our taxes to Nauru and PNG to keep asylum seekers in appalling conditions, isolated, hidden from public scrutiny and without access to legal representation.

Most Australians would agree that people who come without visas should be detained in some way until health and security checks are made. However, you presided over a regime of indefinite mandatory detention in maximum security prison conditions. Your continuing inhumane regime has literally driven some of its victims to despair, and many, including children, to attempt suicide.

You have spent over \$700 million of our taxes over the past three years building, operating and supporting detention centres in Australia, on Nauru and Manus Island.

You have, for the most part, ignored the numerous reports and requests from highly reputable watchdog organisations – the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, the United Nations, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Australian Medical Association, Amnesty International, State Child Welfare and Mental Health bodies – which warned of the grave consequences of indeterminate detention on the mental health of detainees, and which pleaded for the most vulnerable of them to be released into the safety of approved community bodies.

You have allowed children to be held in detention for over five years

and five months, and some are still there.

You fought and won the legal right to detain forever those few unfortunate asylum seekers who have a genuine fear of being returned to their homeland but do not fit the narrow definition of a United Nations Convention refugee. Some of these people have now been held in detention by you for over six years.

You pressured asylum seekers to return "voluntarily" to their home countries, by threatening them with forced deportation. Over five hundred Afghans did agree to return home, many of them forced to flee again because their situation was so unsafe.

Until 1999 all refugees were offered permanent protection. You introduced a system of temporary protection. This keeps refugees in fear and uncertainty about their future, separates many from their families, offers no hope of family reunion, and restricts their access to resettlement benefits.

Members of our organisation have visited each of you on several occasions to express our deep concern and to urge you to take action. We have told you stories based on our direct contact with refugees in the community and asylum seekers in detention. Each time you expressed your unqualified support for government policy.

We deplore your government's treatment of these people. We believe it is in breach of United Nations conventions to which Australia is signatory. One day the government must be held accountable. You are part of that government. You will not be able to say: "That was not my responsibility."

Nor will you be able to say: "I did not know". You were there.

Barbara Brewster,  
Stephanie Belfrage  
Buddies Refugee Support Group  
Sunshine Coast, QLD

## What about those not in paid work?

If John Howard wants to fight the next issue on Industrial Relations why doesn't he release the findings of his "Inquiry into employment: Increasing participation in paid work?" The Inquiry criteria was instigated by Tony Abbot and Amanda Vanstone last September. The public has a right to see the results of this Inquiry, they paid for it out of their taxes.

The Government took eight years to construct an economy that squanders the energies and talents of millions of people, now without secure jobs. Now more than 30 percent of our human productive capacity is idle and wasted. I am sure that any promises made in the next few weeks will be met with cynicism.

According to the inquiry paper: "Building a simpler system to help jobless families and individuals", ISBN 0 642 77055 7, the intention was to "deal" with unemployed people. This sounds like a failure of policy to address the problem. The problem is years of poor policies that scapegoat income support recipients as victims instead of helping them into secure jobs with a living wage. John Howard has failed these people.

Marginalisation itself is a form of violence that leads to other types of violence, feeds back on itself and eventually spirals out of control. Many social commentators claim that violence has increased to a crisis point in inner cities. Unemployment, that is people exist-

ing on less than a living wage (this includes many pensioners), leads to increased poverty, illness, drugs, violence and suicide. This eventually adds to the nation's overall cost of health, welfare and law and order. It takes a perverse kind of genius to turn a nation's increasing ability to generate so much wealth into a declining standard of living for many of its citizens.

Mary Jenkins (Secretary)  
Australian National Organisation  
of the Unemployed (ANOU)  
Spearwood WA

## Howard in breach of Constitution

The Australian Constitution disqualifies any Federal electoral candidate from nominating if they are:

(1) under any acknowledgment of allegiance, obedience, or adherence to a foreign power, or is a subject or a citizen or entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign power: or

(2) attainted of treason, or has been convicted and is under sentence, or subject to be sentenced, for any offence punishable under the law of the Commonwealth or of a State by imprisonment for one year or longer (Section 44).

Given the Howard Government's surrender of Australian foreign policy to American imperatives, it would appear that Mr Howard is in breach of the Constitution and should be dismissed from office forthwith.

Let us hope the election produces the desired outcome without us having to resort to a political putsch à la Whitlam!

Gareth Smith  
Byron Bay, NSW

# Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

## Culture vs Advertising

In its way, it is the fundamental question in the field of the arts and entertainment: is its purpose the dissemination of culture or the dissemination of advertising?

In Singapore, feature films in a cinema are supported by a "first half" consisting entirely of commercials. People hurry in to the cinema so as not to miss any, and are excited when a new one appears. The ads are part of the program, a capitalist's dream.

As anyone who has been to a multiplex (cinema complex) lately can tell you, we are fast approaching the same dismal situation here in Australia.

A scant four decades ago, the idea of commercials on a public broadcaster was anathema; anything that could be interpreted as an ad for a product was ruthlessly excised from programs on the ABC. Now public broadcaster SBS is awash with commercials, and, if Howard is re-elected, how soon will it be before the ABC is forced to follow suit?

For capitalists, with their imperative drive to increase their rate of profit and to find new sources of profit, anything that can attract the attention of large numbers of people

(but which is not then used to advertise something) has "wasted its potential". Just as a large blank wall on a busy street or an unimpeded verge on the side of a main road is no more than an "ideal site" for an advertising billboard, so the mass media too becomes an adjunct of advertising.

The mass media, the most potent educational and cultural tool ever devised, has been hijacked by capitalists who will use its power and verisimilitude as an aid for selling cars, mortgage scams, soap powder, etc, etc. The capitalists see nothing wrong in this, for their credo is that anything that helps business is for the public good.

This identification of their interests with those of "the community" – or even, God help us, "the nation" – is very convenient for capitalists. It actually allows them to disregard the interests of the community (or the nation) totally, and to use their power and influence for what really concerns them: increasing their profits.

Although much of the merit of cultural media such as films and television has been largely subsumed by salesmanship, all is not yet lost. Capitalists may think that an evening of half hour "infomercials" constitutes some sort of ideal television, but the public does not.

One such recently released "program" comprising a 30-minute hard sell for a tediously boring and shockingly over-priced exercise device for strengthening your abdominal muscles (your "abs", whose "firming up" will apparently improve not only your appearance but also your health and your sex life).

Despite the relentless "dumbing down" perpetrated by commercial television, most people demand



After watching *Queer Eye* men are five times more likely to shop

something more stimulating than infomercial fare.

To the chagrin of the capitalists, to draw people to watch their TV channels or visit their cinemas still requires actual movies and television programs. For their part, the people want ideas, emotion, characters in conflict.

They want to be made to experience anger, laughter, pity, to enjoy the clash of ideas expressed through character and action. In other words, consciously or otherwise, they thirst for cultural enrichment.

Advertisers are aware, too, that new media technologies are shortly to be upon us that will allow viewers to download their favourite programs without any commercials.

What then is your capitalist to do? One answer is to incorporate the sales pitch into the movie or TV show.

This idea is not new. It is basically a new form of an old money-making idea that's been around the

movie and TV business for a long time: product placement.

It used to be a means to raise some extra dosh from a breakfast cereal manufacturer by showing his product up close in a scene over breakfast, or from a car maker by having lots of close-ups of his latest model, and that still goes on. In fact, it's bigger than ever.

An estimated \$120 million was spent on product placement last year in Australia alone. Movie producers are encouraged to contact product placement specialists while still at script stage, so the experts can assess the film's "placement opportunities".

But, compared to the new, sophisticated methods of producing what capitalism calls "branded entertainment", the old product placement deals are crude and obvious. Today, the very programs themselves are conceived with an eye to servicing specific sectors of the market.

How do you, for example, increase sales of male toiletries, cosmetics and fashion aids? You conceive a program called *Queer Eye For The Straight Guy*.

This program shows what a powerful tool it can be providing the producers don't succumb to overkill and show a particular product too often. In US it has not only boosted sales of the brands featured on it (old style product placement) but has been lucrative for the entire "men's grooming category" (new style placement). According to *Fortune* magazine, on the day following a *Queer Eye* episode men in the US are five times more likely to go shopping than women!

That's worth real money, and one result is that those in the know expect, in the words of Grant Hay from product placement outfit In Shot, "more brands will become content producers themselves".

Art and culture? Forget it: this is business. ☺



Sun October 10 ~  
~ Sat October 16

Near the beginning of the four-part series *In Search Of Shakespeare* (ABC 2.00pm Sundays), Michael Wood observes that the gaps in our knowledge of Shakespeare's life have given rise to all manner of "conspiracy theories" to the effect that other people wrote all his plays and poems.

Ironically, the ABC is even going to include one of these "conspiracy theories" - *Much Ado About Something* - in its TV Arts *Shakespeare Season*, along with *William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night* and *The Tragedy of Hamlet*.

Wood, I am pleased to say, is not bothered with such theories. Elizabethan and Shakespearean scholarship has advanced beyond these puny efforts to attribute the works of England's greatest writer - arguably the world's greatest writer - to a member of the aristocracy or at least to someone who went to university.

His series is an historical detective story, that uses fascinating new evidence from spies' reports, village archives and even a coded prison diary to fill in the blanks in our knowledge of Shakespeare's life and times.

The times are important in Wood's presentation, for as he shows, the life of Shakespeare was inextricably linked to the history of his time. But, for all his historical approach, Wood is no Marxist,

and the history of the Tudor and Elizabethan period is not for him a time of the consolidation of a central monarchy as a key element in the development of the new system of capitalism.

For him it is "a bitter battle of religion, played out in blood, bodies and minds". And, of course, that is partially true, but it is only part of the historical picture.

Nevertheless, *In Search of Shakespeare* is fascinating. Episode One explores Shakespeare's life in the early years of Elizabeth's reign.

With his father holding the high-ranking position of Alderman and Mayor of the small town of Stratford, William is one of the privileged few, brought up in a nice house with lots of money, servants and a good education. But his father's money comes from black market trading in wool and money-lending, and Will's world is turned upside down when his father's business collapses.

The family loses its fortune and William is forced to leave school to find work.

The series is directed by David Wallace and makes excellent use of historic locations and especially the historical records of the Elizabethan authorities, whose multitude of informers kept tabs on seemingly everybody.

The nation of Tuvalu is a cluster of eight coral islands around the rim of an ancient undersea volcano in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Their average height above seal level is a scant two metres.

As Professor Of Geography and Climatologist Blair Fitzharris points out in *Paradise Drowned: Tuvalu The Disappearing Nation* (ABC 9.30pm Wednesday), sea levels are set to rise by almost a metre (0.88 of a metre to be exact) by the end of this century (2100) - thanks to global warming.

Already many parts of Tuvalu are flooded during king tides; the water table is so near the surface that frequently the country's only airfield is awash with groundwater;

and in many places the white sandy beaches are only a memory. Water for drinking has to be boiled or even imported.

But worse is to come: Professor Fitzharris notes that if the Greenland ice cap continues to melt and the Western Antarctic ice sheet collapses, as has been predicted, then the sea level could rise a staggering six metres. At low tide the tops of Tuvalu's trees would be barely visible.

As the Prime Minister of this nation of 10,000 people notes, his country has contributed *nothing* to global warming. The industrialised countries that *have* caused it should take steps to reverse it and to compensate those who are suffering because of it.

The United States, which produces 36 percent of the world's greenhouse gasses, has refused to sign the agreement. Even the residents of those countries that have signed are unlikely to change their lifestyles and economies because a tiny Polynesian nation is about to be drowned.

A three-metre rise, of course, would have a dramatic effect on the environs of Port Jackson and Port Phillip Bay. It will be a bit late to start reducing greenhouse gas emissions *then*, however.

This is a well-made pogram (from the New Zealand Natural History Unit) which really brings home an awareness of what will be lost, and what a personal tragedy it will be for the Tuvaluans if they do have to relocate to New Zealand or Australia, as many are already preparing to do.

It is marred only by a curious insistence on giving "both sides" of the picture, which in this case entails constant intercutting of comments by someone identified as "Dr Vincent Grey, Climate Scientist", who denies the veracity of evidence for global warming, rejects claims that sea levels are rising, pooh-poohs data showing greatly increased cyclone activity, and culminates his extraordinary reactionary running diatribe with

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the pronouncement that the Kyoto Agreement is "a fraud".

For the rest of us, one intriguing question is why this program, which was made in 2001, has only just reached our screens.

A quick word about a couple of other programs that are worth watching this week: *Troubled Minds: The Lithium Revolution* (SBS 8.30pm Thursday) tells the story of Australian doctor John Cade, who led the "lithium revolution".

In the 1940s, when Freudian psychoanalysis, electric shock and lobotomy were the dominant methods used to treat mental illness, Dr Cade was the first person to successfully treat a bi-polar condition (or manic-depression, as it was known then) with the simple salt lithium.

His wartime experiences had convinced Dr Cade that nutrition and body chemistry were determining factors in mental health, but it would take 20 years of struggle before lithium was finally accepted as a treatment. Drug companies

remained uninterested in lithium because it was a naturally occurring element that could not be exploited commercially.

*Indian Royalty: Beyond The Veil* (SBS 7.30pm Friday) is about two filthy rich former Indian princes who are seeking to turn their gilded palaces into swanky hotels to attract the tourist dollar.

SBS is promoting the program as "providing a glimpse behind the allure of centuries' old dynasties to juxtapose two different men from similar privileged pasts, each of whom are trying to carve out a sustainable future for themselves and their families without abandoning their illustrious familial legacies".

The people whose labour created these "illustrious familial legacies" for our two princes, live in utter poverty outside the gates of the palaces they are not allowed to enter. That former royalty is allowed to continue to enjoy a life of wealth and privilege amidst such abject poverty is shameful, even disgusting. ☹

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# Where to after Howard?

**The most important task in the federal elections on Saturday October 9 is to defeat the Howard Government. In the present conditions this means the election of a Labor Government. The two major parties are spending millions of dollars on highly researched and sophisticated campaigns to buy votes. The mass media outlets are flooded with their propaganda.**

The defeat of the Howard Government would be a very important victory against the policies and ideology of the extreme right forces in Australia but how far does it take the people of Australia?

While there is a widespread belief in the need for change, the main political parties are not interested in delivering it.

## The limits of Labor

What would Labor offer? Would it bring about the much-desired changes?

Experience over recent decades has shown that it makes relatively little difference whichever of the two major parties is in power. It was the Hawke/Keating Labor governments that took the running on economic rationalist policies. They privatised, deregulated, introduced competition policy and facilitated the attack on wages and working conditions.

Economic rationalists believe in a total reliance on private enterprise and on market forces. They see moneymaking and profit as the dominant goals of society and place these objectives above the needs of the people.

**The most important element in this broad front is, in our opinion, an organised and active working class which also adopts policies to win the support of other anti-corporate sections of society.**

There is nothing to suggest that a Latham Labor government would abandon economic rationalism. Labor has made no commitment to abolish the GST, return the Commonwealth Bank and Telstra to full public ownership, or halt the casualisation of the workforce.

Its promises on Medicare – originally introduced by Labor as a universal health care system – fall far short of what is required. Latham's promises will in fact give more large handouts to the private hospital system. Latham, consistent with his economic rationalist credentials, champions "free trade" and globalisation and plans to wind back the welfare system.

The advocates of economic rationalism are the spokespersons of the biggest and most powerful sections of private capital. They are the representatives of transnational.

## For a new direction in politics

Economic rationalism has created an expanding web of social problems throughout the world – mass unemployment, poverty, homelessness, disease, drug addiction, inadequate or no education, lack of medical care and environmental damage.

Australia has, up to this time, been somewhat protected from the worst consequences of economic rationalist policies because of its rich resources, small population and close proximity to the huge Asian markets. But even in Australia the attack on economic and social conditions and people's rights is intensifying.

It is for these reasons that the Communist Party of Australia believes that a government of a new type is needed, a government committed to a massive redistribution of wealth in favour of the majority.

Such a government would support the public education system and really put "care" back into the health system. It would reverse the process towards the casualisation of jobs and increasing hours of work. It would implement policies providing a progressive tax system rather than one which gives concessions to the big companies and the wealthy.

It would end Australia's subservience to the United States and offer friendly and mutually beneficial relations to all countries. It would take Australia out of war and cut back the bloated military expenditure.

farmers, pensioners, small business, the professionally employed, Indigenous people, women, migrants and others.

The forces creating environmental devastation throughout the world are the same as those attacking the rights and working conditions of workers. Big capital is behind the agri-business now driving many farmers off their land. The huge transnationals, including the arms manufacturers, are responsible for the drive to war.

It is big capital that has really taken over the privatised Commonwealth Bank, Telstra, Qantas, the airports and privatised rail networks.

However, we believe that there is strong and growing resistance to this direction in Australian politics and economic life.

The varied social forces must be brought together to change the present policies of the major parties. The most important element in this broad front is, in our opinion, an organised and active working class which also adopts policies to win the support of other anti-corporate sections of society.

In building a democratic front and establishing a new type of government, care must be taken not to exclude any potential supportive party, organisation or individual, even though different opinions and policies will inevitably exist on various questions.

## Principles of united action

Building a political alternative to the two major parties means being prepared to work together with other organisations and individuals for real change, irrespective of some differences.

It means building co-operation and unity on a principled basis including mutual respect and honesty with consultation at every step of the unity-building process.

Through the process of joint work, trust will be built. This and common interests will be the binding force that strengthens the coalition and makes it a viable and lasting alliance. Unity and agreement should grow as a process. It cannot be ordained by any particular organisation attempting to dominate others.

Where agreement is not reached on an issue, the issue should be put aside with each organisation free to express its views using its own facilities. Once agreements are reached, however, all organisations must help to popularise and win support for policies.

Discussion and agreement at leadership level must be backed up and deepened by co-operation at all levels of the organisations involved.

Ideological differences should not stand in the way of co-operation on issues held in common. A contest of ideas between co-operating organisations is natural but should be contested in a manner that does not undermine the unity achieved but contributes to clarity and strengthens unity and the



solidarity of the organisations involved.

## Parliament and winning Government

The parliamentary arena is an important area in which coalitions or alliances of organisations can work together against reactionary policies. At the same time, parliamentary work has to be based on work outside parliament to encourage activities by NGOs, trade unions, professional organisations and others.

These two fields of work do not exclude one another but go hand-in-hand. It is the responsibility of parliamentarians to ensure that voters are kept informed of work done in parliament, have a say in formulating policies and are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of political life.

Many more left and progressive parliamentarians are needed at all levels of government. Respected, knowledgeable and active participants from left and progressive political parties, trade unions, environmental, peace, educational, Indigenous and community organisations, health and democratic rights bodies, all should be encouraged to stand for office – not contesting against one another but working for the common good.

Progressive parliamentarians can publicise, resource and help to build the people's activities outside parliament. When a sufficient number of such parliamentarians have been elected they could form a government committed to fulfilling an agreed program of policies.

Such a government would be democratic, multi-party and answerable to the people. As the vast majority of the population is

made up of working people, we believe that the representatives of the working class would form the core of the new type of democratic government.

Such a government would implement policies to substantially curb the power of the big corporations and would encourage supportive activity by community organisations, trade unions, parents and citizens groups, etc.

The many organisations that could come together to form a new government must each contribute to the formulation of an agreed program of policies.

## What the major parties fear

It is the formation of such a government that the major parties fear above all. Legislation regarding the registration of parties makes it very difficult for smaller parties to stand candidates in their own name and the powerful elites are planning further changes to the electoral system to make it harder still.

In the elections on October 9, the outcome will be either a Labor or Liberal government. There is however the possibility of the election of a number of Greens and independents to the House of Representatives and even the formation of a minority government dependent on some of these Members to govern. There will be even more elected to the Senate.

A good result for the Greens and other left and progressive candidates in these elections could be the beginning of the formation of an alternative, pro-people democratic parliamentary force and the popularisation of alternative policies and the idea that more substantial change can be achieved. ✪



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