

POLICE TERROR

NSW Police can now invade your home

You're at work, or buying groceries, or at the beach. You come home. There are a few items out of place but generally things are as you left them. What you do not know is that while you were out the police were going through your belongings. They secretly entered your home, photographed your correspondence, examined your most personal and intimate possessions, made copies of photographs and carried out forensic tests. This is the scenario under new legislation introduced by the NSW Carr Government.

Once this legislation becomes law it could be used in relation to almost all terrorist offences under Commonwealth legislation in the name of that ever-expanding umbrella labelled "anti-terrorism".

Carr has once again broken new ground to violate people's rights on behalf of the Howard Government: the first was the federal-state coordinated increase in powers given to the Federal Police, ASIO, ASIS and the military in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

The NSW police will not be obliged to inform you they have broken into your home until six months after the event. In addition, they will be able to bug your phone and computer and your home continuously for three months.

A judge will be able to issue a warrant if he or she "is satisfied there is a reasonable suspicion that relevant offence has been or is likely to be committed". The judge can also extend indefinitely the six-month period that the occupant of a searched premises is kept in the dark.

It will be easier for police to covertly obtain search warrants,

which will also allow them to seize property, access computers, make copies of documents, operate electronic equipment and carry out forensic tests without revealing the purpose behind the investigation.

Carr was not coy about what he was doing, announcing, "These changes will give police the power to observe potential terrorists covertly over long periods and develop intelligence about their network".

Police will also have increased powers to spy on those locked in the NSW prison system: as Carr put it, to monitor "inmates in our prisons who may be involved with terrorist groups".

Prisoners targeted are to have their contact visits limited and their mail more closely scrutinised. But other questions remain: how monitoring in the prison system itself will be increased, and which category of prisoner will come under surveillance.

Presumably the hours prisoners are asleep and their visits to the toilet will no longer be considered private and personal activities.

And people are mistaken if



they believe these laws won't affect them as long as they "don't do anything wrong". If you know anyone in the peace and environment movements, or anyone in a political organisation or party outside the mainstream; if you actively support your union or if you have protested against government policies – or are connected in any way with someone who has – you will potentially be caught up in the widening net of police powers.

Or maybe someone will simply, anonymously, email/phone/write to the police about what they have perceived as your "suspicious"

behaviour, using the terrorist information hotlines set up by the Federal Government.

Cameron Murphy, president of the NSW Council for Civil Liberties, pointed out that NSW has the toughest anti-terror laws in the world. "There's no evidence these additional powers will assist in finding and prosecuting terrorists", Mr Murphy said.

In addition, the increased powers will "exponentially increase the risk of police corruption". He rejected as "rubbish" Carr's claim that the new laws would have helped police catch Willie Brigitte,

who was arrested in Australia on terrorism charges.

"In the Brigitte matter, the federal agency was aware of it. And what did they do? They chose to deport him."

NSW Greens MP Lee Rhiannon accused Carr of using scare tactics to deflect attention from his government's mismanagement. "These laws will not make society safer – it's another massive over-reaction by the Premier."

She said allowing police to conduct property searches without telling the occupants removes another fundamental legal right. ☘

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Obscenity

No event illustrates more vividly the obscenity and moral degradation of capitalism than last week's bolt by the two directors of James Hardie that are responsible for the denial of funds to the victims of asbestos related cancers. They resigned from their company positions and walked away with \$10 million between them while the fund for cancer victims is just about dry.

Let's remember their names and inscribe them in the hall of infamy – Peter Macdonald and Peter Shafron – former chief executive office and chief financial officer respectively. They have been responsible for a series of manoeuvres designed to deny cancer sufferers compensation.

No doubt they knew exactly what they were doing and their resignations are apparently not going to bring an end to manoeuvres of the present company directors headed by Chairwoman, Meredith Hellicar. She must also have been well aware of what the former company chiefs were up to. Following their resignations Ms Hellicar is reported to have said that the company had no legal obligation to pay asbestos victims. No doubt she would argue strongly that the company had a legal obligation to pay the former company officers their golden handshakes.

These are not isolated events. There is a long string of such corrupt practices. Recall the corrupt behaviour of Brad Cooper who paid out and a Mr Howard who received envelopes of money as bribes in relation to the bankruptcy of HIH insurance. Part of the conspiracy between the two was aimed at extracting about \$14 million out of HIH three months before its collapse.

Then there was the infamous Rodney Adler who also jumped ship before the HIH shipwreck left HIH staff and thousands of insurance policy holders with worthless pieces of paper. In fact five of HIH's board members resigned in the months before the collapse suggesting that they knew well the real state of affairs and were collecting their money and running – "cut and run" as the Prime Minister would call it.

There were others involved such as the company auditor Arthur Anderson – also involved in the ENRON collapse in the United States. It was by no means a case of a few rotten apples in an otherwise healthy business barrel. It was greed and corruption incorporated. HIH had claimed assets of \$940 million as of June 30, 2000 yet a short time later it was in the hands of liquidators. One can only wonder who else (besides those who have been charged with corruption) actually helped themselves to this \$940 million and left people homeless, retirees without their savings and staff without jobs.

Then there is the current case of Mr Musingku, a man who is wanted in Papua New Guinea and Bougainville for ripping off many citizens with infamous pyramid schemes which were used to lure PNG and Bougainville citizens into parting with their very small savings on the promise of "get rich quick" returns. Millions of dollars are owed by this corrupt individual who has suddenly returned to Bougainville in an Australian plane carrying weapons. (See story page 5)

There are many, many other examples of corruption in which people are ripped off and left stranded without jobs, without the savings they invested and in some cases without the homes they bought.

"Capital eschews no profit, or very small profit, just as Nature was formerly said to abhor a vacuum. With adequate profit, capital is very bold. A certain 10 percent will ensure its employment anywhere; 20 percent certain will produce eagerness; 50 percent, positive audacity; 100 percent will make it ready to trample on all human laws; 300 percent, and there is not a crime at which it will scruple, nor a risk it will not run, even to the chance of its owner being hanged. If turbulence and strife will bring a profit, it will freely encourage both. Smuggling and the slave-trade have amply proved all that is here stated." Quoted by Marx as a footnote to *Capital* from T J Dunning in *Trades' Union and Strikes* (Marx Engels Collected Works Vol 35 p748)

This evaluation of capital made more than 150 years ago remains true today. If anything capital has become even more rapacious as it reaches out again to control the whole world.

Press Fund

The Howard Government cannot move fast enough, privatising every public asset and service that can turn a profit, attacking the trade union movement to provide cheap labour to the transnationals, especially those ripping into the economy under the banner of the Free Trade Agreement with the USA. There is a period coming that will call for great struggle from the working people. *The Guardian* needs your financial support to play its crucial part in the fight.

Warmest thanks to those who contributed this week:

Evelyn Spiers \$20, Bert Appleton \$40.

This week's total \$60. Progressive total \$9740

New offices opened

Andrew Jackson

The new headquarters of the Communist Party of Australia were officially opened at a function held last Saturday, October 23. The function followed a public open day held the previous Sunday.

The event marked the completion of the move from the old offices in Campbell St to the new building in Buckingham St, Surry Hills.

Guests representing trade unions, solidarity, peace and community organisations attended, as well as Central Committee members, State and Branch Secretaries, and *Guardian* staff.

We were also honoured with diplomatic representatives from the Socialist countries as well as representatives of fraternal Communist Parties.

The upstairs function room was packed to overflowing when Party General Secretary Peter Symon welcomed the guests.

A ceremonial red ribbon was cut by Kassim Abood, the representative of the Iraqi Communist Party. Peter Symon introduced Comrade Kassim as belonging to the "Party of Martyrs", in recognition of the lives sacrificed by countless Communists in their struggle to bring about peace, democracy and socialism in Iraq.

Comrade Peter thanked Party members, *Guardian* readers and friends for their financial contributions and physical efforts in assisting the relocation. He expressed special thanks to the professional and trades people who offered their time and services to get the building operational, including the electricity, telephones and computer network.

In a grave tone Comrade Peter reminded the guests we were about to enter "one of the darkest periods in Australia's history" under the fourth Howard Government. With control of the Senate, and despite his post-election reassurances, Mr Howard would not only push through his nine-year backlog of legislation, but would escalate and widen his reactionary agenda.

To counter this offensive and defeat the Howard Government in three years time would require the combined effort of all progressive organisations and individuals, said Comrade Peter.

He then invited the representatives of various community organisations in attendance to make use of Party facilities. "We have function rooms, we have facilities, a photocopier, a library and a skilled staff. Please use them!" ☺



CPA President Hannah Middleton with guests at the opening



Enjoying food and conversation



CPA General Secretary, Peter Symon addressing the gathering



Kassim Abood, representative of the Iraqi Communist Party, cutting the ribbon

Dracula in charge of the blood bank

NSW Premier Bob Carr's proposal to hand over responsibility for the health system of Australia to the Howard Government will inevitably lead to more privatisation and the introduction of even more elements of the chaotic US-style private, managed health care system. It will lead to Medicare being undermined further and its replacement as a universal public health system by ever-shrinking "safety nets".

The Federal Government is already responsible for aged-care services. Everyone knows that as these services have been privatized, it has been starved of funds while costs have jumped. The number of health care workers is far below what is needed for this service to operate efficiently for the growing number of elderly people in the community.

Even Bob Carr complains of the number of elderly people using the emergency departments of public hospitals or staying in hospital beds because they cannot find places in retirement villages.

He said, "Mums bring their sons with soccer injuries into emergency departments... These are GP style problems. At the other end, there is a shortage of aged-care beds." What will handing over control to the Commonwealth do to remedy these problems.

But Bob Carr, while recognising this state of affairs, is willing

to hand the whole of the public hospital system over to the Federal Government. He fails to draw the conclusion that the responsibility for this state of affairs rests with the Federal Government, the same Government to which he proposes to hand the rest of the health system.

It is fairly obvious that Bob Carr's proposal springs from the problems that the NSW State Government is experiencing in administering the public hospital system. Rather than setting conditions of a hand-over such as the maintenance of Medicare as a universal system and its extension to dental and optical services and the full funding of the public health and hospital system, he meekly talks of the Howard Government now having a mandate and that it is necessary to accept "reality".

Assault on education

At the same time as proposing to hand over the health system, Bob Carr has called for the Commonwealth to give the States full responsibility for the education system including TAFE.

The Prime Minister immediately rejected Carr's proposal saying that the Commonwealth Government is adamant that any changes must not undercut his election promises. One such promise was to establish a system of mostly private technical colleges which would be funded

directly by the Commonwealth and is clearly designed to compete with and destroy the existing TAFE colleges. Teachers would be employed on individual employment contracts and paid according to merit, thereby breaking down existing conditions of teachers employed in the public system. The union would be excluded.

The Howard Government will continue its assault on public education, including its massive support for private schools, and extend the privatisation process into TAFE.

The responses to the Carr Government's proposals by various public figures fail to recognise the inevitable consequences of Federal

Government control of either health or education and that the essence of the policies of both Federal and State Governments is to push for more privatisation. Their aim is to turn both health and education into "for profit" services. The result would be greater inefficiencies, higher costs, and a deterioration in services for the majority of the community, particularly for those on lower incomes.

The President of the Australian Medical Association (AMA) described Carr's proposal as "exciting", believing that it would end "blame shifting and cost-shifting" and could result in a more effective health system. Other commentators

claimed that a single source of funding would unify the health system.

The reality is that the difficulties facing both public health and public education are not as a result of bureaucracy or even the undoubted conflicts between Federal and State Governments. The real source of the present crisis is to be found in the policies of both and State and Federal Governments pushing for privatisation of the public health and public education systems and the starving of these services of the necessary funds.

Putting health under the control of the Howard Government is tantamount to putting Dracula in charge of the blood-bank. ☘



Australia's consumption skyrockets

Australians are consuming the earth's resources at an alarming rate, with an ecological footprint per capita that is now 3.5 times the world average.

"We're running on empty, Australia's natural resource consumption is one of the worst in the world", said Greg Bourne, Australian CEO of the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF). "We must push forward on finding a balance between our consumption of natural resources and the earth's ability to renew them."

The *Living Planet Report 2004*, released by the WWF, shows humans now consume 20 per cent more natural resources than the

earth can produce, and that the number of terrestrial, freshwater and marine species fell on average by 40 per cent between 1970 and 2000.

The Living Planet Index reveals that from 1970 to 2000 populations of terrestrial and marine species dropped by 30 per cent, while freshwater populations plummeted by a spectacular 50 per cent. The WWF believes this is a direct consequence of increasing human demand for food, fibre, energy and water.

Sharpened and enhanced data confirm the trend pointed out in previous *Living Planet* reports.

Our "ecological footprint" – that is the impact of humanity on the earth – has increased two-and-a-half

fold since 1961. The "footprint" is the amount of land it takes to sustain each person and now has an area of 7.7 hectares per person in Australia. Of course, some people consume much more and many others much less than this rough average in our very unequal society.

According to the report, Australians have the fourth worst ecological footprint after the United Arab Emirates, US and Kuwait.

The "footprint" of the average American is around 9.5 hectares while Australians have a 7.7 ha, Canadians a 6.4 ha and British 5.4 ha "footprint". The 2004 report shows the world average footprint is 2.2 ha per person while there is only

1.8 hectares of land to provide natural resources for each of the people on the planet. The earth's human population is consuming more than it can produce.

Particularly alarming is Australia's energy "footprint" – dominated by our use of fossil fuels such as coal, gas and oil. This is the fastest growing component of the ecological "footprint". Globally it has increased by nearly 700 per cent between 1961 and 2001. Australia needs more than four global hectares per person to absorb the amount of carbon dioxide produced from burning fossil fuels.

"A sustainable Australia means we dramatically reduce our impact on the environment – we must urgently step up efforts to switch to renewable energies and promote energy efficient technologies, buildings and transport systems", Mr Bourne said.

"Only a quantum leap in our

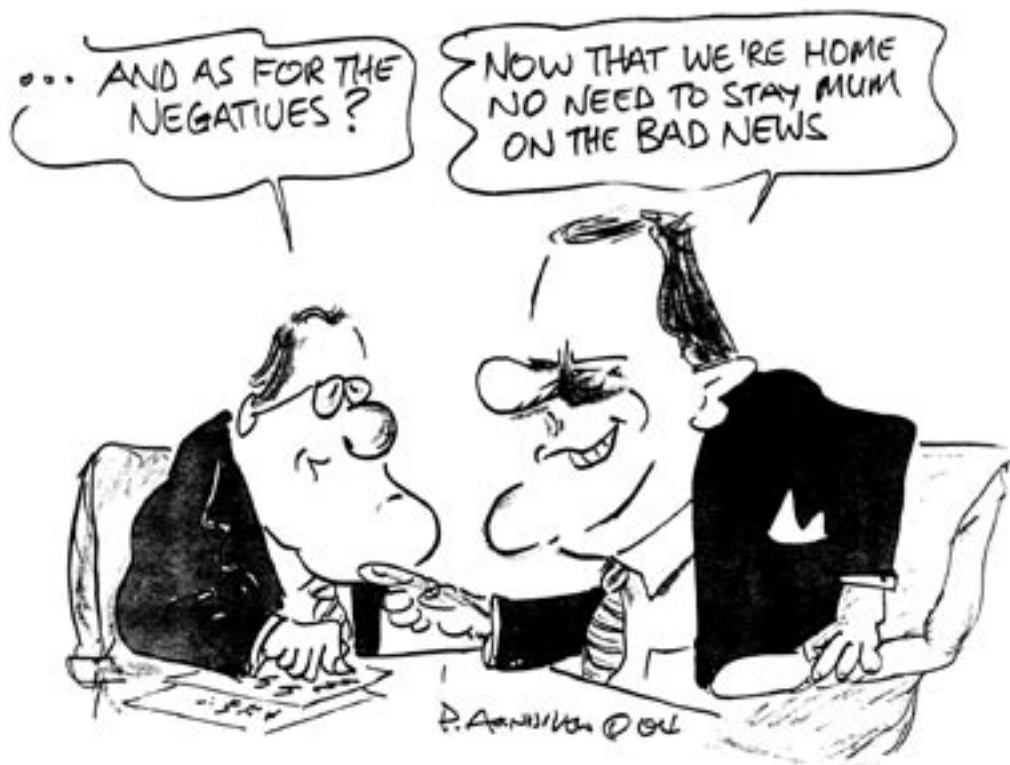
nation's efforts to deal with key threats such as declining water quality and wetland health, weeds and pest animals, States still land-clearing, and climate change will reduce our impact".

The year 2004 has marked a worrying time for Australian native species, with 58 new plants and animals added to the Threatened Species List. There are now 1695 plants and animals facing the threat of extinction in Australia.

The WWF estimates that up to 20 per cent of Australia's half million or so plants and animals could be threatened with extinction by 2010.

The *Living Planet Report* did not consider the social political and economic causes of the very unequal size of the "footprints" of the world's countries or the relationship between the increase of corporate power over the globe and the depletion of its resources. ☘

Pete's Corner



Commemorating LEN FOX (1905 - 2004) COMRADES UP THE CROSS

LEN FOX the journalist, artist, social activist and Mona Brand, his playwright-partner, lived up The Cross for some fifty years. The exhibition of Len Fox's paintings, sketches and posters reveals his commitment to the Peace and Civil Rights movements, the Green Bans and workplace politics.

runs until 30 October.

The Cross Art Projects
33 Roslyn Street Kings Cross Sydney 2011

Ph: 02 93572058

Flying kangaroo's strike breakers

Janice Hamilton

Airline unions are gearing up for a bumpy Christmas after Qantas Chief Executive Officer Geoff Dixon admitted to shareholders at the company's annual general meeting last week that airline management has been training up to 1000 strikebreakers in the event of any strike action by flight attendants. The Flight Attendants Association threatened the strike action when its enterprise agreement expires in December after Qantas announced that it would be relocating 400 long haul flight attendants to London in order to cut costs.

The confrontation is shaping up as a post-election opportunity for the Howard Government to kick off its union-busting agenda.

The admission from the Qantas chief came as one of the trainee flight attendants, Erika Gutierrez, spoke publicly about the conditions of her limited term 11-month contract, or at least what she thought it was when she signed up.

In an interview on the ABC's 7.30 Report Ms Gutierrez said that

on her first day she had realised what she had signed up for, which was basically two weeks of training.

"Once the training was completed, I would not actually be employed by Qantas. My contract would not commence until 11 December, so that approximately meant six to eight weeks without any work at all.

"They also advised that you weren't to actually be employed by anybody else at that particular point in time, and if in the event that there were strike action, that there may be an opportunity for us actually to fly [and] we would be paid out four week's wages, then on your merry way."

In response to Ms Gutierrez's statement Michael Mijatov, from the Flight Attendants Association said, "This current management of Qantas has gone too far.

"What it's doing to these people, playing with their lives is, is utterly despicable."

Mr Mijatov said that his members were ready to fight for their job security.



Other airline unions whose agreements expire at the same time also said their members would join the flight attendants in taking industrial action.

The Australian Services Union (ASU), which covers check in, call centre and administrative staff, said its members would walk off the job in response to a company decision to increase the fees paid to non-executive directors by 66 per cent.

According to the ASU National Secretary Linda White, the productivity from the airline's work-

force had been unprecedented in the airline's history. Yet workers had been offered a three percent increase while executive salaries were soaring.

"In 1999 the CEO's salary was about 30 times a professional engineer, so we're talking a person who has engineering qualifications. These days at Qantas, the CEO's salary is about 60 times a professional engineer and that's a staggering growth and differential in a short period of time."

Linda White says now that the flying kangaroo is confronting

strikes with an alternative workforce, others will follow.

"This will be commonplace in this country", she warned.

Prime Minister John Howard said that he supported the company taking the action claiming that we live in a global economy and that workers should learn to live with it.

In an interview with the 7.30 Report's Kerry O'Brien Howard also indicated that the government would move to stop strike action in all essential services as outlined in the Coalition's "Fight Back" policies written in 1992. ✪

Five years, 524 truckies killed

A \$55,000 fine imposed on a transport operator whose driver was incinerated on the Pacific Highway in NSW has sparked calls for Workcover to go after the "Mr Bigs" of road transport. The Transport Workers' Union's (TWU) Scott Connelly said 524 people had died in NSW truck accidents since 37-year-old, Darri Haines, was killed in a 1999 fireball, after bodging logbooks and consuming methamphetamines in a bid to meet schedules.

"This is a step in the right direction", Connelly said. "But Workcover needs to go after the clients if it is serious about road safety.

"It's the Woolworths, Coles and BHPs - the clients - who set the schedules and drive the pricing structures.

"Under the current OH&S regime their behaviour can be addressed but, despite 524 deaths in five years, it has never been done.

"The clients are the root of the problem and their behaviour has to be addressed if we are going to make our roads safer for everybody."

Mr Connelly said Industrial Relations Commission vice president Michael Walton's decision was a "landmark ruling" because it established that highways were workplaces for OH&S purposes.

It also gives Workcover access to rosters, log books and records, allowing them to write prohibition notices before accidents occur.

The decision appears to determine that, under NSW OH&S legislation, risk of fatigue is enough to warrant Workcover action.

Commissioner Walton found long-haul driver Haynes had been making deliveries, up and down the NSW coast, fuelled by methamphetamines, because he was afraid he would lose his job if he didn't meet schedules set by his employer, Jim Hitchcock.

He found Hitchcock guilty of failing to provide safe conditions for his employee, after hearing Haynes had clocked up 5400 kilometres in the week before his death.

Hitchcock's company, Sayogi Pty Ltd, "paid very little, if any, heed to the risk, either to its employed drivers or to anyone else at risk of an accident", Commissioner Walton said.

He found "fatigue" was a primary cause of the accident and said Hitchcock's company had "provided incentives" for drivers to increase their hours behind the wheel.

"The company pressured its drivers to meet delivery deadlines resulting in breaches of the logbook. Drivers risked their jobs or incomes if they failed to comply."

Commissioner Connelly said such fines could drive small operators out of the industry but, in all likelihood, their contracts would be picked up by other operators on similarly unrealistic terms and conditions.

According to TWU figures, 77 people have died in NSW truck accidents so far this year.

Long hours and unrealistic deadlines are only part of the picture. Shonky diesel fuel is another killer. ✪

Hardie rewards asbestos rats

Unions are demanding that more than \$10 million in payouts to disgraced James Hardie executives go to victims of their asbestos scam. NSW Labor Council Secretary John Robertson said the payout again highlighted the fact that James Hardie had learnt nothing in recent months about ethical behaviour.

James Hardie last week announced that it would pay CEO Peter McDonald US\$6.5 million, or A\$8.83 million, to leave the company while former chief financial officer Peter Shafron, who has also resigned, would receive US\$865,000.

Mr Robertson said he was concerned that the company, in the middle of negotiations to meet its compensation liabilities, was "out of control".

"This is an insult to victims of asbestos who are being told James Hardie does not have to meet their legal obligations and a slap in the face to negotiators trying to secure a just outcome", Mr Robertson said.

"This company just does not get it - they are rewarding unethical behaviour with riches beyond the dreams of the people whose lives have been and will be destroyed by asbestos."

"If the company had any regard for the victims of this elaborate scam, they would put these millions into the compensation fund rather than into the pockets of those responsible for this sorry affair."

He was backed by Australian Manufacturing Workers Union NSW Secretary Paul Bastian who

said the payment was an affront to people who had contracted deadly asbestos diseases by working for James Hardie.

"How James Hardie could find their way through to doing that reinforces that this company has no sense of corporate morality or contrition towards its victims", said Mr Bastian.

The conduct of both Macdonald and Shafron is being investigated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, after the Jackson Inquiry recommended that charges for breach of corporations law be laid.

James Hardie has appointed promoted Louis Gries, previously the head of the company's US operations, as interim chief executive officer. ✪

Kentucky Fried ducks conviction

A fast food company that pleaded guilty to frying a 17-year-old in a vat of oil has had an occupational health and safety (OH&S) conviction quashed on appeal. Daniel Guyomar was standing on a fryer to clean an extraction hood at a Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) outlet at Cranbourne when he fell into a deep fryer. He was hospitalised for 19 days following the incident.

Southern Restaurants, operators of the outlet, were fined \$25,000 by the Magistrate's Court. A Victorian judge overturned the conviction and the fine after hearing evidence the employee had received written procedures.

"The message that this sends is if you can afford to appeal then you can look forward to getting off", said Renata Musolino, a safety information officer for the Victorian Trades Hall Council. "Would KFC

executives let their own children be treated like this?"

"Relying on written procedures when dealing with any employee is inappropriate", Ms Musolino pointed out. "Particularly young people who need to be supervised.

"The industrial conditions in the fast food industry mean that workers are often forced to take unsafe practices due to pressure."

The store where he suffered the injury was not Guyomar's normal workplace and he was unfamiliar with it. The job was usually done by another employee before the store opened before the fryer was turned on.

"The instructions he was given were laughable", said Ms Musolino. "One was basically, 'use a step ladder and don't fall off!'"

After the appeal the Cranbourne KFC restaurant franchisee was placed on a two-year good behav-

our bond, without conviction, and ordered to donate \$10,000 to charity.

WorkSafe Victoria's executive director, John Merritt, said with Christmas approaching and many young workers entering the workforce for the first time, employers had to look to training and supervision.

"Employers and workers need to realise that a serious injury received at 15, 16 or 17 might be with them for the next 60 years", Mr Merritt said.

"Employers need to anticipate what could go wrong, and have the procedures to ensure it does not. Written procedures are only part of the story. They need to be followed. That's where supervision comes in.

"Young workers need to be careful, and ask their boss for help if they're not sure if they're working in a safe way." ✪

Sydney

**Celebrate the anniversary of
The Great October Socialist Revolution**

**Sunday November 7 at 2pm
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills**

Donation \$10 (\$4 concession)
Food provided / drinks available
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CPA Sydney Central Branch

"Chilling" decision hits union rights

Corporate Australia is seeking massive fines against the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) in Western Australia and four rank and file delegates. Employers are expected to argue that months of on-again, off-again industrial action at Westfarmers Coal was "unprotected", exposing the union, its officials and delegates to damages that could run into millions of dollars.

Westfarmers Coal has issued writs for unspecified damages against WA AMWU officials Jock Ferguson, Colin Saunders, four workplace delegates, and their union in Collie.

unions right of entry, delegate education and leave provisions.

Corporate lawyers, Clayton Utz, are representing Westfarmers Coal in the action.

Jock Ferguson says it will be a "lawyers' picnic". "Lawyers will be the big winners in this and everyone else will pay through the nose", he said. "It's not hard to guess what John Howard did before he went into Parliament [a lawyer]."

"This situation will settle down eventually but, in the meantime, there will be a lot of pain, suffering and expense.

"The High Court has opened up a difficult situation because nobody

workers, employers, lawyers and politicians.

Senior Sydney-based industrial lawyer, Lachlan Riches, said recently that the High Court had left industrial relations operatives high and dry with its Electrolux ruling.

"They have left it ambiguous as to what the ground rules are and, as a result, fundamental rights that go back 80 years will be challenged and re-examined", he warned.

Immediately after the ruling, a string of employers, including Dandenong-based truck manufacturer, Iveco, tried to have clauses in enterprise agreements rubbed out and industrial actions declared illegal.

Industrial law firms began circulating employers with advice that long-agreed provisions might now be illegal and render entire documents, including wages, unenforceable.

Justice Michael Kirby warned fellow judges in a dissenting opinion on Electrolux that their decision would have a "chilling effect" on collective bargaining.

He called the majority view "impractical" and "narrow", suggesting it was divorced from workplace reality.

"To expose an industrial organisation of employees to grave, even critical, civil liability for industrial action, determined years later to have been unprotected, is to introduce a serious chilling effect into negotiations that such organisations can undertake on behalf of their members", Justice Kirby wrote.

The case is set down for hearing in Perth on November 4 and 5 before Justice French in the Federal Court. ☼

Workers who genuinely believed they were acting within the law, can be sued retrospectively for millions of dollars over actions that employers also believed were lawful at the time.

The case is based on the recent Electrolux ruling where the High Court found that industrial action taken in support of claims that were "not pertaining" to the employer-employee relationship was not protected. (See *Guardian* September 12, 2004)

A proposal in WA to grant Collie tradesmen local government representation leave is one of half a dozen clauses Westfarmers Coal is seeking to have ruled "not pertaining" to the employer-employee relationship.

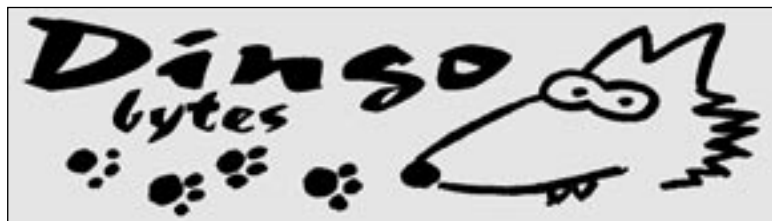
Westfarmers has also taken exception to clauses that seek to control contracting and deliver trade

knows what the rules of engagement are any more. All protected action over the last six years appears to be up for grabs as a result of its Electrolux ruling.

"Workers who genuinely believed they were acting within the law, can be sued retrospectively for millions of dollars over actions that employers also believed were lawful at the time.

"This case is a classic example. Westfarmers Coal is going to the Federal Court to have clauses ruled unlawful that it has already agreed to in negotiations."

There will be intense interest in the Westfarmers case from



Donation details for NSW local government elections last March from the state's Electoral Funding Authority reveal that pro-development councillors on Tweed Shire Council were the beneficiaries of \$341,000-plus campaign donations from some of the region's biggest developers. Fran Kelly, Coastal Campaigner for the Total Environment Centre, reacted to the Tweed Shire revelations with a call to ban developer donations from all levels of government. "Democratic elections become a sham when those with the money, seeking to make yet more money, can exercise yet more influence", Ms Kelly said.

The Association for Independent Schools receives more than 20 complaints a month from disgruntled parents who say that their children are not receiving the education that they, the parents, pay for. Dr Keith Tronc, a former associate professor at Griffith University who recently presented a paper called *A Plaintiff Lawyers Guide to Suing Non Government Schools*, cited a number of examples where independent schools were not practicing what they preached. These included a case where a 16-year-old whose complaints of sustained bullying were dismissed by the school principal as "bullshit". Some advice for those parents! PUBLIC IS BEST!

Under the cloak of secrecy the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority in June approved an application that will see Sydney's Luna Park subdivided into four separate land titles. Gerard van Rijswijk, chairperson of the Protectors for Sydney Foreshores, said that pieces of Luna Park had been removed from public ownership without any guarantees of funds going back to support the park. A number of different development companies, such as Multiplex and Metro Edgley, are also taking out leases on parts of the park. Mr Rijswijk called on NSW Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, Craig Knowles, to intervene and declare the subdivisions invalid.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is cultural imperialism. Rupert Murdoch's Fox Studios and all those Australian actors in Hollywood blockbusters might fool some people into thinking Australia has a thriving movie industry. But, like the films themselves, this impression is but an illusion. Local film production has fallen, from 28 a year in the late 1990s to just 15 last year. And as for television, in the last 12 months a long list of Australian television shows have been axed to make way for more US product. Australian in-house produced drama on free-to-air television has dropped from five programs to two. The SBS and ABC networks are currently not producing any in-house drama at all.

A sinister game on Bougainville?

The peace process between Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Bougainville has been slowly and painfully moving in a positive direction thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Governor of Bougainville, John Momis; Joseph Kabui, the former leader of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army; and Sir Peter Barter, the PNG Government Minister responsible for Bougainville affairs. Years of fighting and many deaths led eventually to an agreement to end the conflict and search for a peaceful way forward to Bougainville independence.

As the PNG newspaper *The National* declared on October 20, "As each month passes, the island moves closer to the goals now so clearly longed-for by all thinking Bougainvilleans".

Australian connection

Into this situation has now flown a Cessna aircraft belonging to Tasman Australia Airlines and its pilot Peter McGee. On board was a Mr Noah Musingku and a cargo of high-powered weapons. The aircraft

landed at the decommissioned and disused Aropa airstrip. Another Australian, Andrew Reid is the owner of Tasman Australia Airlines and he is reported to have directed the flight and landing at Aropa.

The National commented: "Many will question the sanity of a man [Mr Musingku] who arrives illegally at Bougainville's disused Aropa air strip with high powered weapons, while the rest of the population heads towards the disarmament and destruction of the many guns still on the island. Does Mr Musingku wish to re-ignite the Bougainville Civil War?"

But is it a case of insanity or is it more likely the action of some nefarious forces (including some in Australia) who would like to see the peace process come tumbling down so that they can more effectively fish in the conflict that could follow a break-down of the peace process?

Mr Musingku is wanted in PNG for a pyramid scam that fraudulently ripped millions of dollars from unsuspecting people there. He is wanted for corruption and money laundering, yet, says *The National*,

"The National Government [of PNG] appears powerless to apprehend Mr Musingku and bring him to trial for massive fraud."

Meanwhile, the PNG Government has arrested the Cessna aircraft and charged the airline and its owner for breaching the rules and regulations of PNG's Civil Aviation Act in that they operated an aircraft in a careless manner and were engaged in dangerous activity involving an aircraft.

Into these strange happenings comes the name of Francis Ona who helped to initiate the struggle of the Bougainvillean people for independence but parted company with his own people when he refused to join the peace process.

The *National* commented: "... like a bad penny, Mr Musingku reappears, apparently posing as some latter-day saviour of Francis Ona and his long-sidelined Meekamui Defence Force".

The newspaper goes on: "The interference of Mr Musingku in this situation must be terminated by whatever means can be found, and as rapidly as possible". ☼

Sydney
Discussion Forum

Philippines: Human Rights, Economic Crisis and Pre-Emptive Strikes in the War on Terrorism

Guest Speaker: Neri Colmenares
Filipino Human Rights Activist, Lawyer, Bayan Muna (progressive political party)

Saturday 30 October 3pm
CFMEU meeting room 12 Railway Street, Lidcombe

Sponsored by Action for Peace and Development in the Philippines and Philippine Australia Union Links
For further information ring Peter 0425 363 370 or email apdp@spinfinder.com

Sydney's water crisis and the privatisation

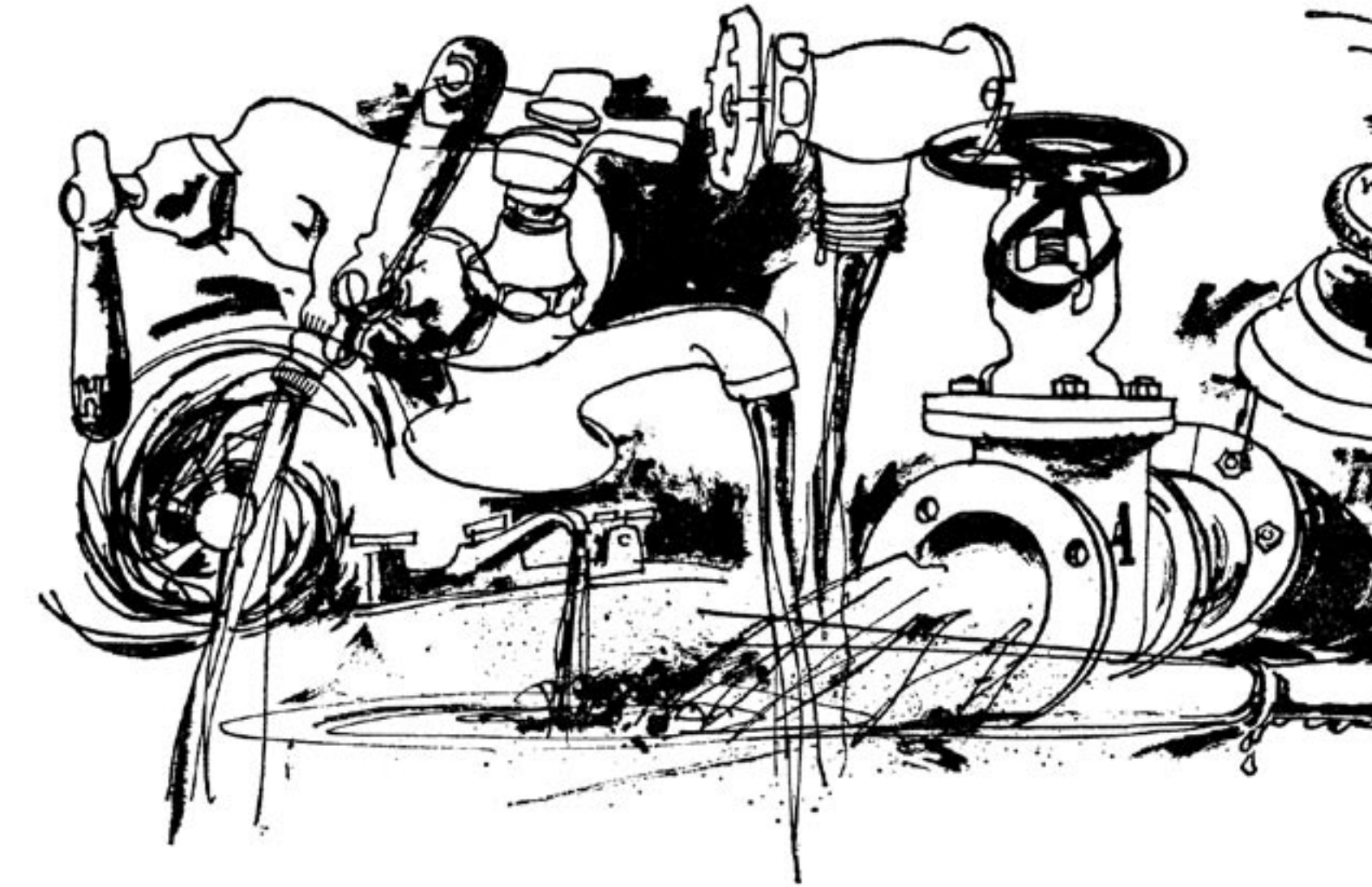
Bob Briton

In the southern half of Australia the consequences of climate change, mismanagement and population pressures are combining to produce an alarming shortage of drinking water. Centres once used to plentiful supplies of town water with occasional mild restrictions on households are now adjusting to tough water conserving regimes. Back-to-back drought years have exacerbated the worrying situation in some areas.

In Goulburn NSW, residents are suffering under level five restrictions involving a limit of 150 litres per person per day. A five-minute shower can use half that. Level four restrictions apply in Bendigo in Victoria and even the streets of the once green national capital look brown and parched. Perth's dam levels are down to 32 per cent of maximum capacity and even underground sources are running low. Sydney's main Warragamba Dam is at a record low of just over 40 per cent. Unless the catchment area gets good soaking rains it only has about two and a half years' supply left.

Earlier this year state and federal leaders met in the Council of Australian Governments. They announced that households (who use nine per cent of the nation's water) will have to live with virtually permanent restrictions while producers of crops like cotton and rice (who consume 11.7 per cent and 7.8 per cent of Australia's supplies respectively) will be able to carry on essentially as they always have. Electricity, gas, mining and manufacturing (which use 13 per cent of our water) will also be left largely to their own devices.

Households are being softened up to pay significantly more for their water. Melbourne now has a two tier charging system – 70c per 1000 litres for light use and \$1.30 per 1000 litres for heavier use. Attention is being drawn to water-rich Sweden where consumers pay \$5 for 1000 litres. And whenever governments talk about solutions



be put towards the planning and design work for a desalination plant.

The State Government is "pretty confident" that the private sector will undertake a \$560 million project to recycle "grey water" back into the toilets and onto the gardens of new suburbs. A similar scheme already exists in Rouse Hill in Sydney's western suburbs.

Reaction to the government's plan in the mass media has been lukewarm. There is relief that ear-

cles 20 per cent of its waste water while Melbourne reuses 15 per cent. Sydney recycles three per cent.

Previous undertakings – made seven years ago in WaterPlan 21 – to build "water factories" have not been fulfilled and not enough has been done to promote the use of rainwater tanks. The reason given by *Four Corners* for this policy defect is that Sydney Water (the public water utility) has an interest in selling lots of cheap water that

their monopoly position", yelled the bold print.

The point was made that not all the income from supplying water is reinvested in the utility. In fact last year Sydney Water contributed \$100 million of its operating surplus to NSW Treasury. The situation in other states is similar. As Ticky Fullerton pointed out on the ABC, dividends to state governments in WA, SA, Victoria and NSW add up to around \$600 million a year.

The argument is that with these sorts of "profits", a corporate mentality creeps into the planning of the water utilities, a mindset that is made worse by their monopoly status.

In reality, it was the corporatisation that introduced the corporate mentality. Pro-business representatives were appointed to the utility's board and the drive for profits unleashed. In the past, before the rash of privatisations, profits from public enterprises were an important source of government revenue that could be poured back into the community. Surely this was a far superior situation to what is being advocated now, where most of the profits are to be pocketed by a small number of the people through private ownership.

Given the present corporatised arrangements, why would profit-driven Sydney Water be concerned with recycling – unless it provided a new source of profit and did not eat into existing profit generation?

It is doing very nicely out of piping the current, diminishing sources of drinking water.

Critics of the government have even been encouraging the authorities to recycle sewerage water for drinking water. Opposition utilities spokesman Brad Hazzard has been seen drinking from a bottle of NEWater, a product from Singapore made from recycled sewerage. He dismisses the Premier's sugges-

tion that there would be too much resistance in the community to the idea and continues to blame Sydney Water's defence of its monopoly for the lack of nerve.

Another reason given for Sydney's poor record for recycling water is that any possible solutions to deal with stormwater would become mired in bureaucracy. No single authority deals with it. Sydney Water does business with the various councils and the Waterways Authority.

Until recently, Premier Carr has been dismissive of ideas to top up Sydney's supplies with desalinated water. He called it "bottled electricity", referring to the large amounts of energy required to separate drinkable water from the briny residue. But now he is singing a different tune and spending money to come up with a new, less energy-hungry design. This is since Perth's decision to build a plant.

Four Corners suggests that somebody must have reminded Bob Carr that the state also has a monopoly on the sale of electricity. Indeed, the Minister responsible for the water utility and electricity production are the same person – Frank Sartor. This, it is claimed, is a clear "conflict of interest" and the real reason why desalination is getting the nod.

The real agenda

So what did Ticky Fullerton and the newspaper columnists suggest should be done about these problems besetting water management in Sydney?

Private enterprise is their answer. Let the private corporations themselves move in and run the show.

As for *Four Corners*, its piece appeared at times to be an infomercial for one of the companies seeking approval for a "water factory" to recycle the partially treated

Whenever governments talk about solutions to the water crisis, private investment is promoted. Furthermore, governments are under pressure to hurry along their plans for privatised water.

to the water crisis, private investment is promoted. Furthermore, governments are under pressure to hurry along their plans for privatised water.

Attacked from all sides

Last week the Carr Government announced its scheme to tackle Sydney's pressing water problems. Over the next 10 years, it will spend \$780 million on major infrastructure projects. There will be no new dams but \$106 million will be spent on new pumps to access water lower down in the Warragamba and Avon dams and \$680 million is to be spent on pipes and pumps to bring water from the faraway Shoalhaven River to Warragamba Dam. A trial costing \$4 million will determine if bore water could be used to top up reservoirs. Another \$4 million will

lier leaked ideas for a huge offshore desalination plant or the shipping of water from Tasmania should not be necessary. While there has been some concern reported about reducing flows down the Shoalhaven River, the necessity of using the water is generally accepted. There is approval for the decision not to build any new dams because of their environmental impact.

Where the government has drawn heavy criticism is its failure to invest in the recycling of the city's own storm water and sewerage. The ball was set rolling by Ticky Fullerton's *City Limits* report on the ABC's *Four Corners* program on October 18. The piece made the valid observation that Sydney is lagging behind other state capitals in recycling these sources. Adelaide, it was pointed out, recy-

cles 20 per cent of its waste water while Melbourne reuses 15 per cent. Sydney recycles three per cent.

The program fails to note that this conflict arises because Sydney Water has been corporatised – a first step towards privatisation. As a corporation its prime aim is to make profits which creates an incentive for selling more, not less water.

Milch cows and "bottled electricity"

Last Wednesday's *Australian* ran with the headline: "State monopoly a 'barrier to water solution'". A quote from Jeff Angel of the Total Environment Centre sat in the middle of a critical article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of October 19. "It's the same old Sydney Water propaganda, intended to preserve

n push



Land! Food! Jobs! Its Red October in South Africa

This year the South African Communist Party (SACP) has launched a campaign calling on the millions of landless people, the rural poor, rural women, rural youth and farm workers to join the Party's 2004 Red October Campaign. It is a month-long program of action which will involve networking with a range of progressive forces, consultation and popular mobilisation.

Party branches will be conducting household surveys in targeted rural and farming areas. We will hold tribunals, forums and mass meetings, and we plan for a culminating National Day of Action for Land, on Saturday, November 6, says a Party statement announcing the campaign.

On this day, the Communist Party will lead a national march to the offices of Agri South Africa, the National Departments of Land Affairs and Agriculture, and the Reserve Bank in support of demands for accelerated land and agrarian reform.

The primary target of this campaign is commercial agriculture who remain the main beneficiaries of apartheid and colonial land ownership patterns.

We demand:

- Access to ownership and control of productive land by the landless workers and the poor;
- Access to basic services and rights for farm-workers and their families;
- A National Land Summit.

Mobilise trade unions

The Communist Party is to convene a National Consultative Conference on October 15 to mobilise trade unions, civil society, churches, land rights organisations and other stakeholders. The Conference is aimed at mobilising support and endorsement of this campaign by a wide range of social forces.

In addition to the National Day of Action, the Communist Party will make a submission to the Parliamentary hearings on the progress of Land Reform scheduled for October 19-20 in the National Assembly. The Party will highlight the importance of food security as part of land and agrarian reform through a World Food Day Celebrations on October 16.

In its election manifesto, the ANC together with its alliance partners (the SACP and COSATU) undertook to "speed up land reform, with 30 per cent of agricultural land redistributed by 2014".

In the course of our mobilisation campaign, the Party will seek to add impetus to this commitment to speed up the process. The Communist Party makes no apology for demanding that land must be given to the workers and the poor as the principal beneficiaries, says the Party statement.

Access to ownership and control of productive land

The Communist Party does not support the present willing-buyer willing-seller approach as it subjects land reform to the capitalist market and is not an effective means for achieving the objective of substantive land reform.

The Party calls for the underpinning of land restitution and land

reform with effective infrastructure, agricultural extension programmes and ongoing assistance. The emphasis on land reform must be to ensure household food security, co-operatives for inputs and marketing, sustainable rural communities and small-scale farming.

Whatever prospects there are for smallholder agricultural production in South Africa, they are likely to be curtailed by the existing market-led land reform dispensation. Linked to this is the dominant reading of the property clause in the country's constitution as simply protecting property rights instead of also being read as a mandate for land reform.

The state must be more active in acquiring private land for redistribution instead of the current focus on state land disposal. Twenty-five percent of the 87 per cent of land denied to black people since 1913 is state land. State land disposal undermines the strategic role of the state in land usage and ownership. State land disposal also means that ownership by apartheid beneficiaries remains largely untouched.

The Communist Party underpins the relevance of sustainable livelihoods and sustainable land and agrarian reform is central to this.

Access to relatively small pieces of land for productive purposes is an essential element in the range of survival strategies required by the landless and women in particular. Besides agricultural production, such a strategy could also comprise additional resources of income such as the processing and packaging of agricultural produce, the production and sale of other products, sustainable self-employment based on co-operatives, remittances, etc.

Demands

For these reasons, we further demand:

- Acceleration and consolidation of land reform in favour of farm workers, rural dwellers, rural women, the landless, the workers and the poor;
- Access to productive land, resources and credit for household based subsistence and small scale farming in both urban and rural areas;
- Provision of unused land by absentee landlords, big farmers, national and provincial government, municipalities, churches and state-owned enterprises;
- Land tax for unused land (to provide an incentive to use land more intensively and increase overall supply of land to the market and to reduce land speculation);
- An increase of budgets for land and agrarian reform;
- Better coordination and integration of land reform and agricultural transformation;
- Consolidation of the role of the Land Bank in supporting emerging farmers and, in particular, land-based co-operatives.

Notwithstanding the minimum wage determination for farm-workers, and security of tenure legislation, the conditions of workers and their families on the 46,000 commercial farms remain, generally, little changed.

We have an abundance of evidence coming from our rural branches of illegal deductions from wages, continued illegal evictions and impounding of workers' livestock, and the general abuse of this sector of the working class and

women in particular, says the Party statement.

We will use the Red October month to campaign for an end to all forms of violence, victimisation and abuse; an end to child labour, and for free education and health-care for the children of farmer workers.

We will also campaign for the extension of Justice Centres into rural areas, and for an increase in Department of Labour resources to more effectively monitor farms.

We will hold workers' tribunals and mass meetings with farm workers and farm dwellers starting on the weekend of October 9-10 in all provinces

National Land Summit

We call for a National Land Summit within the next 12 months to bring together government, farm workers, landless people, rural women, landowners and agricultural capital in order to:

- review land and agrarian reform since 1994;
- agree on specific measures and policies to accelerate land and agrarian reform;
- review policy on foreign land ownership.

In the immediate period, we call for the empowerment and resourcing of farm workers, rural dwellers, rural women, the landless, the workers and the poor to ensure that they can make their voices, aspirations and interests heard in the Agri-BEE Charter process.

In preparation for the National Land Summit, we call for an audit of all land transferred to individuals and communities, through the land reform, in order to establish the real

impact on the livelihoods of land reform beneficiaries.

The primary question that agricultural capital must be asked at the Summit is: what is their contribution to democracy and development?

The Financial Sector Campaign

The Red October campaign will be connected to our ongoing financial sector campaign, to ensure that micro-credit is available for effective land reform. We reject the unilateral decision of the financial sector to set targets and amounts for black economic empowerment.

We reaffirm our insistence on the democratisation of the finance sector and demand that this funding process be halted until there has been a thorough discussion involving all stakeholders.

The Red October Campaign is just a start of ongoing mass mobilisation on land and agrarian reform and an intensification of mass pressure on the financial sector.

Umsebenzi Online – South African Communist Party ✪

Just two weeks into our 2004 Red October Campaign and its impact has reached far and wide. Provinces have held a number of farm workers' and people's tribunals, forums, mass meetings and other activities. From these gatherings, there is one single message – **land and agrarian reform is moving too slowly.** This continues to be a major national grievance in our country. *Umsebenzi Online* (20/10/2004).



sewerage now being piped into the waters off Manly Beach. Company director John Van der Merwe was a David taking on the State Goliath with only the approval of the privatisation National Competition Council to comfort him.

Concerns about a corporate mindset at Mr Van der Merwe's company were glossed over in the presentation. The secrecy and environmental consequences of profit-driven utilities were similarly ignored. The disunity shown as being a problem in the present setup would, apparently, cease to be a problem if all the components were private enterprises producing the maximum possible private profits.

The article in *The Australian* attacking Sydney Water's monopoly agreed that its function should be chopped up and privatised. It quoted Dr Coombes of Newcastle University: "We have to let the private industry in. We might have to highly regulate them, but we have to have incentive for innovation." It is not hard to imagine a quotation from an academic at some future time arguing that regulation of private water services has to be abandoned or eased so that the market can work its magic.

Clearly a push is on to break up Sydney Water and open up the area to competition. As the big transnationals move in and take over the bits and pieces, accountability and quality will be jettisoned. Over time, competition will lead to collapses, takeovers and mergers. The public monopoly will become a foreign owned private monopoly for whom the provision of water is only a vehicle for profit generation.

The arguments suggesting more public control and better services through the selling off of public assets must be exposed. The water crisis demands more planning and the exclusion of the private profit motive. ✪

New oil target in Africa

The Sudan, the largest country in Africa and a potentially rich source of oil, has become the latest target of imperialist intervention.

Britain was the former colonial power in Sudan and today, together with the US and European colonialist countries such as France, are looking for an excuse to send troops into the country, to impose a compliant government and secure for themselves Sudan's oil resources.

Sudan became an oil exporter in 1999.

On September 18 the UN Security Council by 11 votes threatened sanctions on Sudan's vital oil sector unless she complied with western demands. China, Russia, Algeria and Pakistan abstained in the vote. Britain said she was ready to send a 5000-strong military force to be rapidly deployed in Sudan. France has already sent a small contingent to the border between Chad and Sudan under the pretext of protecting local residents there.

The US, which had strongly criticised Sudan, wants it to join Bush's campaign to "fight terrorism". That means accepting the establishment of US bases and military occupation.

An excuse has been given to the imperialist powers by the decades long conflict between the Islamic north of the country and the Christian south. There are also the consequences arising from the spread of the Saharan desert and the attempts of northern Arabs to seize the land from those in the south of the country.

Tens of thousands of refugees have been created arising from this conflict although some reports suggest that the extent of the crisis has been exaggerated and that the

suffering of the refugees is being used as an excuse for the imperialist powers to justify their occupation.

The African Union (AU) has been actively involved in the dispute in an attempt to avoid the imposition of UN sanctions and the threatened military occupation of Sudan by colonialist powers.

The leaders of five African countries met recently in Tripoli, Libya, to find a framework appropriate and acceptable to the sides in Sudan and within the AU. The countries involved in the AU meeting were Sudan, Libya, Chad, Egypt and Nigeria.

End conflict

The Sudanese government has agreed to do its best to end the conflict in Darfur that is said to have displaced about 1.5 million people. Rebel groups accuse the Sudanese government of years of negligence and the unfair allocation of resources.

The AU is leading international attempts to resolve the crisis peacefully and is in the process of deploying a 4500-strong force from five African countries to Sudan to oversee the agreed peace process there.

In a strong statement against imperialist intervention in Sudan the Communist Party of Canada said: "There are increasing calls from Washington and London, backed by a vocal right-wing campaign, for 'humanitarian intervention' in the Darfur region of Sudan. However, there are also strong indications that US imperialism is deliberately inflating the scale of this tragedy in order to send troops into yet another oil-rich territory.



"The loudest demands for intervention in Darfur come from the two countries which bear responsibility for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians over the past decade – the US and Britain. George Bush and Tony Blair lied about 'weapons of mass destruction', and deserve to be charged as war criminals for their illegal pre-emptive invasion of Iraq.

Why should we believe the same corporate media which repeated the falsehoods of these two men about Iraq, when the topic is Darfur? We warn against exploiting human suffering to expand the geopolitical

reach of imperialist powers.

"Hostilities between Sudan's northern and southern regions are partly a legacy of the British colonial policy of divide and conquer. The central government's push to impose fundamentalist Islamic law on the country have deepened these tensions.

"Added to these internal factors, dozens of Asian and European oil companies are seeking contracts to explore, drill and pump Sudan's high-grade, low-sulphur oil. Billions of barrels are thought to be available, a tempting target for US and European bankers and oil executives.

China biggest consumer

"At present, China is the biggest consumer of Sudanese oil, and the biggest investor in Sudanese oil exploration and production. The China National Petroleum

Corporation helped finance the pipeline that delivers crude oil to Port Sudan on the Red Sea. US and British imperialism clearly see China as a rival in this context.

"The Bush administration has been accused of using the Darfur issue to undermine progress towards a peace agreement in Sudan. A fragmented Sudan might make it easier for a new client state in the south to open the oil fields to US corporate interests.

"In fact, US imperialism and Israel have helped to train and aid southern rebels such as John Garang, head of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, which is backed by right-wing, Christian fundamentalists in the US", says the Canadian Communist Party statement.

Sudan is a member of both the African Union and the Arab League. Both organisations are committed to a united Sudan.

People's Voice ☪

Pakistan telecom victory

The policies of the ruling class based on privatisation, downsizing, and restructuring have made life hell for the working class. On the one hand the rulers are throwing the workers into the quagmire of joblessness and poverty and on the other hand they are involved in massive corruption and looting. And in a continuation of this looting and plundering, they are planning to privatise the Pakistan Telecommunication Corporation Ltd. (PTCL).

The total number of employees at PTCL is 60,000 out of which 7,000 are on contract.

According to the management of the organisation, the introduction of computers and modern machinery is the main reason for downsizing. Computers can do four times the work that a worker can do. So, in the management's view, more than 50 percent of the staff are surplus.

As a result, thousands of workers will lose their jobs and will be thrown out without any notice or benefits from this organisation.

However, while with one hand the management is firing the old employees with schemes named the "golden handshake", on the other hand it is recruiting new staff on a daily wages basis. Daily wages workers are performing the same job as regular workers, but they receive less salary and work without any job security.

But the workers of PTCL revolted against these pro-imperialist policies through a ballot and the Pakistan Telecom Employees Union won the referendum due to their

radical program. Immediately after the victory in the referendum PTEU submitted a charter of demands asking the administration to adjust wages in accordance with day to day inflation, earnings of the organisation and in line with the salaries of other good companies

Instead of approving the demands of the workers, the regime not only started unfair labour practices but also started making attacks on the union to crush it. The union resisted the state attacks and kept on fighting against the regime in the courts as well as on the ground. They kept on struggling for the approval of their charter of demands but the regime did not understand the polite language of the workers.

The workers gained the support of the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (PTUDC), which not only stood shoulder to shoulder with the employees' union in their struggle, but took on the aim to gain further support from other unions and organisations of workers and youth.

On September 30, 2004 while addressing a workers' meeting the Secretary General of PTCL Employees Union, Rana Mohammad Tahir, gave a notice that the workers would go on complete strike and jam the whole communications system of the country on October 14 if the demands were not met.

Some of their demands included:

- The wages of PTCL workers should be increased by 15%.

- The workers who deserve promotion should be promoted immediately

- The quota for the recruitment of children of on duty staff should be restored.

- The daily wages employees of telecom foundation should be regularized.

- The employees should be paid bonuses according to the proportion of the profit of the company.

- The medical facilities of the workers should immediately be restored.

- The fake cases against the union should immediately be withdrawn.

Initially management and the regime took this as something routine. They were not the least concerned about these demands.

This attitude only further angered the workers. There was a good response to the strike call of the union. In many cities the workers participation in strike made the regime tremble and on the evening of October 12, the regime accepted all the demands of the workers and requested them to call off the strike.

It is a great victory for the workers of the communication industry in Pakistan and will strengthen the cause of labour. The workers still face many challenges ahead. The inevitable challenge of the workers is to resist the privatisation policy of the regime.

The PTUDC will play a key role in support of the workers in their future struggle against the privatisation. ☪

US election already rigged

Manuel Valenzuela

As much as America and the world wish to believe Florida will not be rigged with electoral fraud this November, the sad truth is that all the mechanisms needed to steal the state in favor of George Bush are already firmly entrenched.

This is thanks to Jeb Bush – Governor of Florida, manipulator of mandates, corrupt fraudster, decimator of democracy, brother of the president, and the Republican Party, which in essence controls the logistics of and the keys to running the election. Florida has already declared tens of thousands of voters, mostly black and Democratic, ineligible.

Many more voters, of all creeds and colors, will be disenfranchised on election day, be it through intimidation, coercion, government intervention, criminal negligence, corruption and fraud, and, of course, through electronic voting machines, most of which are owned by staunch Republican supporters.

Thus, it is fair to say that the election scheduled for November is

already stolen, the purging of votes already assured, the swindling of the 2004 Presidential election has become, for all intents and purposes, an absolute inevitability.

Already, throughout the nation, instances of Republican Party meddling with electoral procedures and citizens' right to vote have surfaced, from Florida to Nevada to Oregon to Ohio and everywhere in between, trying desperately to garner any advantage in any of a dozen states deemed as swing states, where the outcome will be so close that 10,000 votes could mean the difference between winning electoral votes and losing the presidency.

With so much at stake, and with American democracy a mirage of its former self, Republican minions and vultures are hard at work, once more disenfranchising thousands from an election that will decide the future destiny of the entire planet.

After all, absolute power corrupts absolutely and addition to the Almighty Dollar makes demons of already dishonorable miscreants.

Information Clearing House
(Abridged) ☪

Cuban lessons in fighting AIDS

Today, Cuba has an HIV infection rate of less than 0.1 per cent in a region that has one of the fastest growing infection rates in the world.

Not only have Cuban authorities virtually eliminated the transmission of the virus through blood transfusion and intravenous drug use, they have also halted transmissions involving newborns at birth.

Peter Piot, the executive director of UNAIDS said last year that "Cuba was one of the first countries to take AIDS seriously as a problem and provide a comprehensive response combining both prevention and care."

In the mid-1980s, Cuba was widely condemned by the international community for its harsh treatment of AIDS sufferers. It sought to isolate or quarantine people with HIV in sanatoriums – far away from the "collective" population.

Their sexual partners were subsequently traced and tested. Pregnant women and those who had travelled to Africa were also tested.

By the late '80s, however, Cubans were more knowledgeable about the epidemic and they humanely allowed patients to leave the sanatoriums for extended periods of time.

A few years later, the Cuban government introduced its ambulatory care treatment program, which enabled AIDS patients to choose between living within the sanatoriums or convalescing at home with family members.

In Cuba today, people with HIV are guaranteed access to free medi-

cal care and nobody can be fired from their jobs because they are carrying the virus.

There is clearly a strong commitment on the part of the political leadership in Cuba to undertake a wide-ranging and comprehensive HIV/AIDS action plan – domestically as well as internationally.

As early as 1983, Cuba had set up a National Commission on AIDS, before any cases had even been diagnosed, to educate its 11 million people. Sex education programs were introduced in schools and TV ad campaigns informed Cubans about AIDS and the need to promote safe sex.

While HIV testing is no longer compulsory, Cuban health authorities recommend it for pregnant women and those in high-risk categories. Those who do contact HIV are required to attend an eight-week education and drug support program in a sanatorium.

Last year, Dr. Byron Barksdale, the director of the American charity, Cuban AIDS Project, was quoted as saying: "I don't know if six weeks or eight weeks are the magic numbers, but that is certainly a longer time than is given to people in the US who receive such a diagnosis. They may get five minutes' worth of education."

Because of the 40-year-old US economic embargo against Cuba, no anti-retroviral drugs were initially available on the Caribbean island.

By 2001, however, Cuba's growing biotechnology sector was beginning to manufacture generic

versions of several HIV/AIDS inhibitors.

Cuba is now one of the few developing countries that actually provides its HIV/AIDS patients with a full supply of free drugs.

Helping others

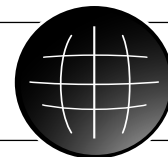
From an international standpoint, Cuba has sent thousands of doctors and nurses to almost every part of the world to help in the struggle against HIV/AIDS.

In Botswana, which has the highest proportion of people living with HIV in the world, Cuban medical professionals work in several clinics and hospitals to treat AIDS sufferers and to offer suggestions for prevention. Two weeks ago, the Cuban government offered to train – at no cost – nurses and doctors from other Caribbean countries to fight the pandemic.

More strikingly, Cuba has promised to provide anti-retroviral drugs to its Caribbean friends for a cost well below market prices. It won't be long before countries in Latin America and Africa will also come calling.

This is even more impressive when you realise that Cuba is largely a poor, developing country locked in an undeclared war with its superpower neighbour only 145 kilometres away.

Cuba's approach to the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a major success story. There is much that the rest of the world can learn from the compassionate Cuban experience. *From The Toronto Star* ☛



Global briefs

SPAIN: US troops did not march in Spain's National Day Parade on October 12. Instead, a French contingent participated. Former right-wing Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar had invited the US contingent as a solidarity gesture after the September 11, 2001, attacks, and a small group participated in 2002 and 2003. But, responding to overwhelming popular demand, the newly installed centre-left government immediately announced withdrawal of Spanish forces from Iraq. The US contingent was not invited this year because "it is a national holiday, not a US holiday", said a Government statement. "The alliance with the United States continues. What does not continue is the subordination and the kneeling" [before Washington]. The French presence is seen as an anti-war statement because of France's opposition to the US invasion of Iraq.

NIGERIA: The Labour Civil Society Coalition started a nationwide four-day general strike on October 11 to protest against petrol price hikes following the government's deregulation of the domestic fuel market. The International Monetary Fund is pushing deregulation as a key aspect of economic changes. The Coalition said the strike involves workers and working families, students, artisans, professionals, market men and women, and all segments of society. The Nigerian Labour Congress President Adams Oshiomhole said that the federal government has not participated in talks. "The government is [instead] busy arming the military and the police to suppress protesters", he said.

CHILE: Chile's national legislature is poised to remove some undemocratic provisions introduced into the constitution by former military dictator Augusto Pinochet. According to measures the legislature is expected to pass, the president will no longer have the right to remove the head of the armed forces, and past presidents will no longer automatically be made senators for life, making the senate fully electable. But there is no agreement on reforming an electoral system that observers say over-represents right-wing forces. In August the country's highest court ruled that Pinochet should be stripped of his immunity from prosecution, opening the way for a possible trial for his fascist campaign of repression in the 1970s and '80s.

JAPAN: A new accord for Japan to resume importing US beef has been held up by Japanese consumers who are demanding that all imported beef be tested for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). In Japanese slaughterhouses, parts at high risk for collecting the abnormal prion causing BSE are removed from all beef cattle and tested, while in the US such parts are only removed from cattle 30 months and older. "Food safety for the Japanese people will be seriously undermined if Japan yields to the pressure from President Bush, who is keen on gaining the support of US cattle growers" said a report in the *Japan Press Weekly*. "Before pressing Japan to resume beef imports, the United States should conduct BSE tests on all beef cattle and remove all high-risk parts. It should never distort issues concerning food safety with crass political priorities."

Eyewitness to Venezuela's historic vote

James Vega

Arturo Griffiths wanted to go to Venezuela. Before long, he was travelling to Caracas as part of a documentary film crew. And he brought his son along, too, "so he could experience, firsthand, an exercise in participatory democracy."

Griffiths, is a member of the Service Employees International Union and a long-time community activist and on his return he spoke to the US *People's Weekly World* about his experiences.

"I was able to observe the recall referendum — the campaigns being conducted by the opposition forces as well as Chávez' supporters", Griffiths said. He saw mass rallies, including the pro-Chávez rally in the capital of over 1 million on August 14. He interviewed both pro- and anti-Chávez people on the street, and visited community centres, health clinics, schools, and polling places.

Mass participation

Particularly striking, Griffiths said, was "the mass participation of those sectors of the population who have traditionally been excluded from the political process – women, indigenous people, people of African descent, progressive trade unionists, peasants, and poor shantytown dwellers". Until recently, he said, many people in these categories were not registered to vote. But by Election Day, about 95 percent of the eligible voters from these groups were registered and ready to cast their ballots.

On Election Day, "the lines extended for many blocks", he said. "People were at the polls at 5 am,

even though it started at 7 am. The polls did not close until 2:30 am the following day." The result was a decisive win – 59 percent – for the Venezuelan president.

President Chávez' "Bolivarian Project", which began with his election to the presidency in 1988, created a "path to empowerment" for these groups, Griffiths said, based on tangible socio-economic reforms.

Redistribution

Griffiths said the Bolivarian Project's fundamental aspects are redistribution of the country's oil wealth to the poor in the form of social programs and land reform; rejection of "neo-liberal" economic policies of "free trade," privatisation, state austerity, and deregulation, all of which favour big business over the ordinary citizen; participatory democracy and greater local self-government; and affirmative action that gives preferential treatment to previously excluded groups in financing, housing, educational and health programs.

In the shantytowns of Caracas, Griffiths said, "I personally saw people receive dental and eye examinations, and get eyewear products and on-the-spot prescriptions". The Venezuelan government has been assisted in providing these services by large numbers of Cuban doctors and health professionals, who are there by special agreement with Havana.

Literacy, public works, jobs

Other government-sponsored programs include adult literacy campaigns, university scholar-

ships for poor and working-class students, public works projects, employment training and affordable housing laws. Over 130,000 families benefited from land reform in 2003, and another 100,000 are to be provided with land by the end of this year.

The opposition to Chávez, Griffiths said, is concentrated in the traditional, lighter-skinned elite of the country – the "oligarchy," elements of the middle class, the right-wing-dominated media, the more conservative elements of the Catholic Church, and the leaders of the old-line trade union federation, the CTV.

Poverty and oil

"They were declaring that President Chávez must be overthrown", he said, and that the country needed to return to its traditional setup. That setup condemned 70 percent of the population to poverty, even though the country is the fifth largest exporter of oil in the world.

Griffiths, who is of Afro-Panamanian ancestry, made special note of President Chávez' attention to the interests of people of indigenous and African descent.

"I had the opportunity to visit the coastal area of Naguita, where a new school was inaugurated with the name of the Rev Martin Luther King Jr. This location is primarily Afro-Venezuelan, and I asked what impact, if any, the Bolivarian Project has had on their community. They said 'for the first time we have hopes and aspirations', and Chávez is actually doing something to improve the conditions of the most marginalised." *People's Weekly World* ☛

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Ruffled the feathers

I was one of the school students that visited your office a number of weeks ago to procure a hammer and sickle flag. We managed to erect the red and yellow up the flagpole of our very conservative middle class public school on our 'muck up' day. We also further ruffled the feathers of our ultra conservative hierarchy by displaying images of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin all around the school inciting a healthy fear of revolution.

May I also register my dismay at last weekend's election disaster. I have tried on several occasions to write to my local newspaper but the Murdoch controlled local gas continually refuse to publish my "controversial" perspective. (Note: I live in the incredibly benighted electorate of Phillip Ruddock.)

I was dumbstruck even during the campaign at the ignorance of the major parties regarding the core issues that will determine the direction this country will pursue in this polarised world.

Neither addressed the appalling

state of Aboriginal health, neither addressed the ridiculous state of Australia's foreign aid budget, refugees and their rights, the Iraq war, the ecology and sustainability of the earth's resources.

All of these core issues took a back seat to the seemingly greedy worry of interest rates. The results were even more worrying and a reflection of the ignorant, benighted society we have become as a result of our nation's prosperity. Clearly prosperity breeds ignorance – the more we have the more we want. We need a constructive and critical TRUE left in this nation, rather than the conformist, compromising labor party.

Greed beat conscience! A moral defeat for Australia!

Justin Morris
Sydney

Smokers are voters

We saw in the Federal election the Australian public being divided by ideologies. It is my view that Labor divides – straight/gay, /public/private schools, jails/hospitals, public service/private sector, Medicare/private, etc.

The Labor state governments are now dividing smoker vs non smoker in all the states which, of course, are Labor in pubs and clubs where their traditional voting base congregates. My dear departed Dad used to say that Labor isn't for the working man anymore. This might be helpful to

their navel gazing exercise as the old stalwarts desert the sinking ship federally.

In the ACT, two elections ago, "Smokers are Voters" took out three sitting Labor members by not giving preferences to any group. Perhaps the Labor states should take note.

Brigitte Ballard
O'Connor ACT

OK, OK, we lost a battle! Wake up!

OK, OK, so we have lost a battle. That does not mean we have lost the war. We do not stand around wringing our hands and crying woe. Things will get tougher yet, but we too will get tougher. To use an old working class saying – we will spit on our hands, hitch up our trousers and get right back into it with redoubled effort.

Another old (but oh so true) saying is that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Such a prospect faces the Australian people even if the majority do not realise it. They have to experience it first hand before it is driven home. Fascism could never happen in Australia. No! Watch events over the next few years. It is unfortunate that so many good people will have to die before the proletariat wake up.

Bert Appleton
Woy Woy NSW

Illusions

The article "Where to after Howard" (*The Guardian* 6/10/04) fails to deal with the key role of the Communist Party in bringing about a People's Government and hence the need to build the Party particularly in the working class.

The Communist Party's Program makes it clear that a People's Government is part of the revolutionary process that leads to socialism and that the Communist Party, as the revolutionary working class Party, must play a leading role in such a struggle which will be opposed vigorously by the capitalist class enemy.

However, *The Guardian* article gives one the impression that the Party is no different to any other community organisation. Somehow or other a whole lot of other community organisations will get together to form a People's Government to tackle the power of monopoly capitalism. It's as simple as that.

Part of the article reads:

"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."

This presentation ignores the reality that classes form political parties and the class struggle takes place through the clash of such parties. To suggest that a People's Government made up mainly of non-class organisations can carry out the task of challenging the rule of the big corporations is a plunge into the most extreme form of idealism. It smacks of a non-class approach which can only mislead the working class.

It is true that just to talk about the leading role of the Communist Party won't make it happen. A lot of work needs to be done by the Party to build living connections with the working class and to educate workers to reach out to the middle classes to join the struggle against corporate power.

One of the tasks of the Communist Party is to reveal the nature of the capitalist state machine which inevitably will be used against the People's Government. An understanding of how to combat such a force is essential if the People's Government is to be established. Not to do these things would create illusions about an easy path ahead.

The *Guardian* article creates just such illusions.

Alan Miller
Adelaide.

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Bundle of advertising ... or bundle of worries?

They're sharp, these capitalists, aren't they? And they're right up to the mark with uses for new technology, too.

One of our readers brought in a letter a few days ago that she had received from the American International Assurance Company (Australia) Limited.

She has a two-year-old toddler, and AIA's letter – and accompanying bump – was presumably sent to her after computerised trolling through records of births correlated with electoral rolls.

The envelope was adorned with a colour photograph of a baby playing with a computer keyboard, watched over by a cute little teddy bear wearing a scholar's mortar-board.

The link between the infant and its future education was obvious. Why was American International Assurance gracing their envelope with this particular image, however?

Well, that was to some extent revealed in the slogan printed in

red above the photo of the baby and its playthings: "Bundle of joy ... or bundle of worries?"

Actually, it was a bundle of advertising – for insurance that will allow parents to pay for their children's education.

"Like most parents", says the glossy leaflet enclosed, "you have probably given thought to the future education of your children and the funding that goes with it." Note how neatly they tie thinking about education for your children to the concept of you **paying** for that education.

The leaflet nails AIA's colours to the mast with the proclamation that "education is **not** free, and it is definitely not cheap". Certainly, the insurance companies don't want it to be free (or even cheap), for there would be no business opportunities for them if it were.

And now for the scare bit

To reinforce their message, and hopefully scare parents witless, AIA's leaflet asserts that "One year's worth of education in high school costs anything from \$3,000 to \$9,000 depending on choice of school. Tertiary education costs even more."

However, AIA is not advocating that people take to the streets and protest about this dreadful state of affairs. Or elect a government committed to providing free education. Oh, no.

The insurance industry has an entirely different "solution" in mind: the "Gold Scholar children's

education savings plan", a form of term insurance.

By coughing up a **monthly** premium starting at a mere \$42.57 – "dependent upon age of the child" – you can start a plan "with a guaranteed cash payment designed to pay fully/partially for the cost of education at secondary and or tertiary levels".

Fully/partially? So even with Gold Scholar insurance you may not be able to pay for your kid's education.

However, they are at pains to reassure parents that it won't be too big a burden. "The key", it seems, "is planning, regular disciplined savings and, most importantly, an early start."

And they mean early: you can start insuring your child's future education costs when the scholar is as young as four weeks of age!

Unashamedly, and outrageously, AIA urges parents to "channel birthday monies and/or Centrelink family payments to partially or fully fund these plans" with the comforting words that "it will save you the 'financial pain' in later years".

Just so long as the insurance company gets its premiums.

The letter enclosed with the bundle of advertising highlights what David P Murray, Vice President – Agencies, calls recent "cost of education" news allegedly from "around Australia".

This "news" is divided into two sections, under the headings

UNIVERSITIES: "Two more universities set to raise HECS fees"; "Five figures for cheapest degrees"; and

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES: "Parents reject state schools" [that disposes of the less expensive but obviously undesirable public school option]; "Fees on rise at top schools".

Interestingly, the glossy leaflet proclaims that "it is every parent's desire to give the best education to their child". Is it?

AIA may like to think that it is up to parents to provide education for their children, but I think that



is actually the role of society as a whole.

I think it is every parent's desire that their children *receive* the best education *that society can provide*. And I think that is also every child's right.

Education free, secular and universal

Education should be free, secular and universal – available equally to all, regardless of parents' income.

Of course, there would be fewer opportunities for corporate profit-making under such a system and no need for the likes of AIA's Gold Scholar scheme.

But what a world it urges us to look forward to, where educating your children can put you in the poorhouse. It's a world that capitalism embraces and promotes.

ABC radio reported only a

few days ago that *fourteen million children* in the once socialist now capitalist former Soviet Union cannot afford to go to school.

What a comedown for a country that once boasted the best educational opportunities for children anywhere in the world, a country that provided free education to everyone, from kindergarten to university or vocational training.

Fourteen million children who cannot afford to go to school should make the leaders of the various countries that were the Soviet Union very worried: in 1917 that sort of thing led to revolution.

This is a world inevitably created by capitalism as the State steadily cuts its responsibilities and funding and money-grubbers move in with their "Gold" schemes to rip off parents and make them that much poorer while shareholders whiz off to the Gold Coast to enjoy their ill-gotten "rewards". ☹

Sydney

POSTPONED!

What future for South Africa?
a forum with Zico Tamela of the SACP

scheduled for October 28

has been postponed due to visa difficulties.

Keep reading *The Guardian* for future dates



Sun October 31 ~
~ Sat November 6

I had always been under the impression that when Shakespeare retired from the London theatre he returned to Stratford and abandoned writing to live the life of a country gentleman at last. But as the final episode of *In Search Of Shakespeare* (ABC 2.00pm Sunday) shows, far from "never writing another word", he collaborated with younger playwrights and was in fact quite active.

In fact, two years after he "retired" to Stratford, he bought a house in London – next door to his theatre company's posh indoor theatre in Blackfriars.

I will miss this series. I will miss its erudition and scholarship and its enjoyable journeys through the extraordinary historical and cultural records and artifacts of England (what amazing things survive in a wealthy country that has never been overrun by an invader for a millenium).

And I will miss Michael Wood's infectious enthusiasm and his masterly and determined linking of Shakespeare's work to the historical processes of the time.

The actor Martin Shaw does not fit my mental image of the poet-copper Commander Adam Dalgliesh who is PD James' resourceful sleuth in her popular series of detective novels.

Shaw does not seem dry enough for Adam Dalgliesh, but I must admit, after seeing the previous short series in which he played the part, I am looking forward to his return in the new two-part series *The Murder Room* (ABC 8.30pm Sundays).

A co-production between the BBC and US cable station WGBH, the series was adapted for the screen by Robert Jones from the PD James novel about a series of grisly murders replicating exhibits in a section of a museum devoted to the social history of Britain between the Wars.

What are the important things in life to 14-year-old girls? According to the new kids series *Girls In Love* (ABC 5.25pm Mondays), adapted from Jacqueline Wilson's best-selling books, they are "friends, fun, snogging and BOYS!"

While I have no doubt those things are important, I think it sells kids short. Those four things may be all some girls that age think about, but not all girls by any means.

Cast your mind back to the anti-war demonstrations prior to the invasion of Iraq. School kids were very prominent in those events, and not because they thought it was a way to meet boys or even that it was fun (although it was).

They were there because they were concerned about the issues, about peace and war, about inhumanity and injustice. By eschewing any sort of social conscience or awareness on the part of the girls in the series, *Girls In Love* reinforces the idea that such concerns and activity are uncool.

The series could have helped to expand kids' horizons, while still dealing with the problems of being a teenager. It doesn't, and that's a pity.

In the ultimately successful struggle waged by imperialism to overthrow socialism in the USSR, no stone was left unturned, no tool was left unused. Popular music from

the West was a potent weapon in this struggle for ideas and culture.

Amongst those whose music was skilfully used to help overthrow socialism – or as capitalist spin doctors put it, to "open Soviet society" was Paul McCartney.

On May 24, 2003, Paul McCartney's "Back In The World" tour visited Russia, where he was generously rewarded for his part in helping re-establish capitalism there. His nearly three-hour live concert in Moscow – in Red Square no less – was attended by such dignitaries as President Putin and former President Gorbachev (a local has-been but still a Western favourite).

In St. Petersburg McCartney received an honorary doctorate from the esteemed Russian Conservatoire, and – the ultimate irony – dedicated a building for the future advancement of the arts for Russia's youth.

It's all in *Paul McCartney In Red Square* (ABC 9.30pm Monday).

Mr Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred A Leuchter, Jr (SBS 10.00pm Tuesday) is a documentary from the acclaimed American filmmaker Errol Morris (*The Thin Blue Line*). This program is a portrait of Fred Leuchter, a man who spent his childhood in Massachusetts visiting the prisons where his father worked, and grew up to design execution equipment (electric chairs, lethal injecting machines and gas chambers).

In 1988 Fred Leuchter was approached to testify in the case of Ernst Zündel, a German national living in Canada who was to be tried for publishing a pamphlet denying the Holocaust. Leuchter visited the sites of the Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps in Poland and, without permission, took measurements and chipped samples from brickwork which he later submitted for chemical tests.

Ignoring the evidence of survivors and the mountain of other



Taking up the issue of Aboriginal health (*Stories From A Children's Hospital*)

historical evidence including the Nuremberg testimony, he concluded in a report and in his subsequent testimony, that no gas chambers operated.

He later gave speeches to the Neo-Nazis who enthusiastically embraced his denial of the Holocaust. Revisionist historian of the Holocaust, David Irving, claims Leuchter's publication *The Leuchter Report: The End of a Myth* is what "converted" him.

Historian Robert Jan Van Pelt says Leuchter is a victim of the myth of Sherlock Holmes who believed he could go to the scene of the crime and reconstruct reality. He points out that Leuchter had no training and was simply a fool committing a sacrilege at a historical site of indescribable suffering.

The final episode of *Stories From A Children's Hospital* (ABC 8.00pm Thursday) takes up the issue of Aboriginal children's health in remote parts of Western Australia.

The episode concludes that Aboriginal health is not so much a medical problem as a socio-economic problem that has to be solved by government action. In the meantime, as the program shows, a few dedicated doctors struggle

to plug the gaping holes in the health care provided for Indigenous Australians.

The cruelty and inhumanity of many of those who claim to be carrying out the "word of God" never ceases to amaze. *Unholy Orders* (SBS 8.30pm Thursday) is the story of a class action brought by several hundred people who had suffered degrading and inhumane punishment in Scottish orphanages by nuns.

Orders such as the Sisters of Nazareth in Glasgow thought it right and proper to separate siblings, so that sisters would never see each other for years on end even though they lived in the same institution!

Even after a nun was found guilty on four charges last year, the Catholic Church and the nuns continued to deny that the abuse had taken place and refused to apologise.

The class action went before the court in August 2004 but 150 claimants, including all the people in this film, were promptly excluded from the class action by a legal manoeuvre: under Scottish law, claims of abuse before 1964 are prohibited. Survivors are now fighting to have this law changed in the Scottish Parliament. ☘

Sydney

MANUFACTURING FEAR

Public Forum: The politics of anti-terror

As terror laws and military strikes escalate, who gains, who loses? Who is manufacturing fear and why? Who lives in fear in the "war on terror"? What can be done to challenge this? How can people take up the issues, and act for justice?

Saturday 13 November
9.30-4.30

Broadway Tower,
University of Technology Sydney

Entry by donation – disabled access
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Speakers: Vicki Sentas, Community Law Centre, UTS; David Bernie, NSW Council for Civil Liberties; Agnes Chong, Australian Muslim Civil Rights Advocacy Network; Joo Cheong Tham, Civil Rights Network Victoria; Micheal Head, UWS; Michael Humphrey, UNSW; Jude McCulloch, Monash University; Stephen Hopper, solicitor; Ratna Dewi, Legal Aid Institute, Indonesia; Rafendi Djamin, Human Rights Working Group, Indonesia; Nori Colmenares, Karapatan, Philippines;

Tanja Dreher, UTS Shopfront; Scott Poynting, UWS; representative from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission; Warren Duncan, Community Relations Commission; Ken Davis, APHEDA, Trade Union Aid Abroad; Dr Jamal Rifi; Keysar Trad, Lebanese Muslim Association; Kieran Longridge, Greenpeace; with participants from the NSW Labor Council, Amnesty, NSW Council of Social Service, and others.

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www.civilrightsnetwork.org/
Research Initiative on International Activism, UTS
www.international.activism.uts.edu.au

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First of a two-part series, *Who's Afraid in the War on Terror? Facing Fear: community anti-racism work after Sep 11, 2001*, will be held 26 November.

Email: manufacturingfear@yahoo.com Ph: 02 9514 2714

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Sydney

Politics in the Pub

Every Friday night 6pm – 7.45pm
Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills
Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

October 29

NEW ZEALAND; WHY IS IT POLITICALLY SO FAR AHEAD OF AUSTRALIA? WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THEM?
Ken Johnston Sociology, Macquarie Uni (Recently retired)
Prof Ian Burnley Geography UNSW

November 5

US BASES IN AUSTRALIA THE SOCIAL IMPACT
Hannah Middleton Australian Anti Bases Campaign Coalition,
Board Member of Global Network Against Weapons in Space
Jane Brock Migrant Philippines-Australia;
President Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

November 12

THE NEW US PRESIDENCY – WHAT DOES IT OFFER?
Stephen Loosley (former ALP Senator)
Partner with Pricewaterhouse Coopers Legal
Prof Ian Tyrrell School of History, Uni NSW
Dr Bob Howard Research Associate,
Government and International Relations, Sydney Uni

Inq: Pat Toms 02 9358 4834 pbtoms@bigpond.com; Janet Fischer 02 9398 8891;
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www.politicsinthepub.org

Canadian workers' victory

Jim Selby*

Lakeside Packers has been a benchmark in Alberta labour relations for 20 years. (Alberta is a central western state of Canada). The meat packing plant in Brooks was decertified in the mid-1980s after a long and protracted strike/lockout and employers have resisted efforts by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) to re-organise them ever since.

Organising Lakeside seemed almost impossible. The company's anti-union campaigns were thorough, vicious and well beyond what are allowed by Alberta labour laws – yet none of the unfair labour practice charges upheld by the Alberta Labour Relations Board could compensate for the effects of the coercion and intimidation practiced by the employer during organising drives.

The news that UFCW 401 had successfully certified the plant in a vote on August 27 spread rapidly through the Alberta labour movement. The union's success was completely unexpected, because any organising drive is a huge job under Alberta's labour laws, and because of Lakeside's history of successfully resisting unionisation.

This is the most significant and successful union drive in Alberta in the past 20 years. UFCW never gave up on organising Lakeside. According to UFCW 401 organiser Don Crisall, "We've been there every year since 1991. My first Lakeside campaign was 1996 – and I've been back every year since then until last summer." The fact is that the union's efforts year after year were seldom rewarded with enough signatures to meet the government's requirement for proving support from 40 per cent of the workforce before a certification vote will even be held.

Immigrant workers

When the union showed up, the company would kick its anti-union machine into gear and the workers, many of them immigrants from diverse backgrounds, would be intimidated into inactivity.

Still, the union presence every year obviously had a lasting cumulative effect on the workers. Every year they got union pamphlets and a union message. The background presence of the union was a fact of life for the packing house workers.

Refused to quit

Canadian Labour Council Alberta representative Les Steel attributes the union staying power to UFCW 401 President Doug O'Halloran. "Doug refused to quit", said Steel. "There was no way he was going to let the anti-union management at Lakeside win."

Despite the seeming invulnerability of the company to the union's organising efforts, a walkout by 70 plant workers in April this year to protest bad working conditions gave the first indication that attitudes were changing inside the plant. The company, instead of bringing in the workers and dealing with their concerns, simply fired all of them. That gave UFCW an opening that they quickly seized.

"This year was different", said Crisall.

The union met with the protesters at the Sudanese Friendship Centre in Brooks. Although the media portrayed the wildcat as ethnically based, claiming that the workers were all Sudanese, the union notes that the 70 sacked workers came from all over the globe. Many of the fired workers volunteered to help the union campaign, leafleting the plant and talking to their former co-workers and friends still employed at the plant.

"The phone in the union office started ringing constantly", said Crisall. "That's when we

Unlike previous years, the management at Lakeside seemed to be caught flat-footed by the organising drive. According to Crisall, it wasn't until the union filed on August 3 that the company woke up and launched their usual anti-union campaign. In previous years, they campaigned very early against the union.

"In any event", said Crisall, "the company campaign was vicious. They took Alberta labour laws and

did in 1999", said Crisall. "That is a useless remedy. Unless the Board is given the authority to grant automatic certification or a fine that serves as a real deterrent, employers will continue to violate the law at will. Basically the employer is saying to hell with the law because they know they won't be effectively punished for directly intimidating and coercing employees."

In an attempt to put some teeth

including Arabic, French, Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese and Cambodian. "A lot of the workers at Lakeside are very well educated, speaking several languages", said Crisall, "we just had to deal with difficulties in English."

In a critical and effective innovation, the union distributed a little postcard to supporters that showed a picture of a sample Board ballot with the union box checked. "We told them: 'if you want a union, your ballot should look like this'", said Crisall.

The union won the certification vote 95 to 85, a majority of 51.4 percent. But, union observers are sure their support is far stronger and deeper in the plant. "I think the union would have done a hell of a lot better than 51.4% if the company campaigning had stayed within the guidelines of the Alberta Labour Relations Code", said Crisall.

Now that UFCW 401 has overcome the first major barrier to unionisation in Alberta, they have to overcome the second – getting a first contract. It won't be easy. The union has filed a whole new group of unfair labour practices against the company for employer actions since the certification vote.

In his official statement following the certification, UFCW 401 President Doug O'Halloran promised to address a broad range of workplace issues at the bargaining table. "I am hopeful that the Company will adopt a positive attitude to negotiations and that an agreement consistent with the unionised industry can be negotiated soon", said O'Halloran.

Lakeside Packers is owned by Tyson Foods, the world's largest processor and marketer of chicken and red meat products, with annual sales in excess of US\$23 billion. There are unionised Tyson plants in the United States.

*Jim Selby is an Alberta Federation of Labour staff member.

Acknowledgement to *People's Voice* published by the Communist Party of Canada. ☼



Many of the fired workers volunteered to help the union campaign, leafleting the plant and talking to their former co-workers and friends still employed at the plant.

knew something was in the air at Lakeside, that we had a good chance." By mid-July, hundreds of workers had signed up through word of mouth.

Door-knocking

"That's when the union brought in an organising team", noted Crisall. "We went door knocking in town, signing up the majority of petitions in the last three weeks of July. On August 3, we put in our application for a certification vote to the Labour Relations Board."

shredded them."

The campaign went beyond veiled threats. "There was a group of employees wearing t-shirts – complete with the company logos – that were for sale in the plant," said Crisall. The shirts read: "No means No – at Lakeside we always think for ourselves". The company denied any connection with these renegade employees or any responsibility for their actions.

The union filed numerous unfair labour practice charges. "But we didn't ask for a new vote like we

in the Board's sanctions against violations of the law, the union asked that the Board force the employer to pay the total costs of the union organising campaign. This novel request offered the Board an opportunity to develop a mechanism by which it could actually enforce the laws.

The union ran a very different campaign than in its previous efforts at Lakeside. In past years, the union had tried to answer all of the company's allegations and to counter the anti-union smear campaign. This had made the union message scrambled.

"This time", said Crisall, "we kept the message simple. We said: 'it's time for a change – this time vote yes for a union'."

The UFCW national office communications specialists did a ten minute to-the-point video on Lakeside that was distributed to all of the union's supporters two days before the vote to solidify support.

Twenty languages

To deal with the language barriers inherent in a workforce where more than twenty languages are spoken, the union produced pamphlets in many different languages,

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