

## DEFEND UNION RIGHTS

Anna Pha

Trade unions are approaching a crucial juncture in their history. When in the late 1990s the then Workplace Relations Minister Peter Reith stripped workers' awards, taking away many hard won conditions, it was the opening shot in the Government's longer term plan to smash the union movement in this country. Reith, the man who brought hooded goons, guns and dogs onto Australia's waterfront, is gone. But the Government's objective remains.

It now intends to step up the pace. The employers and government are preparing for a massive offensive against workers and their unions.

With control of both Houses of Parliament from July 1 next year, the Howard Government will push through legislation to strip bare all enterprise bargaining agreements, leaving only minimal working conditions and wage rates.

When awards were stripped back to 20 so-called "allowable matters" by Reith, trade unions were forced to turn to enterprise bargaining agreements (EBAs) to retrieve as many of the lost award provisions as possible.

The task was made more difficult by restrictions placed on unions, including a clamp down on the right to take industrial action. Trade union resources were pushed beyond their limits and many workers, particularly in smaller or industrially weak workplaces, were left with only the minimal conditions of a stripped award.

The many award provisions that were removed included: flexitime; shift breaks; maximum hours of work; restrictions on the use and hours of work of casuals; accident pay; amenities; promotion systems; incremental wage rises; equal employment opportunity; closed shops; stop work meetings; workplace harassment; shop steward rights; preference to unionists;

use of contractors; travelling time; superannuation; training and study leave; protective clothing.

These award provisions were not gifts from employers. They were won over decades and decades of struggle before being incorporated in legally binding and enforceable awards. These awards covered workers across a trade, occupation or industry, whether or not they were in union-organised workplaces.

In one stroke of the pen, workers and trade unions were forced to the negotiating table to negotiate back what so many workers took for granted. Many of the provisions have been incorporated in EBAs, while some, such as preference to unionists and closed shops, have been outlawed under the Workplace Relations Act.

### Missed out

The Government is using the recent High Court decision in the Electrolux case (see *The Guardian* 12-09-04) as an excuse to introduce legislation that will strip EBAs back to only "matters that pertain to the employment relationship" in the workplace, i.e. EBAs must be confined strictly to matters between management and workers in each separate workplace. The Electrolux decision put in doubt the legal validity of many clauses in existing EBAs and even the legal validity of the EBAs themselves.

And although the Government claims it is legislating to validate EBAs, the stripping of awards is clearly in line with its policy aims.

Amongst the important workers' rights that Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews plans to remove from EBAs are:

- **The use of contractors and conditions covering contractors...**

The deletion of restrictions on the use of contractors fits neatly with Howard's promotion of the use of contractors in workplaces. At present, particularly in the building industry where this practice is rife, employers are obliged to pay EBA rates and adhere to other EBA con-



ditions (hours of work, etc). Howard wants an end to this, so that contractors can beat each other down by competing for work.

- **The requirement of employers to pay into a particular superannuation fund or deduct union dues, etc...**

When the "choice of superannuation" fund comes into force next year and every employee is required to indicate choice of fund, the employer will have a stronger hand to decide what workers "choose". As usual, when the Government says "choice" in practice it means no choice. Howard would love to destroy the union-industry funds and let the big insurance sharks in.

- **Right of entry, trade union training leave and other trade union rights...**

Howard's aim is to de-unionise workplaces and force workers onto individual, non-union contracts (Australian Workplace Agreements). He is giving more funds to the Employment Advocate's Office which exists for this very purpose. The use of contract labour and encouragement of individual contracts also has the same aim.

- **Training and study leave...**

A full list would include most of the items stripped from awards.

Some trade unions have decided to pursue new EBAs as quickly as possible, with "non-pertaining" (deemed invalid by Electrolux decision) matters transferred to common law agreements that would not be covered by the Workplace Relations Act.

For those unions in a strong enough position to do this, it might give their members some immediate protection. But in the longer term, it presents new difficulties. Alleged breaches of common law can lead to long, and very expensive, court cases, an outcome often (not always) avoided by the use of the Workplace Relations Commission.

It could also create a division in the union movement – those with stripped EBAs plus top-up common law protection; and those left with EBAs stripped to the bone.

### Deregulation

In the longer term, even those who gained additional protection will find that extremely difficult to maintain if wages and working conditions of other workers are decimated.

One of the Government's and big employers' aims is to destroy the present industrial relations

system and replace it with a totally deregulated system where individual workers (and "contractors") are pitted against employers under common law and corporations law.

Big business expects much more than the stripping of EBAs from the Howard Government.

"Introducing legislation which has previously been defeated by the Senate is fine as far as it goes, but this is an historic opportunity to effect a substantial deregulation and we would hope that the government would consider that", said former Deputy Treasurer Des Moore, now director of the right-wing Institute of Private Enterprise.

"The idea is to allow employers and employees to have much greater freedom to contract and negotiate the terms of employment", Moore continued.

The likes of anti-union corporate big wigs such as Len Buckeridge, Chris Corrigan and Hugh Morgan, are not wasting any time. Nor is the Howard Government. They too see a historic opportunity to destroy the trade unions, deregulate the labour market and deal with workers on an individual basis.

The only thing that can stop them is the collective strength of the union movement in struggle. ☛

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## The Guardian

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### Insidious propaganda

Rupert Murdoch denies that management interferes in editorial decision-making, and generally speaking that is probably true. The uniformly pro-war, fear-mongering line that pours out of his media empire, from the daily newspapers through Fox News television, is not the result of day-to-day edicts handed down from his board of directors. Murdoch backs George W Bush, the theft of civil rights and the military aggression being carried out under the cover of the war on terrorism. Senior editors are given their instructions, the wheels are put in motion and the general line followed: all employees must follow suit. The propaganda can be overt, or sly and underhand. *The Weekend Australian Magazine* of November 13-14 is a prime example.

On its cover, instead of a headline there is a long quote – “She looked pregnant, otherwise she was completely normal. She looked at me. She smiled ... and then she exploded.” There is the photograph of a young woman in army fatigues holding a child on one arm and a gun on the other. That particular issue of the magazine lift-out was a carefully designed promotion of racism tied to the denigration of women. The juxtaposition of photos, the order of appearance of its articles, the choice of subjects; all were loaded to give maximum effect to the cover story.

There was a reminiscing piece on the women protesters who were arrested at the US base at Pine Gap in 1983, written as though the threat of nuclear annihilation by a world superpower no longer exists, and as if US spy bases are essentially benign presences.

Next to that there was a profile of singer Tina Harrod – with glossy colour photo in designer fashions – who we are told critics are “comparing to Nina Simone and Aretha Franklin”.

Further on there is a head and shoulders colour portrait across two pages of “Perth teenager Gemma Ward”, who we are informed is “the supermodel of the moment” but who has “her wide eyes ... set on bigger things”. There followed two pages with a photo history.

The next feature was a story about shark attacks with the upper-case headline “BLOOD IN THE WATER”, leading into the cover story. Headlined “MOTHER, MURDERER, MARTYR”, it asked, “What led a young mother to choose a murderous fate as a suicide bomber?” The article runs across seven pages.

It asserts, “Every Palestinian wants to be a suicide bomber, in public at least. Western reporters’ notebooks are filled with page after page of declarations of an imminent self-sacrifice that rarely happens. Like an old coin the same tired slogans have passed from hand to hand despite the dawning recognition that the war of martyrs has failed ...”

Further on the author contradicts himself, claiming “the cult of martyrdom has grown”. And in order to rob the story of its political content, the article insinuates, without any facts to back it up, that the young mother had become pregnant in an adulterous affair and that that was why she carried out the bombing.

It says she had “never left the prison strip of Gaza”, which is “crammed with 1.3 million Palestinian refugees”, that she “lived in a world of suffocating closeness ...”

The author’s description of Palestinian society, its historical and cultural make up, is placed in skewered context: “The tribe, not the individual is paramount. Western concepts of individualism – the ambitions and dreams, the private bedroom that Australian teenagers take for granted – are culturally alien.”

The Israeli occupation, the real “suffocating closeness”, is mentioned, but the impression conveyed is that this is simply a necessary measure in order to keep in check an “alien” culture.

The conclusion we are expected to draw from all of this is that the answer to the question posed at the beginning, “What led a young mother to ...?” must be, “Because she is not Western”, meaning “civilised”, meaning her “uncivilised” society drove her to it. The real barbarians – Israel’s Sharon Government and its state-sponsored terror – are left completely out of the picture.

If only she had been like that blues singer, that supermodel, those spirited women at Pine Gap, who after all didn’t resort to that sort of thing.

Such are the insidious peddlers of racial hatred and the promoters of war.

#### PRESS FUND

Christmas is coming, our stocks are getting fat  
Please put five hundred in this big shop’s hat!  
If you haven’t got five hundred  
A hundred will do.  
If you haven’t got a hundred  
Then we’ve no time for you!

Unlike the big shops, The *Guardian* Press fund doesn’t expect you to go into massive debt at this time of year. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable to expect the number of contributors to at least reach double digit figures each week. Come on party members and supporters, we know you’re out there! Perhaps you could try thinking of the fund as a close and valued family member, who really deserves a nice present, and for whom something really should be put aside over the next few weeks. Better still, just do it because it’s an excellent cause that deserves your support. Meanwhile, we offer our thanks to this week’s contributors, as follows:

Harry Black \$8.45, “Round Figure” \$11.55, Larry Gowland \$500.  
This week’s total: \$520. Progressive total: \$10,530.

# CPA contribution to Eureka 150th Celebrations

The Sydney District Committee (SDC) decided to mark to the 150th Anniversary of the Eureka Stockade by reprinting two publications about this momentous occasion in the working class history of Australia. These publications will be launched at an event called “Still Fighting to Defend Democratic Rights” on Sunday December 5 at the Gaelic Club.

The first publication is called *Eureka – A Portfolio of Prints*, it was originally printed in 1954 to mark the 100th Anniversary of the stockade.

This portfolio includes 13 lino cuts of events leading up to and during siege of the stockade. Some of the artists who produced this work are still alive and are very happy to see their work reprinted.

The artwork is backed up by historical comment from the participants or contemporaries of the events. One very notable contemporary was Karl Marx who wrote about it, an excerpt of what he wrote

is included. Stockade participants Monty Miller and Carboni Raffaello are liberally quoted.

The combination of stark lino-cuts and the commentary of participants makes for a very significant

valuable addition to any library, personal, local, union, university or any other.

The second publication, *The Eureka Stockade*, is a small 30-page booklet by RD Walshe. This booklet was also first produced in 1954 for the 100th Anniversary.

It maps the political content of the struggle and its relevance for today’s Australia.

The launch of these books will feature as guest speaker Dr Drew Cottle, historian, Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Western Sydney. Drew would be known to many readers for his excellent book, *The Brisbane Line*.

To make it a really great afternoon, the launch will feature songs of workers’ struggle from around the world.

The DC urges all members, friends, unionists, in fact anyone with an interest in working class history to attend on December 5. See the ad on page 7 for details of function. ☺

## Still Fighting to Defend Democratic Rights

publication. The SDC believes this publication would make a very

## The Annual Glebe Street Fair

The Communist Party of Australia – Port Jackson Branch – was part of the annual Glebe Street Fair 2004 held on Sunday November 21. The basic selling item was the now “famous brand of revolutionary jams”. Passers by were encouraged to revolutionise their tables with “Red Jams”!

A complete revolutionary “kit” was available for any customers. The stall offered books, posters and general party literature to all. There was also an extensive array of T-shirts and appropriate bags.

Highlights of the day included the raising of \$120 for the Iraq Hospital appeal and the friendly chatter with many people. We received many compliments to the effect that we were one of the few groups still campaigning despite the “victory” of Howard. We sold many copies of the *Communist Manifesto* and material on Che.

If you are interested in more information on the Port Jackson Branch or the Party in general, then please phone 02 9699 8844 and ask for Rob or Tom. ☺



CPA presence at the Glebe Street Fair 2004

## Second Hospital Appeal for Iraq

Late last year the Communist Party of Australia through *The Guardian*, appealed for funds to provide medical assistance for the people of Iraq. As a result of the generous contributions from readers and supporters more than \$2,000 was raised. The suffering and needs of the Iraqi people have not diminished over the last 12 months. The CPA is again appealing to readers, members, supporters and friends to help raise an even bigger amount this year – no less than \$5000. Money collected will be conveyed to the Iraqi Communist Party to continue their medical services to the people of Iraq. We urge you to give what you can – and a bit more!

Many thanks to the following for their generous contributions:  
H Heinemann \$34, Cathy Picone \$50, Michael Power \$50.

Total \$134.00

✂.....

### Hospital Appeal for Iraq

I.....Of .....

.....donate \$..... to the above appeal.

I agree/do not agree to having my contribution acknowledged in *The Guardian*.

Contributions by cheque, money order or credit card giving name on the card, card number and expiry date.

Credit card \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_

Please send donations to: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010



# Hardie drags out asbestos compo agony

Bob Briton

**Last week representatives of the NSW Attorney General's Department and Cabinet sat in on discussions being held between the ACTU and James Hardie about the future of compensation to victims of the giant manufacturer's asbestos products. Shortly afterwards, the Carr Government announced that a review would be conducted into the state's current compensation scheme to see if legal costs could be kept down. The review is expected to be completed by early 2005.**

ACTU Secretary Greg Combet had originally requested the review as a way around Hardie's previous dogged insistence on a statutory scheme that would strip asbestos disease sufferers of their right to seek compensation under common law. Hardie welcomed the news of the review.

The six weeks of talks that followed on from the Jackson Inquiry had become deadlocked over the issue of legal costs. Representatives of the building products manufacturer alleged that lawyers' fees in the current system could swallow up \$400 million of the over \$2 billion (20%) expected to be needed to compensate claimants. At different times they have maintained that legal costs would account for 27 per cent, 30 per cent or even 40 per cent of payouts within the existing system.

During the Jackson Inquiry, however, plaintiff lawyers Turner Freeman revealed that legal fees account for only 17 per cent of the costs met by Medical Research and Compensation Foundation (MCRF) — the body currently distributing compensation that had been set up and left behind when Hardie moved its headquarters to the Netherlands.

"It is not appropriate that the unions and Hardie agree arrangements in these negotiations that affect the entirety of the system, nor is it up to Hardie to dictate the terms of changes to the compensation system in exchange for funding a compensation liability that is theirs to fund in any event", Mr

Combet said after the government announcement.

However, it appears that Hardie is indeed steering developments to achieve by other means what it said it wanted at the beginning of the talks. Hardie is still insisting on a system involving mediation before the compensation matters go before the Dust Diseases Tribunal.

It now wants claimants to be penalised if they do not accept the company's offer of damages and a subsequent court ruling awards lower damages. Hardie claims its costs would be "halved" under such a scheme. If the unions and the

ment against James Hardie products and unions and victims now have a permanent protest outside the company's factory in Rosehill, NSW.

It appears, though, that the company has sympathy in high places. Last week SA Labor Senator Penny Wong called on Hardie Director Donald McGauchie to step aside as Telstra chairman in light of the ongoing asbestos scandal. Communications Minister Helen Coonan described the call as a "low act" and added, "Whilst we do support the claims of the victims ... it is not just a simple matter of snapping your fingers — you have to be able to fund these claims."

Hardie did manage to snap its fingers and produce \$10 million for disgraced former executives Peter McDonald and Peter Shafroff. The company would probably claim to have snapped its fingers again recently with the announcement of an offer of \$85 million to bail MCRF out of its current difficulties. At the moment the foundation has assets of \$40 million as against \$80 million in notified claims.

**In view of Hardie's foot dragging, the strengthening of the community campaign against the company becomes a vital task.**

NSW Government does not remain firm, Hardie may get its statutory system under another guise to the great detriment of asbestos disease victims.

## Still avoiding responsibility

Hardie has persisted with its heartless stance in the face of considerable pressure. The Jackson Inquiry found that the company had schemed to avoid its full responsibility to asbestos victims. The NSW Government has threatened to pass legislation to make the corporation — not just its spun-off foundation — directly liable for compensation if the current talks break down. There is a growing boycott move-

## Talk of liquidator

MCRF managing director Dennis Cooper described the offer as "another example of spin over substance". He was not interested in any funding proposal unless the foundation's "legal rights against the Hardie group and its directors were totally preserved". While MCRF estimates that it has sufficient funds to meet claims until April, its grim situation will probably lead management to appoint a liquidator in early December.

The ACTU hopes that the NSW Government's review of the current court-based system will put the emphasis in discussions back onto the question of the financing of Hardie's liabilities by Hardie.

In view of Hardie's foot dragging, the strengthening of the community campaign against the company becomes a vital task. Shareholders will not bring Hardie to heel. The company's "success" in controlling the agenda so far saw share its price rise last week. ❖



Unionist protest against Hardie at the Melbourne Stock Exchange

## Costing millions to give it away

**The Sydney rail system, which performed brilliantly during the Sydney Olympics, has since been reduced to near chaos, principally because of corporatisation, staff cuts and privatisation of maintenance and failure to update infrastructure. Rather than increase staffing, the Carr government cut weekend services in half, which they said would free up drivers for weekday work. It didn't work.**

Passengers are fed up — as evidenced by the fare-free day forced on the Carr Labor Government last Monday. (See page 4.) Staff are fed up with the appalling conditions they have to work under, made worse by the government trying to blame them for the system failures.

The corporatisation and subsequent cost-cutting are forerunners to privatisation. Don't be surprised if very soon the government comes up with a "solution" — in the form of public private partnerships (PPPs), where it cries poor after all these years of willful neglect and calls in the private sector to provide the capital.

It has been tried before, as we were reminded last week when the government announced that it was contributing an extra \$98.3 million to the failed Sydney Airport Rail Link (SARL).

This private company operates the four-station airport rail link, constructed some five years ago. Despite the government having shut down the former airport bus service in order to force commuters to use the rail link, comparatively few passengers use the line because of its extraordinarily high fares. (A one-way ticket costs \$11.60 from the city, about four times the cost of an equivalent journey on the publicly-owned rail network.)

The airport line was initiated in 1995 by the Fahey Liberal Party Government, which claimed that because it involved a public-private partnership, construction would cost the taxpayer nothing. And that might be true. But it is not the whole truth.

Post-construction the government — taxpayers — have been hit with ongoing costs, and there is no end in sight.

The typical PPP provides guarantees to the private half of the partnership of profits based on certain levels of usage by the public. If these are not met (as seen on tollways) then the government makes up for the shortfall in cash.

SARL argued that because patronage of the line was below that predicted by the government, the company should be bailed out at taxpayer expense. And that is what the government has been doing.

Rather than resume control of the line as a government enterprise, the Carr Government has to date paid the company some \$558 million. Its latest bail-out allocation will bring the bill so far to almost \$700 million, all to be met by the taxpayer.

PPPs are a form of privatisation where the public funds the profits and the private sector pockets the profits.

Sydney voters will doubtless wreak vengeance on the Carr Government at the next election. However, both major parties are wholeheartedly committed to the disastrous PPPs, the failings of which are so dramatically illustrated in the saga of Sydney's airport link railway.

And the government has more of this in line for Sydney rail commuters and tax payers. ❖

## Pete's Corner



# Union bashers come out

One of the corporate union bashers pushing John Howard to deregulate Australian workplaces is facing accusations of anti-competitive practices and the possibility of million-dollar fines for health and safety breaches. Patrick Corporation boss, Chris Corrigan, is one of 20 New Right activists urging the federal government to use its control of both houses to eliminate collective workplace organisation.

This week his company was fingered by the head of the ACCC (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission), Graeme Samuel, for operating a "cosy duopoly" with P&O that delivered higher returns than those enjoyed by other Australian businesses.

"According to the stevedores' own figures they are enjoying returns on assets of around 27.8 per cent EBIT [earnings before interest and tax]", said Samuels. "These are well above international rates of return for comparable industries of seven to 17 percent. These rates of return are a direct result of low levels of investment in expanded capacity."

"A figure such as 27.8 per cent is something about which most Australian companies can only dream."

Meanwhile, the NSW Industrial Relations Commission has reserved its decision on penalties against Patrick Corp after finding the company guilty on five separate occupational health safety charges.

Observers at the hearings said evidence of the offences was so strong that the Commission could post million-dollar sanctions over the use of single-operator straddle cranes.

A number of workers operating the cranes sustained long-term impairments after prolonged use of the equipment at the centre of the Federal Government's 1998 War on the Wharves. In that dispute, the Howard Government sided with the attempt by Corrigan and the National Farmers' Federation to drive unionised labour off the Australian waterfront and essentially destroy the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA).

Mercenaries from the armed forces were secretly trained in Dubai to take over the jobs of MUA members.

Attempts to prove a conspiracy between Patrick and the Howard Government, in court, have been repeatedly thwarted by the Government's refusal to produce sought documents.



MUA members and supporters during dispute with Patrick Corporation

On the very day that Corrigan and his 19 associates delivered their demands for an all-out attack on unions, his company was forced to back off moves to strip conditions from low paid vehicle workers at Patrick's Autocare division.

Patrick dropped its demand after 30 Ingleburn employees marched on a board meeting in Sydney.

Corrigan and his associates are urging the government to go beyond the seven IR bills defeated by the last Senate to include legitimising unfair sackings.

They want an inquiry to consider proposals to make it easier for collective contracts to be replaced

by individual contracts; unions to be stripped of remaining legal rights; welfare payments eliminated as a "deterrent to job seeking"; the possibility of repudiating international labour standards signed by Australia.

Corrigan has been joined in promoting the wish-list of other high profile anti-worker corporations, many with connections to the extreme right-wing HR Nicholls Society.

Other signatories include WA building products magnate Len Buckeridge who was placed on a two-year good behaviour bond after assaulting a union member.

Buckeridge was last year's winner of the Charles Copeman medal, presented by the HR Nicholls Society. During his acceptance speech he admitted having drawn up a hit list of union activists.

Charles Copeman, himself, architect of the notorious Robe River lockout, was another signatory to last week's plea.

As were Perth businessman, Harold Clough, who outed himself as the "mystery backer" of Tony Abbott's campaign to have Pauline Hanson jailed; and Steve Knott, head of the Australian Mines and Metals Association. ☘

## LABOUR NOTES

The Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) NSW Branch has donated \$20,000 to the Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia (ADFA) to assist asbestos victims. State Secretary of the Construction Division Andrew Ferguson said that rank and file members had dug deep to help ADFA fight for justice against multinational James Hardie. President of the ADFA Barry Robson said the donation will be used in the continuing campaign against James Hardie to meet its legal and moral obligations to pay compensation for future sufferers and their families.

Unions representing workers at Brisbane City Council are uniting to protect wages and working conditions. The move comes after the Mayor of Brisbane commissioned an Operational Efficiency review. The review identifies a number of areas for "improvement action" ranging from "optimising performance and maximising efficiency" (increasing fees and charges), achieving market competitiveness (outsourcing and tendering) and exiting or ceasing a number of services (and sacking workers). The Queensland Council of Unions has produced a campaign newsletter which can be accessed at [brisbanecommunity.com](http://brisbanecommunity.com).

More than 30 disability service workers at Silverlea Community Care in Broken Hill NSW have been told to sign an Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA) in seven days or face the sack. President of the Australian Services Union in NSW, Sally McManus, said the employer blamed reduced funds from the State Government as the reason for placing workers on individual contracts. "Under the contracts, the workers will be the lowest paid disability workers in the state", Ms McManus said. "These agreements take away all penalty rates, weekend rates, slashing and burning their conditions and being presented with no real choice."

Approximately 18 Johnson & Johnson workers based at North Ryde in NSW have been exposed to asbestos after roofing was removed incorrectly by a roofing contractor. CFMEU Organiser Steve Keenan who was at the site said that it appeared that required safety precautions had not been met and the company had failed in its duty of care. It appears that Lidoran Roofing demonstrated complete disregard for the law, as well as for the health and safety for the workers who use the offices and were exposed, by failing to properly remove the asbestos and then failing to notify Johnson & Johnson of the risk. CFMEU officials are conducting an investigation into the incident to identify how widespread the contamination is and what decontamination procedures will be needed prior to workers returning to the site.

## Carr forced to back down

**The architect of this week's fare-free day on NSW trains is throwing her weight behind workers. On the eve of the state government's capitulation to people power, Carlingford legal secretary, Rebecca Turner, "thanked God" for the trade union movement.**

"Unions are there to protect workers and if management and the government are not going to stick

up for us then thank God the union movement is", Ms Turner said.

She was speaking after winning enthusiastic support from 500 building workers for her civil disobedience campaign that would have seen commuters refuse to pay fares last Monday.

Turner's comments pulled the final plank from the state government's strategy of trying to blame

rail workers for the system's chronic unreliability. Premier Bob Carr tried to trump her campaign by announcing fares would be abolished for the day.

NSW rail workers had taken to platforms across Sydney, Wollongong and the Central Coast to hand out 50,000 fliers explaining they were not to blame for the city's train woes.

Some commuters stopped to help the workers hand out the leaflets, which blamed RailCorp management for poor train services.

"If you think it's bad being a rail commuter, try being a rail worker - we are all in this together", the fliers read.

Transport Minister Michael Costa had threatened to fine commuters who failed to buy tickets on the day of action.

Before the government's announcement over 20,000 unionists from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and the Finance Sector Union had pledged their support for the Turner action, with the offer of legal advice to members if they were fined.

Ms Turner began her campaign on November 11 and was dubbed "Captain Commuter" by Sydney media.

"What are they going to do if thousands of people turn up at Town Hall and demand to be let out? They can't fine everyone", she said.

"Imagine what we as commuters can do if we threaten to cost the Government millions of dollars in lost revenue."

The campaign has an e-mail account - [angrycommuter@hotmail.com](mailto:angrycommuter@hotmail.com) - gather support for the cause.

Other angry commuters have begun a protest website at [www.shityrail.info](http://www.shityrail.info) ☘

## Leightons incites strike action

**Perth building workers have brushed aside threats made in the dead of night and decided to continue their fight against building giant Leightons' bid to slash night work rates. The company has invoked the full armoury of weapons supplied by the federal government - Industrial Relations Commission orders, Supreme Court and Federal Court writs - in its effort to evade double time payments on the Perth Tunnel project.**

Last week, it sent representatives on late night visits to the homes of employees to warn of legal action against individuals who did not turn up to work the next day. None of the 300-strong workforce caved in to the threats.

Workers struck after Leightons announced last week that it would only pay 25 percent loadings for 12-hour night shifts on the project.

Industry sources say double time has been the construction industry standard in Perth for more than 20 years. Leightons pays double time to employees on its nearby rail

project, as well as for night shifts at the Spencer Street redevelopment in Melbourne.

They claim Leightons underpriced the tunnel job, fell behind schedule, and face penalty payments as high as \$54,000 a day.

In negotiating rates for the job, the joint venture's management assured construction unions there would be no night shift work on the construction phase.

Leightons has obtained Section 127 orders in the Industrial Relations Commission, return to work orders in the WA Supreme Court, and a Federal Court writ against Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) officials for "aiding or inciting" the strikers.

Union officials have met members to explain the legal judgements and warn of their consequences.

CFMEU State Secretary, Kevin Reynolds, refused to discuss the dispute.

"Due to legal restrictions on our union and its officials we have no comment at the moment", he said. ☘

## Theatre review by Andrew Jackson

# The Spook

Written by Melissa Reeves

Directed by Neil Armfield

**The South Bendigo Branch of the Communist Party of Australia in 1965 was not a hotbed of subversive activity: they sold the *Tribune* at the factory gates; they held a Soviet film night in the local hall; they organised a rally – attended by several dozen people – against the war in Vietnam. No trade union leaders sat around their table, no future Lenins or Guevaras; just a small group of country-town Australians with a firm belief in socialism doing their best under the circumstances.**

They would surely have been surprised to learn, then, that they were deemed such a threat to Australia's national security that the secret service would go to the time and effort of deploying a spy amongst them.

Thus the stage is set for Company B's extremely engaging and powerful production of *The Spook*.

**While Reeves certainly captures that agony and loneliness, it is delivered with great humour and candour by the outstanding cast.**

Playwright Melissa Reeves was inspired to write the play after she came across a 1991 article from the *Melbourne Age*. In "The agony and the loneliness of an ASIO spy" Bendigo resident Phil Geri confesses that he had joined the Communist Party in 1963 at the behest of ASIO and had spied on his comrades for the next 23 years.

While Reeves certainly captures that agony and loneliness, it is delivered with great humour and candour by the outstanding cast.

In his portrayal of the young spy actor Tom Long exudes a youthful enthusiasm and nervous energy that is both endearing and grating.

Assured by his ASIO contact (Steve Le Marquand) that he is performing a great duty in the service of his country, 19-year-old Martin takes to the job with gusto.

The play opens as Martin raves excitedly into a tape recorder about a party he had just attended, giving names and descriptions of guests, what they argued about, who drank too much and who's bonking whom.

However, as the years go on Martin's excitement for the job wanes as he not only begins to know and develop close friendships with his new comrades, but also finds – as a good working-class boy would – that he often has sympathy for their causes.

It is a turbulent time in the Australian left – anti-communist hysteria has split the Labor Party. The Maoists have split from the Communist Party. A military coup in Greece unleashes a second wave of mass murder against Communists there. The war in Vietnam is escalating and just as Hungary is becoming is becoming a distant memory a crisis in Czechoslovakia looms.

Melissa Reeves' thorough research of the subject matter is evident and is appreciated. Historical events are woven through the dialogue – often with great subtlety – and each piece of news influences Martin, his Party comrades and family members in a new way.

I approached this play with great caution, fearing it may descend into a cheap pot shot at the old commie dinosaurs as they lumbered towards extinction.

This fear was prompted by a review *The Sydney Morning Herald* in which the play was described as "an enjoyable romp", a "caricature, parody and near-farcical comedy"; the storyline as "stagnant and slight"; and declared that "whimsy wins out over the sobering truths".

Were that so – had comedic style won out over the underlying sub-



Anna Lise Phillips often steals the scene in her role as Martin's long-suffering girlfriend Annette.

stance – then the writer, director and cast would have wasted enormous effort in attempting to highlight a very pressing political issue in Australia today.

Director Neil Armfield explains in the notes:

"My own delight in *The Spook* was fuelled by my memory of that time – my own childhood in the 1960s...", says Armfield.

"It was a time of national fear and xenophobia and manipulation by the government, led by the repressive example of the United States, intent on the demonisation of Communism as a global threat to freedom and our way of life.

"Half a lifetime later, it all feels very familiar."

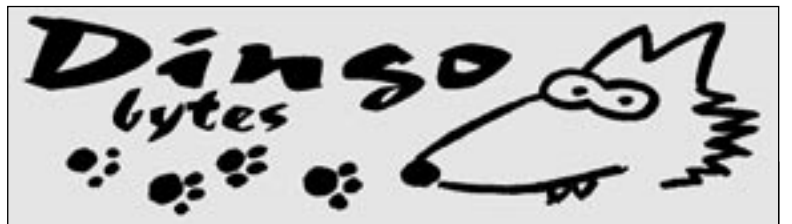
Fortunately those "sobering truths" did not escape the high school students filling the auditorium at the matinee I attended. In the Question and Answer time after the play one young student asked directly "What relevance does this play have for Australia today?"

Actor Russell Kiefel pulled no punches responding, "If you substitute an Iraqi Muslim for the Greek Communist you will immediately understand the relevance".

A quiet hum of agreement and dozens of nodding heads indicated that these school students had indeed understood.

*The Spook* is playing at the Belvoir St Theatre, Sydney, until December 22.

For tickets and session times go to [www.belvoir.com.au](http://www.belvoir.com.au)



The privatisation of health services, spearheaded by the Howard Government's destruction of Medicare, will be accompanied by the abandonment of ethics and standards in the pursuit of profits. So, we have drug companies paying doctors for information about the medicines they prescribe for their patients. GPs estimate that the sale of script information could see doctors collectively pocket \$200 million a year. The Australian Medical Association – which fundamentally supports privatisation – says a medicine should be chosen because it is the right one for the patient and "not because of perverse incentives". Can't have it both ways.

Meanwhile, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Chile, the latest scare tactic in the fear and loathing department is that terrorists might attack food supplies. Howard and his puppeteer George W Bush no doubt played a big hand in getting *that* into the summit's final draft statement. And the masses of impoverished and unemployed will surely be comforted in the knowledge that a gathering of world leaders around crucial economic questions has included a commitment to crack down on shoulder-held anti-aircraft missiles.

Secrecy is a fundamental mode of operation for a government involved up to its armpits in collusion, nepotism and corruption. So it was that last week the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet announced that any disclosure by the media of leaked secret policy material will result in police raids on the particular media outlet. This followed a Federal Police raid on the *National Indigenous Times* newspaper two weeks ago after it published policy information about racist plans to take away welfare payments from Indigenous Australians. Peter Shergold, the Head of the Department, said he was protecting "the provision of frank and fearless advice". Like the stuff about Iraq's weapons, or the children overboard affair, perhaps?

**CAPITALIST HOG(S) OF THE WEEK:** are the Band-Aid pop stars. At Christmas time 20 years ago a bunch of overpaid rock singers, led by Bob Geldof, came together in what was called the Band-Aid concert and recorded the song, "Do They Know It's Christmas?". Then as now it was a political question: underdeveloped former colonial possessions are still dominated and exploited by the economically powerful West. Now, Sir Bob (knighted for his efforts) and other like-minded pop stars are to again to record the Christmas ditty in the name of the world's starving millions. It also apparently hasn't occurred to these puffed up celebrities that asking the famine stricken if they know it is Christmas is somewhat askew considering the devastation was hitting nations that are overwhelmingly of the Islamic faith. British Chancellor Gordon Brown was quick to support this exercise that helps obscure the real reason behind the plight of the poor, announcing that government taxes on the new CD will be waived.

## Privatising apprenticeships

**The Federal government is prepared to pay ten times more per student to private operators than it injects into the TAFE system. The move, which would put competency skills into the hands of big business, has been labelled a "thinly veiled attempt to privatise training".**

Unions have revealed that the plan to establish the "Australian Technical Colleges" would involve schools being set up by tender; workers employed on AWAs (government non-union individual contracts) and no union involvement on the campuses.

The colleges would exist alongside the existing TAFE system and duplicate its underfunded resources, according to Phil Bradley from the NSW TAFE Teachers' Federation.

"TAFE could provide this training if it was not starved of billions since the Howard Government came to power", said Mr Bradley. "There has been a 25 percent cut per student in real terms over the last five years."

Government figures show that over 50,000 people were turned away from TAFE last year because of funding shortages. This does not take into account others who did not even apply because of fee rises.

Mr Bradley also slammed a plan by the Business Council of Australia, the Australian Industry Group, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the National Farmers Federation to set up the "Institute of Trade Skills Excellence".

The Institute is seen as a move by big business to provide accreditation, especially since the current body overseeing trade accreditation, the Australian National Training Authority, is being abolished from July 1, 2005.

Even small business and private providers are up in arms over the federal government move, with the Australian Council of Private Education and Training slamming the Institute proposal.

"This will create a narrow competency base for the short-term needs of big business", said Mr Bradley.

Unions are currently preparing a response to the Government's Australian Technical Colleges proposal.



# 150 years of the fighting E

Paddy Gorman  
Editor *Common Cause*\*

**In Australia today, there is no more fitting emblem of the spirit of a Fair Go than the Eureka flag. It stands as the powerful symbol of resistance to injustice.**

Wherever the battle lines are drawn in industrial disputes you'll find the Eureka flag flying high on the Picket Lines. And when the workers and their supporters take to the streets to demonstrate in support of justice, we march proudly behind the Eureka flag.

Since it was first raised at the miners' Stockade 150 years ago, the Southern Cross of Eureka has come

living on the Victorian goldfields chasing their fortune.

By then, the easy surface gold was exhausted and the miners burrowed into the hillsides and gullies. The workings became known as diggings and those that mined them were Australia first diggers.

The rush to the gold fields created a huge shortage of labour as workers left the factories, wharves and industries in search of their fortune. This greatly concerned the captains of industry who not only had to contend with a shortage in the workforce but had to deal with increased demands from the workers who remained and who had real industrial muscle.

the value of every fine be given to the arresting copper.

Under the control of the Gold Commission on the mining fields, the authorities unleashed a wave of tyranny. Miners who had licences but did not have them on them as they worked their claim were arrested and fined.

Arrested miners were taken to police camps and chained to logs or gum trees or flung into filthy prisons until they or their mates found the money to pay the fines. The coppers grew more greedy and ruthless and resentment among the miners fermented throughout the gold fields, nowhere more powerfully than the mining region of Ballarat, which had a population of some 25,000, including immigrants from Ireland, North America, Britain, Europe and China.

In contrast to the miners' quarters, a more respectable permanent settlement was growing up around the Government Camp, from where the Resident Gold Commissioner, Robert Rede, exercised absolute authority over the diggings, an authority which was enforced by a large contingent of police and backed up by a military garrison.

## Rule by tyranny

Two events in October 1854 lit the fuse that exploded into the Eureka Rebellion.

The first was the wrongful arrest during a licence hunt of a crippled non-English speaking Armenian servant of the local Catholic Priest, Father Smyth. The crippled man was subsequently convicted of assaulting a police officer!

The second occurred when a miner, James Scobie, was killed by the owner of the Eureka Hotel, James Bentley, and three of his men. Bentley and his cronies were acquitted, an injustice that outraged the diggers.

The murdered digger Scobie's claim was next to that of Peter Lalor, an Irishman who was greatly respected as a leader by the miners.

Lalor, whose brother James Fintan was a leader of the Young Irelanders rebellion in Ireland, had spoken out against the injustices and tyranny unleashed on the gold fields.

He said that the diggers were treated like dogs. He pointed out that they had no vote, no chance to get land for themselves and that none of the money from their licence taxes was spend on roads, schools, hospitals or other facilities for their families. We must make the Government realise we're free Australians, Lalor demanded.

A protest meeting against the acquittal of those who had murdered James Scobie was called for October 17 at the Eureka Hotel.



Peter Lalor (Silk Screen) by Ray Wenban

Bentley went to Commissioner Rede who determined to assert government authority and teach the diggers a lesson. Rede called in troop reinforcements.

## Pursuit of justice

On October 17, a crowd of 4000 gathered near the Eureka Hotel, which was surrounded by the hated police. Despite this the meeting was conducted peacefully and it passed two resolutions. The first said: "That this meeting pledges itself to use lawful means to have the Bentley case tried again". The second resolution said: "That this meeting offer a reward for the conviction of James Scobie's murderers".

As the meeting was breaking up the police rode into the crowd trying to herd them away. Inside the Eureka Hotel, the owner, Bentley, panicked and mounting a horse in sight of the angry miners rode full gallop towards the police camp.

The crowd had now swollen to around 10,000 and moved toward the Eureka Hotel to be confronted by Commissioner Rede. Despite Rede's and the heavy police presence the Eureka Hotel was burned to the ground.

Seven men were arrested and charged.

In response, Governor Hotham decided to take a hard line and ordered 500 extra police and soldiers to Ballarat. Hotham demanded more of the detested licence hunts ordering the police to use whatever force they felt was necessary.

On October 22, a crowd estimated at 10,000 miners gathered at Bakery Hill directly across the flat from the Government Camp, on the road to the predominantly Irish area of Eureka. The colonial authorities were on notice, resistance to injustice was increasing and would not be covered by inflicting even greater tyranny. On November 1, the Ballarat Reform League was formed.

Meanwhile in Ballarat, four of

the seven men arrested for burning down the Eureka Hotel were found innocent and the other three were sent to Melbourne, convicted and sentenced to prison terms ranging from three months to six months.

Throughout the next month the leadership of the Reform League sought meetings with Gold Commissioner Rede and Governor Hotham to discuss Bentley's acquittal and the jailing of the three Eureka men as well as broader issues such as the abolition of the licence, democratic representation of the gold fields and the disbanding of the reviled Gold Commissions.

As public condemnation of the injustices grew, so too did Governor Hotham's concern and he appointed one of the State's most respected Magistrates, Mr Stuart, to review the Bentley acquittals. Stuart found that the Ballarat Magistrate Dewes – who acquitted Bentley and his cohorts – and some police were not only liars but were brutal and wicked and that Bentley was undoubtedly guilty of Scobie's murder.

Bentley and two of his henchmen were sentenced on 18 November to three years hard labour for the murder of James Scobie.

But that was all that the miners were going to get from Hotham. Their three mates remained in jail and the Governor remained opposed to their demands for reform.

The colonial powers in Melbourne and on the Ballarat gold fields remained determined to impose their rule by force.

On November 28, military reinforcements from Melbourne to the gold fields were attacked by a group of miners at Eureka. Baggage carts were overturned and a number of men were injured in the clash.

## Southern Cross flown

The following day, November 29, at a mass meeting of some 12,000 miners on Bakery Hill, the Southern Cross flag was flown for the first time.

**The colonial authorities were on notice, resistance to injustice was increasing and would not be covered by inflicting even greater tyranny.**

to embody everything that is best in the Australian character; courage, conviction and a commitment to a Fair Go.

For mineworkers, we cherish the spirit of Eureka. For us, the Eureka miners' rebellion is not a far off historical clash that occurred 150 years ago and is frozen in time; it is alive in our struggles today.

The burning rage against injustice that fired the Eureka miners 150 years ago, remains undiminished in our struggles today.

There is nothing we wear with greater pride than the symbol of Eureka. There is nothing we cherish more than the proud independent spirit of Eureka.

As we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade on December 3 1854, it is fitting to recall the events that led to this uprising and the benefits that flowed to all Australians as a result of it.

## The Eureka Story

In 1851 gold was discovered in a number of places across central Victoria sparking a gold rush that attracted people from not only all over Australia but from all over the world.

By 1854 there were almost 70,000 men, women and children

At the behest of the employers, the Governor of Victoria, Sir Charles Hotham, moved to force workers out of the gold fields and back to the cities.

On the gold fields there were no civic institutions or any democratic representation. They were ruled by a government appointed quasi-military Gold Commission, whose aristocratic officials lorded it over the miners and their families.

The Government collected revenue on the gold fields through a "Miners Licence", which entitled the holder to a single 3.6 metre square "claim" for a flat monthly fee of 30 shillings.

Hotham knew that many of those in the Ballarat diggings did not have a miners' licence. Up to the middle of September 1854, the search for licences occurred about once a month.

Hotham ordered that licence hunts become the order of the day. He boosted his police force with coppers from as far away as Tasmania and ordered that fines be substantially increased to five pounds for a first "offence" ten pounds for a second and 15 pounds for a third. To ensure that the police vigorously pursued the attack, Hotham cleverly ordered that half

## Sydney

### Eureka Stockade (1854) Celebrate the 150th anniversary

Sunday 28 November 9.30am – 4.00pm  
NSW Writers Centre, Rozelle

9.30 – Forum "Flying the Flag"  
2.00 – "Eureka150 Concert"

\$10.00 adults, \$5.00 children under 12, infants free  
Morning tea and sausage sizzle included.  
Feel free to bring picnic lunch.

For more information visit our website at <http://eureka150.net>

Organised by NSW Labour History society, New Theatre & Sydney Trade Union Choir.

#### Getting There: (Follow signs)

Enter the main entrance of Rozelle Hospital at the Cecily St traffic lights, turn left, left again, then right.

or Enter Wharf Rd at the Balmain Rd – Perry St traffic lights, turn into Cottage Rd, turn left, then right into Central Ave, right (again) into South Crescent, then left.

**Bus:** Route 440 from Central Station, Route 445 from Canterbury Rly Stn, Petersham or Balmain Wharf



# Eureka spirit for a Fair Go

The moderate leadership of the Ballarat Reform League reported on their failure to make any significant progress in their talks with Governor Hotham.

## The diggers had had enough.

Pushing his way through the crowd to the platform a miner named Frederick Vern said he wanted to speak. He moved that the diggers burn their licences and that no one take out a new one. Further, if any of the miners were arrested they rest pledged to free them.

Beneath the flag of the Southern Cross to the sound of their own guns firing, the miners burned their licences.

Commissioner Rede's spies brought him the news and he responded by ordering a licence hunt the next day, November 30. They targeted the diggings closest to the police camp and eight miners were arrested.

Following the raid thousands of miners made their way to Bakery Hill where Peter Lalor, rifle in hand, stood on a tree stump.

## Oath of allegiance

Lalor told all those who were there and who could not swear an oath of allegiance to the Southern Cross, to leave. Those who stayed formed into formations and with the Southern Cross hoisted on a flag-staff, Peter Lalor, now commander in chief, knelt beneath the flowing flag and led the diggers in their oath – "We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties".

With Lalor at the head the miners selected other leaders and various divisions were established. The rebel miners marched to the Eureka. Pikes were forged and firearms, provisions and horses were organised.

Drilling commenced and miners displayed their new found strength within sight of the police camp.

That night the rebel miners' leaders met and decided to send a delegation of three to see Commissioner Rede to demand that the eight diggers arrested that morning be released. They also sought an end to licence hunts. The three representatives were Raffaello Carboni, George Black and the Catholic Priest, Father Smyth. They went into a heavily guarded police camp where Rede dismissed their demands.

## Stockade

All the next day, Friday 1 December, and throughout the following day, the rebels constructed a defensive fortification – a stockade at Eureka built of slabs, logs and other oddments. In reality it was no more than a rough fence that provided little protection.

Inside it was about an acre of ground on which were tents. About 500 men were marching and drilling while the Southern Cross flag flew over the stockade.

News of the brewing storm spread throughout the Victorian gold fields as diggers from other areas began to make their way to Eureka.

Rede's spies reported the secret Eureka Stockade password – "Vinegar Hill", to the authorities. The password was a tribute to the first convict uprising at Vinegar Hill near Sydney in 1804 where the colonial authorities brutally murdered dozens of poorly armed



The Pikemen by Peter Miller

Irish convict rebels. Their leaders were hanged in chains and most of the survivors sentenced to between 200 and 500 lashes and sent to work in the colony's first convict coal mines.

The Vinegar Hill historical connection would have greatly alarmed the colonial authorities who feared that the Eureka miners might spark a widespread rebellion throughout the goldfields. The authorities were determined to nip it in the bud as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, in the centre of the stockade a huge bonfire was lit and a makeshift kitchen was established to feed the men.

At noon on Saturday December 2, no attack had come and most miners began to leave the stockade planning to come back on the Monday.

By Saturday night only 150 miners remained at the stockade. Rede's spies were reporting regularly. They knew the miners' ranks were thin that night and that they were poorly armed.

At 2am on Sunday December 3, the Government troops mustered quietly outside the police camp for their surprise assault on the 150 poorly armed miners in the Eureka Stockade.

The Government forces were made up of: 152 infantry soldiers; 30 cavalry; 74 mounted police; 24 foot police; and five inspectors.

At 3am when the attack began most of the Eureka miners were asleep.

The uneven fight lasted between 15 and 20 minutes.

At the end of the battle, among the 22 stockaders killed and the 12 wounded were Peter Lalor and 19 of his fellow Irishmen. With the exception of one miner identified as being from New South Wales, all the others were immigrants.

On the Government side there were four killed and 12 wounded.

Peter Lalor later paid tribute to the courage of the Eureka diggers in the face of overwhelming odds. "There were about 70 men possessing guns, 30 with pikes and 30 more with pistols, but each man had no more than one or two rounds of ammunition."

Most of the Eureka stockaders were taken prisoner while some escaped. A number of tents within

and around the Eureka Stockade were burned. The exact number of miners killed and wounded is not known.

Peter Lalor was wounded in the shoulder and lay hidden beneath some slabs. Although he escaped most of the other leaders were killed but 13 were arrested, including Carboni Raffaello, and charged with treason.

## Marital law declared

However, the Government's military victory was short lived. There was a massive outburst of public indignation and anger over the slaughter at Eureka.

Massive public meetings in Melbourne rocked Governor Hotham and the colonial authorities throughout Australia as the people condemned them and honoured the rebels.

In early 1855, just months after the Stockade, all 13 of the Eureka rebels tried for treason, were acquitted to great public acclaim.

The Governor was forced by public opinion to establish a commission of enquiry into the admin-

istration of the gold fields and it was scathing in its criticism of the authorities.

In the following months, most of the miners' demands were

granted. The Miner's Licence was replaced by an export duty on gold and a Miner's Right, which cost a small annual fee. The detested all-powerful gold commissioners were replaced by mining wardens. Police numbers on the gold fields were cut drastically.

Within a year, the rebel miners' leader Peter Lalor was representing Ballarat in the Victorian State Legislative Council. After the establishment of the Legislative Assembly in 1856, Peter Lalor was

elected as an MP and later became the Speaker of the Parliament.

## The spark for other gains

But the Eureka Stockade did much more than usher in a new era of important reforms in Victoria, it reverberated throughout the whole of Australia and sparked the introduction of many reforms democratic rights for ordinary people throughout Australia.

Within 17 years of the Eureka Stockade the following important laws were passed in Australia ahead of their introduction in Britain:

- 1856 – Australia introduces Secret Voting at elections. England did not follow until 1872.
- 1857 – Australia introduces the right for every man to vote. England followed in 1884.
- 1857 – In Australia a man no longer had to own property to vote. England followed in 1858.
- 1858 – Australia introduces a short period of Parliament for every three years. England introduces a five-year Parliament in 1911.
- 1871 – Australia introduces payment of Members of Parliament allowing workers and other in the community equal opportunities to stand. England follows suit in 1911.

**Beneath the flag of the Southern Cross to the sound of their own guns firing, the miners burned their licences.**

The events of Eureka in 1854 were pivotal in Australia's history for democratic rights and a Fair Go for all.

It is the courage and commitment of the diggers at Eureka that we salute. It is their determination for fight against the odds for what they knew was right that inspires us today.

\* Acknowledgements to *Common Cause*, journal of the Mining Division of the CFMEU. ☺

**SUNDAY  
DECEMBER 5, 2 PM**

**Gaelic Club, First Floor,  
Devonshire Street, Surry Hills**

*Speaker: Dr Drew Cottle, historian,  
Senior Lecturer in Politics,  
University of Western Sydney*

entry  
by donation

**Book launch & entertainment  
Songs of workers' struggle  
from around the world**

**150th Anniversary**

**Still Fighting to Defend  
Democratic Rights**

contact: Rob on 9699 8844

**EUREKA STOCKADE**

For the 150th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade the Communist Party of Australia is reprinting two important publications first issued for the 100th anniversary in 1954  
◦ a pamphlet entitled Eureka by Bob Walshe  
◦ a folio of lino-cuts by artists including Noel Counihan



# Colombia deports unionists

Maria Eaavist

**Aidan White, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, condemned the Colombian Government for deporting four senior international trade unionists from the international airport in Bogotá in early November.**

"In a country where union activists are being killed as they fight for their rights, it is intolerable that international unionists expressing solidarity and support should be victims of a political game of intimidation", said White.

The four labour leaders, due to attend an international union meeting, were detained at the El Dorado



## AFL-CIO head focuses on unity

Roberta Wood

**Just one week after the disappointing outcome of the November 2 election to which the American labour movement had committed unprecedented money, troops and passion, leaders of the AFL-CIO gathered in Washington, DC, for a one-day meeting to draw lessons and plan for the difficult battles ahead.**

The council met November 10 with defeated Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, who came to thank labour for its support. To huge applause, Kerry pledged to continue battling. He vowed to raise his profile on workers' causes such as overtime pay, trade, health care reform, and raising the minimum wage.

While expressing disappointment that Kerry did not win, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney focused most of his attention on the political potential of the network that labour built. "Never before have so many different unions done so much", he said.

"Never have we been so unified, moving forward together. We built a lasting force to continue the fight against attacks on working families, the fight for economic justice."

The meeting also set up a process and timeline to consider much-discussed changes to the federation's structure at the next regular meeting of the 54-member executive council in Los Angeles in February. The council is not only faced with the inevitable dismay at the electoral defeat.

There is long-simmering frustration at the fact that big member-

ship losses, due to outsourcing and technology-driven productivity gains, especially in the manufacturing sectors, have not been matched by organising victories. Sweeney appeared to be going to great lengths to preserve unity of the 59-union federation in the face of these challenges.

Sweeney announced the formation of a "committee for change" composed of the federation's 25-member executive committee, which he will chair. He said the committee will reach out to all unions, state federations, central labour councils and constituent organisations as well as to rank-and-filers for proposals.

One of those pushing most aggressively for structural changes is Andy Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union. Prior to the meeting, Stern issued a 10-point program for major change in the structure of all unions, including merging smaller unions into larger, more powerful ones.

Leo Gerard, president of the Steelworkers Union, put his focus on the continuation of campaigns that could broaden the base of the labour movement. Gerard proposed that a massive campaign for national health care should be used to keep in place the national structure that was constructed for this year's election campaign.

"In the private sector, we need to have a huge focus on health care to rebuild our manufacturing base", Gerard said, alluding to the large number of manufacturing workers in the US who lack basic health insurance.

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airport by agents of Colombia's secret police, DAS. They were told by senior immigration officials that their names appeared on a "list of people denied entry to Colombia" because they had attended an international union conference last September later described as "illegal" by senior government officials.

The four included Victor Baez Mosqueira, General Secretary of the world's biggest union confederation, the Inter-American Regional Organisation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

In Brussels, a delegation led by ICFTU Assistant General Secretary Jose Olivio de Oliveira told Colombia's ambassador, Nicolás Echavarría, that the deportation marks an escalation of the government's anti-union policies.

Following strong international condemnation, Colombia's Vice President Francisco Santos and Foreign Minister Carolina Barco apologised for the deportation, arguing it was a "mistake by immigration officials".

According to ICFTU Online, the delegation told the Colombian ambassador that this explanation "could not be accepted".

"This is no accident or mistake", Olivio de Oliveira said. "The government's explanations are simply not credible, and we are determined to respond to this hostile development with all available means."

The delegation also expressed its concern that the Colombian Government's list may fall into the hands of extremist paramilitaries.

According to a new report by Colombia's National Labor College,

attacks against trade unionists have increased during the government of President Alvaro Uribe by almost 20 percent. More than 50 union activists have been assassinated this year by state security forces and right-wing paramilitary death squads.

In another development, union leaders from Great Britain, Ireland and Spain who had arrived in Colombia to attend a meeting of women trade unionists had their 60-day visas suddenly cancelled and were permitted to stay only three days in the country.

The government's decision was reversed following a formal protest to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented by representatives of the global union federations and Colombian unions.

*People's Weekly World* ☪

## Phillipines:

# Police fire on striking workers

**All they wanted is to own a piece of land to till for a living. What they got was a piece of mound to lay their bodies to rest till eternity.**

In a violent strike dispersal in Hacienda Luisita on November 16, 14 people were killed, including two children aged two and five years old who died from suffocation from teargas lobbed by the police and army dispersal teams. One of the victims was allegedly strangled after being shot and his dead body hanged on the factory's gate. At least 35 people were reported to have sustained gunshot wounds, 133 were arrested and detained, hundreds were wounded and another hundred still missing. The majority of those arrested

Hundreds of military and police forces with high-powered firearms attacked the picketing workers and thousands of its supporters. As the APC rammed into the workers' barricade, the military and police repeatedly used water cannons, high-powered rifles, truncheons and teargas to disperse the strikers and their supporters and to eventually open the factory gates.

## Workers' strike for land, wages and jobs

More than 5000 sugar mill workers and sugarcane farmers of Hacienda Luisita went on strike last November 6. Members of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union (CATLU) barricaded factory Gate 2 while members of the United Luisita Workers' Union (ULWU) simultaneously locked up the mill's Gate 1. CATLU is the employees'

union while ULWU is the farm workers' union.

The strike arose from the deadlock in the negotiations for a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between CATLU and Hacienda Luisita, Inc. (HLI) and the illegal dismissal of 327 farm workers belonging to ULWU last October 1. Among those illegally dismissed were ULWU president and vice president, Rene Galang and Ildefonso Pingul, respectively, and eight other union officers.

More than the issue of wage and jobs, land distribution remains to be the major demand of Hacienda Luisita workers.

In a statement, the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) condemned "in the strongest possible terms the excessive use of military force and the violent dispersal that caused deaths and injuries to the striking farm and sugar mill workers of Hacienda Luisita".

"The strike at Hacienda Luisita is more than just a strike. It is a concrete illustration of the lingering social and class struggle between the exploited Filipino people and exploiters from the landlord, big comprador bourgeoisie and capitalist classes", stressed KMU Chairman Elmer Labog.

The strike has enjoyed massive support from various communities in Tarlac and other sectors nationwide. On November 15, some 12,000-15,000 people from 10 surrounding communities poured at the picket lines to show support to the workers. Together, they thwarted an earlier attempt of the police and military to dismantle the workers' barricades.

At present, the remains of the slain victims lie at the gates of Hacienda Luisita. The victims' family and the two labor unions vowed to parade the bodies of the 14 fatalities as a grim reminder of the brutal carnage. They also averred to regroup and restore the picket lines, stressing that the bloodshed all the more fortified their resolve to continue with the fight. "It is better for us to die fighting than die of hunger", said the workers.

Even with the carnage, charges of assault, illegal assembly, inciting to sedition and malicious mischief are being readied against the strikers.

The KMU has called for an independent and speedy investigation of the bloodbath. Swift justice should be given to the massacre victims, to their families and to the farm workers. ☪

Sydney

## National Asbestos Awareness Day

Friday 26 November 10am - 3pm  
Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour

02 9637 8759 or toll free: 1800 006 196  
asbestos@optusnet.com.au

Renovating?  
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Trade unions, other organisations and individuals are urged to send protest and condemnation letters calling for justice and indemnification for the victims of the massacre.

Letters may be sent by visiting: [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org) and then clicking onto the Philippines reference under the "Act Now!" column on the left.



# Iraq – Every day it gets worse

Susan Webb

**In the wake of the US assault on Fallujah, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, called for investigation of possible violations of international laws on treatment of civilians and war prisoners in Iraq.**

News reports and photos show women, old people and children among the killed and injured. Some bodies lying in the streets have been eaten by stray dogs and cats, witnesses said. A father of seven told Reuters his children were sick with diarrhoea and hadn't eaten for days.

Associated Press photographer Bilal Hussein, who lives in Fallujah, reported on the aftermath of the US assault, "Destruction was everywhere. I saw people lying dead in the streets, the wounded were bleeding and there was no one to come and help them."

**"We opposed the war, invasion and occupation of our country because we knew the deadly consequences. Those who suffer are the unarmed civilian population."**

When US soldiers started firing on houses in his neighbourhood, he panicked and headed to the river to swim across to safer ground. "But I changed my mind", he later told reporters, "after seeing US helicopters firing on and killing people who tried to cross the river." A family of five was shot dead as they tried to cross, he said.

Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions spokesperson Abdullah Muhsin said the IFTU opposes the use of military force against civilian areas like Fallujah, and called for "a far greater effort" to negotiate a peaceful end to "lawlessness, violence and imposition of ... extreme fundamentalist rule" by armed groups.

"We opposed the war, invasion and occupation of our country because we knew the deadly consequences. Those who suffer are the unarmed civilian population", Muhsin told a meeting of Britain's biggest union, UNISON, November 12.

Condemning efforts to "divide

working people on the basis of their religion or nationality", he said, "the majority of Iraqis are determined to keep Iraq together free from fanatics, fundamentalists, Saddam loyalists and foreign troops".

The US was on the defensive over a filmed report showing a marine shooting to death an unarmed wounded Iraqi prisoner in Fallujah. "All violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law must be investigated", the UN official said, and those responsible "must be brought to justice, be they members of the Multinational Force or insurgents". US military officials say they are investigating.

Barry Romo, a national coordinator of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, commented on the incredible pressure faced by soldiers who "are being put back in combat the day after they're wounded, while generals are living in air-conditioned

houses in the 'Green Zone'". Romo said that pressure is taking a toll on troops.

In a letter to President Bush before the US assault on Fallujah, the co-chairs of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Representatives Dennis Kucinich and Barbara Lee (both Democrats), said, "There is no question our troops have the ability to take the city, but at what cost and to what end? A year from now will Fallujah be just another graveyard in a country teeming with anti-American sentiment?"

They urged Bush to "rethink the overall strategy in Iraq" and move toward "Iraqi self-determination with the help and participation of the United Nations".

In a statement last month, Kucinich condemned the administration's request for an additional \$70 billion for the Iraq occupation, which will hit Congress when it reconvenes in January.

"The continued US presence in Iraq is counterproductive", Kucinich

charged. "Every day that we are inside Iraq the situation gets progressively worse." The additional \$70 billion "to continue a failed policy" pushes the total taxpayer cost to \$225 billion, the congressman said. "That is \$225 billion that has not gone to our economy, schools, or health care system."

Kevin Martin, executive director of Peace Action, said he would like to see an alternative, a "real 'Support Our Troops' Act." Such a measure, he told the *People's Weekly World*, would include funds to bring our troops home safely, funds for Iraq's reconstruction, "controlled by the Iraqi people, not by the US", and "funds for here at home" that could pay for veterans' care and other health and social needs.

Violence escalated this week in Mosul, Iraq's third largest city with a population of 1.5 million, and other cities in the county's north and centre.

A leading member of the Iraqi Communist Party, who was also a member of the interim National Assembly, was ambushed and killed along with two comrades near the northern city of Kirkuk, on November 13.

Wadhah Hassan Abdul Amir, also known as Saadoun, had joined the party in early youth, and served in the party's underground partisan movement in Kurdistan, waging armed struggle against the Saddam Hussein dictatorship, the ICP said in a statement. His leadership in these struggles "won him the admiration and affection of the people of Kurdistan". (ICP statement published in *Guardian*, 17-11-04 page 12.)

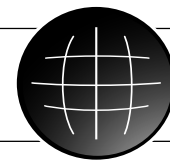
A senior official of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of the Kurdish region's two main parties, claimed that the Ba'ath Party has reconstituted itself in Mosul and is coordinating attacks against Iraqi police, government, and the city's Kurdish and Christian minorities. "The Ba'ath Party is working to create an ethnic civil war", the Kurdish official said.

Also last week, news media reported that kidnapped aid worker Margaret Hassan had been killed, shot in the head. Hassan, an Irish-born Iraqi citizen, had lived in Iraq for 35 years. She had opposed the US occupation.

*People's Weekly World* ☉



Victim of imperialism – a nine-year-old girl from Fallujah



## Global briefs

**HAITI:** The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organisation of American States has released a report condemning atrocities committed in Haiti since September 30. The Commission expressed concern about reported arbitrary arrests and detentions in the last two months including the October 2 arrest of the president of the Haitian Senate and three other politicians associated with the government of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, as well as the arrest of Father Gerard Jean-Juste in his Port-au-Prince parish. The commission emphasised the serious nature of reported threats and violent acts against human rights activists, journalists and the media in Haiti, as well as actions of armed gangs that are reportedly preventing delivery of humanitarian aid to the country's flood victims.

**BRITAIN:** Scientist Steven Hawking and London Mayor Ken Livingstone joined a moving ceremony in Trafalgar Square on November 2 to remember the thousands of people killed in the US war on Iraq. The names of thousands of Iraqis who have died were read one by one, along with the names of the over 1100 US military dead, 69 British military personnel and many victims from other nations. Parents and relatives of dead British soldiers participated, along with trade union leaders, celebrities from sports, the arts and science, and many rank-and-file activists.

**NIGERIA:** A second general strike to protest against rising fuel prices began on November 16. The strike was called by the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC). Union leaders accused the giant oil transnational Shell of being the "enemy of the Nigerian people", and called for action against the company, which accounts for about half of Nigeria's oil exports. NLC head Adams Oshiomhole said this time the strike would be total and indefinite in length, and would affect both the production and export of crude oil. Last week the government introduced grants and tax cuts to help offset the recent 23 percent fuel price hike, but did not act on the NLC's key demand to lower prices at the pump.

**ATHENS:** At its meeting in Athens on October 31-November 1, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) endorsed the decision of a previous joint meeting in Beijing to establish a standing International Trade Union Forum. The Beijing meeting had brought together the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the WFTU, the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU), the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU) and the General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU) of countries of the former Soviet Union. The WFTU welcomed the Forum as "an open platform and as an important step to raise the level of international trade union united action at the present time in the struggle for the economic and social demands of the working people all over the world".

## Canadian dock workers to be fingerprinted for "security"

**Port workers in Canada could soon be fired if they refuse to participate in intrusive new security checks, to be implemented as part of the federal government's proposed new transport security measures.**

Around 10,000 dockworkers in the ports of Vancouver, Montreal and Halifax would be required to have their fingerprints and photographs taken, if new security measures, now in the final stages of implementation, take effect.

The measures, which are being planned on the back of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, would also involve extensive background checks.

These include Canadian police and security intelligence services check for known or past associations and criminal records. In addition, financial checks

would be carried out in order to determine if a worker was prone to being induced.

The Canadian Government has stated that information would be shared with other foreign intelligence agencies.

If a worker refuse to undergo security clearance, they would lose their job.

According to Vancouver-based International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) coordinator Peter Lahay: "The regulations, in place since July 1, have limited ITF inspectors' ability to spot-check flag of convenience vessels due to the requirement to seek an invitation in advance of the inspection.

"Meanwhile the government is doing nothing in the way of truly securing the nation's ports. This starts with a dedicated police force, Canada disbanded theirs in 1997.

Security is being papered over and workers are being turned into scapegoats."

Kees Marges, ITF Dockers Section Secretary commented: "This is a wake-up call for port workers' unions across the world. They should be alert to the consequences for unions and port workers of the misuse of the ISPS Code. So far only unions from the US, Canada and Australia, confronted with the implementation of government policies, have raise specific concerns over the issue."

The ITF's safety and security campaign, launched in September, aims to protect transport workers from excessive security legislation, which is frequently being used to undermine workers' rights.

*International Transport Workers' Federation* ☉

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



email: guardian@cpa.org.au

## Here we go again!

I read your front-page article last week on the Howard Government's racist new welfare laws in absolute horror. Here we go again! The whole work-for-the-dole thing was tried out on the Aboriginal community first before being imposed on the rest of us. Now the next step in this control freak agenda is being mapped out. "Smart cards" to enable Centrelink to quickly deduct some or all of a person's pathetic "benefit" and even to set limits on what they buy. What next? The spirit of Maralinga lives on in this Government.

All this intrusion is said to be

designed to overcome "passive welfare". I reckon the plan is to get a whole section of the population to become a totally powerless, utterly passive source of very cheap labour so that the Government can skimp even more on its responsibilities to the community.

I'm sure the advertising campaigns won't portray it like that. I notice terms like "self-reliance" and "shared responsibility agreements" are already being bandied around. Who is getting paid to come up with these weasel words?

The idea of trialling this stuff on Aboriginal communities is really sinister and must have been designed to ensure that it takes hold with the least resistance possible. With isolated communities living on extremely limited incomes there's the chance to impose "collective responsibility" on them. Non-compliance by an individual or a number of individuals can be punished by denying services or benefits to a whole group. Then there's an opportunity to set the majority of the population against

"offending" persons and get the oppressed to enforce their own oppression.

Howard makes me sick the way he pretends that sections of the Aboriginal community support this recycled paternalism. It's obvious that he hasn't got any such support – that "comments from Noel Pearson" line he uses to cover his racism is getting so old it's got whiskers.

This latest attack on people already lacking in the basics necessary for a healthy and comfortable life must be nipped in the bud. Good on *The National Indigenous Times* for making it public and alerting us all to the sorts of schemes that are being hatched behind closed doors in the Howard ministry.

Laurie Wright  
Lismore, NSW

## We still say: Bring the troops home!

I must admit I haven't been following the Ukrainian presidential election campaign closely. With all

else that is happening in the world at the moment it falls a little out of my sphere of interest.

There was one small detail I picked up from scanning the press over recent weeks: the opposition candidate, Victor Yushchenko, has promised to withdraw Ukrainian troops from Iraq, if elected.

So, as the US finds itself ever farther from its goal of complete domination of Iraq, it is also finding that it has fewer and fewer friends fighting alongside it.

The Spanish people succeeded in having their troops withdrawn by a method at which the Australians and Americans have subsequently failed – at a general election.

The otherwise popular Aznar Government was brought down at the ballot box by a single issue – Spain's involvement in the "War on terror".

The Philippine troops have long gone.

The Hungarians announced three weeks ago that all their troops would be withdrawn by the end of March.

The Polish Government has announced it will also begin troop withdrawals in January after the election, with the Prime Minister stating that the remainder of the troops will "not remain in Iraq an hour longer than necessary".

So we must ask: what impact will those troop withdrawals have on Australia?

Firstly, while our demonstrations against the war have failed so far, we must not forget that public pressure is the most valuable tool we have.

Even the slavishly pro-US government of Gloria Arroyo in the Philippines was forced to cave in to public pressure and withdraw its troops.

Secondly, the occupation forces are struggling to just hold ground in

Iraq. As the "Coalition of the willing" dwindles it will put increased pressure on those remaining to supplement their numbers.

Tony Blair announced last week that the UK would be increasing the size of its contingent; the United States will no doubt make a similar announcement soon.

Even if so far we have been unable to have Australian troops withdrawn from Iraq, **we must prevent more troops from going over!**

Friends, we must not let John Howard's victory dampen our resolve on Iraq. We must find new energy and reinvigorate the campaign for peace.

These facts remain unchanged: the war was *wrong*, the occupation is *wrong*, our leaders *lied* and the *bodies are piling up*.

BRING THE TROOPS HOME!

Andrew Jackson  
Sydney, NSW

## Remembrance Day

**Remembrance Day and John Howard says "we can never repay the debt we owe" to our soldiers etc who went to war.**

Well, World War I? No problems, there is five left, so it's going to cost nothing.

World War II? More than half are gone, and Howard's Government has legislated (1999) to deny the medical benefit health gold card to all who served. Korea, Malaya, Vietnam, there's at least one suicide a week.

John Howard is on record saying you can't "do anything" about suicide. Debt? Just another splash of rhetoric for the big occasion, Mr Prime Minister?

Denis Kevans  
Wentworth Falls, NSW

Sydney

## Maritime Branch CPA

Invites you to join them in celebrating

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Photo: Ana Pha

## Culture & Life

by  
Rob Gowland

## I will not say the day is done

In a recent column, I quoted a description of corrupt, cynical and ruthless capitalism from a thriller set in Japan. And now my wife has come up with another!

A few days ago she borrowed from our local library a recent (2002) book about the life of Australian writer Hesba Fay Brinsmead, *Days Never Done* by Sydney journalists Michael Pollak and Margaret MacNabb.

Like many Australian families, my wife and I have in our book collection a copy of Brinsmead's most famous work, *Pastures of the Blue Crane*, as well as the first of her *Longtime* series, *Longtime Passing*, about the pioneers who in the '20s lived in near total isolation in the bush along Bell's Line of Road in the Blue Mountains – now, of course, one of the main arterial roads west out of Sydney.

Brinsmead's publishers tried to pigeon-hole her as a "children's writer" and strenuously resisted her efforts to break that mould. Certainly, I did not know of her as anything else.

And yet, she was a passionate environmentalist for whom

the drowning of the unique and beautiful Lake Pedder by a hydro-electric project in the middle of a national park was a devastating experience.

It moved her to write a non-fiction work for adults, about the struggle to save the lake and, by extension, the Franklin and all of Tasmania's endangered wilderness: *I Will Not Say The Day Is Done*.

The title is from J R R Tolkien's great work of fantasy and myth, *The Lord of the Rings*: it's part of a song sung by Frodo's faithful companion Sam Gamgee after Frodo has been captured by Orcs in Mordor and all seems lost. And yet the song expresses confidence that good will triumph in the end.

Brinsmead wrote the book in the 1970s, but despite her standing as a very successful author was unable to get any publisher to handle it until 1983, when a small Sydney group called the Alternative Publishing Co-operative took it on.

To Brinsmead's disgust, the major publishers wanted to sweep it under the carpet. They all said it "just *had* to be published – but not by us!", she told Pollak and MacNabb.

Even her regular publisher Oxford University Press did not want a bar of it. "Frank Eyre [OUP's principal in Australia] felt that the book could have political repercussions, and additionally he was concerned that OUP's bank balance may have been put under pressure with the threat of legal writs and so on".

Chalk up another resounding success for private enterprise and a "free press"!

Eyre may well have been aware that those fighting the environmen-

talists in Tasmania had seemingly unlimited funds. And the stakes were certainly high: as Terry Aulich, a former Senator from that period later wrote, it was "the biggest invasion of a wilderness area in the history of this country".

"One billion dollars and that's the end of a wilderness that exists nowhere else in the world." But for a billion dollars profit, who's going to lose sleep over a bunch of trees, eh?

Aulich, who retired from the Senate in 1993 after nine years, had turned to fiction writing while still in parliament. Given Australia's draconian libel laws, writing fiction is one of the few ways left to depict the reality of the Australian scene without inviting ruinous law-suits.

His 1972 thriller *The River's End*, dealing with the struggle to save the Franklin River, has a graphic description of corrupt Australian capitalism in action:

"It was the beginning of the '80s and the men at the beach could see the afternoon shadows on the sandbanks and they rubbed their eyes. But they didn't see much.

"Then, none of us saw much, even though big shiny cars ran up and down the black-top highways doing favours and bags got delivered to politicians, and bank managers opened accounts in false names and men with a seat in the members' enclosure were learning to say 'do it' and someone got taken out at night and got killed.

"And we rubbed our eyes and didn't see much."

Just as the police didn't see much – or claimed they couldn't see much – when Lake Pedder campaigner Brenda Hean received telephone threats that she would be



killed unless she stopped her activities against the dam project and the flooding of the lake.

When she subsequently went missing on a flight in a small plane between Hobart and Flinder's Island in September 1972, together with another environmentalist, the pilot Max Price, many people cried "foul".

The similarity to the convenient sabotaging of progressives all around the world that was taking place at the time was just too strong. But, of course, it was too easy for the authorities to point to the fact that they were flying in a Tiger Moth, and to blame the plane and

its "foolhardy" occupants for the "accident".

Hesba Fay Brinsmead, who had flown in a Tiger Moth and vividly described a crash in one in her novel *Echo In The Wilderness*, believed the environmentalists had been murdered.

In a letter in 1975 she wrote, "People make me so angry when they say 'Fancy flying in an old Moth, no wonder they were killed'. Like a lot of Pedder people, I think his [Max Price's] plane was sabotaged."

Certainly wouldn't be the first time capitalism had blood on its hands. ☘



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

Sun November 28 ~  
~ Sat December 4

**The Debt (ABC 8.30pm Sunday)** is a stand-alone drama marked by considerable complexity in its characterisations plus a certain amount of cynicism. Written by Richard McBrien, this tale of ordinary criminals, police and lawyers has more than a touch of Damon Runyon about it.

All the sympathetic characters – the ones you care about – are either bent or capable of being bent. Everyone has either money or domestic problems, often both.

The central character, Geoff Dresner, is a safecracker so terrified of going back to prison that he's become an honest baker. When his good-for-nothing son-in-law Terry (a scaffolder) gets into debt to a local loan shark, Geoff must face the prospect of returning to crime and even to prison to save his family.

Geoff is well played by a rather meek-looking Warren Clarke (better known as hard-as-nails DSI Andy Dalziel and the husband in *Down To Earth*). Terry is played by Martin Freeman (Tim in *The Office* and the naked male stand-in in *Love Actually*).

Geoff's lawyer (Lee Williams) is having an affair with a female colleague while pretending delight that his wife has just had their first baby. For the sake of his career he will willingly sacrifice all his principles.

One of the coppers, DS Foster (played by Hugo Spear), moonlights as a taxi driver to pay for his son's schooling. This leaves him so knackered that he cannot perform

as a detective and is passed over for promotion.

He finds himself fitting Geoff Dresner up for arson and murder in order to have a success and help his career. His DI (played by Nina Sosanya) lies under oath to support his frameup because she is soft on him.

And so on. As circumstances, lies and lack of money conspire to send poor Geoff back to prison for life, hope seems to be a commodity in very short supply.

But stay with it, for it's not over till it's over and crime (or cynicism) still has a card up its sleeve.

**The Office** begins a repeat season this week (ABC 10.00pm Mondays). A mock observational documentary, *The Office* depicted a ghastly working environment – underpaid dead-end jobs, irritating colleagues and a smug, sexist boss – that was instantly recognised as being so true to life.

In fact, it was so comically horrifying that it became a hit in Britain and winner of numerous awards

Co-writers/directors Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant spent over 12 years between them trapped in offices. The result is wonderfully observed comedy but it is the brilliant cast that make it work so well.

David Brent in particular, as the boss of the office (a branch of a large chain), is a painfully loathsome creation. Painful because we've all met just such creatures in just such positions.

**Saddam Hussein: The Trial The World Will Never See (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday)** looks at evidence it says will never be presented or discussed at Saddam's trial – evidence of the complicity of the US (and to a lesser degree France and Germany) in his crimes.

The program charges that the United States not only supported the Iran-Iraq war – which resulted in the deaths of over a million people – but gave Iraq a "green light" to proceed with the war and even helped it to plan the conflict.

It claims that France supplied fighter planes and an American



Trixie and Captain Cuddlepuss interviewed in the Aardman series *Creature Comforts*

intelligence expert says that French pilots even flew missions.

Retired US Air-force Lieutenant Colonel Tom Francona says that the United States and its allies knew about the use of chemical weapons by Saddam's army against Iranians and Iraqis from when it began but chose not to act on the information.

The film asserts that when Saddam used chemical weapons to murder more than 5000 Kurds in Halabja, Iraq, in 1988 the US initially claimed Iran was responsible for the deaths and refused to meet Kurdish witnesses of the crime or meet with members of the Iraqi opposition.

French and German companies allegedly supplied Iraq's chemical weapons program. Significantly, the French Government did not directly condemn the massacre.

The documentary looks at the relationship between the United States' commercial and strategic relations with Iraq and the failure

of President Bush (Snr) to act when told that Hussein's troops were mobilising for the invasion of Kuwait.

Finally, the program asserts that the US and its allies were complicit in the slaughter of 300,000 Shiites – killed by Hussein after they rose up against him in 1991, after his defeat in the first Gulf War.

Most of us are familiar with the charges but it's nice to see them on the screen.

A few years ago, Aardman Animation, the makers of *Wallace & Gromit* and *Chicken Run*, made a short film called *Creature Comforts*. It was an amusing piece in which recorded interviews with ordinary Britons were put into the mouths of surprisingly appropriate animated plasticine animals.

So successful was the concept that Aardman went on to do a series of TV ads for British Gas using the idea.

Now, at last, Nick Park at Aardman has apparently decided to revive and expand the concept. The result is a new series of ten-minute shorts, with the overall title, again, of *Creature Comforts*.

The comments from what the credits call "the great British public"

are often bizarre, but even the most mundane provide the animators and director Richard Golezowski with splendid opportunities (a middle-aged woman's response "I'm actually afraid of the sea" in a discussion on the pleasures of the seaside takes on a wealth of new meaning when put in the mouth of a walrus).

Comments from patients in a doctor's waiting room have an added resonance when used as dialogue for animals visiting the vet.

As you can see, the series is comprised of variations on a single joke. Watch more than a few minutes at a single stretch and it quickly palls.

Aardman, sensibly, have accordingly made the series in ten-minute episodes so as not to outstay its welcome.

Used as a filler once a week, in the manner of *Black Cab*, it would make an amusing and clever interlude. But that is not how the ABC is going to show it.

They are running it three episodes at a time (ABC 8.30pm Thursdays) – a nice, neat half-hour block, you see. That's the way I watched the preview tapes and it's the wrong way to screen this material. ☼

Combines South East & South West Annual Union

## Family Picnic Day

CFMEU CEPU AMWU AWU Building Trades Federation

### Portland

Monday 13 December 11.00am - 3.00pm Portland Soccer Ground End of Percy St

Contact: Mark Solly AMWU 0427 013 186; Travis Lawson CFMEU 0417 247 999; Margaret Brabender Portland 03 5523 4272; Aaron Cartledge CFMEU 8211 5532; Chris Nesbitt AWU 0429 988 004  
Tickets are available from the Union Office, job delegate, organiser or on the day at the picnic  
Supported by the Portland & SE Trades and Labour Council

### Adelaide

Monday 6 December 10.00am - 3.00pm Bonython Park (opposite Coca Cola)

Tickets are \$17.00 and are available from the Union Office, job delegate, organiser or on the day at the picnic  
CFMEU 8424 3040 Visit CFMEU at www.cfmeu-forestdivision.com.au



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Sydney

## MANUFACTURING FEAR

Forum 2 – FACING FEAR

Friday 26 November 9am – 5pm UTS Broadway (Room to be confirmed)

No entry charge, refreshments provided

This forum focuses on the people and communities, racialised as 'Other', who have their freedoms curtailed, and currently are insecure, fearful, feeling terrorised in their own homes and how people working with racialised communities have themselves responded, finding innovative ways to tell their stories.

Organised by: NSW Civil Rights Network  
+ Research Initiative on International Activism, UTS

www.civilrightsnetwork.org www.international.activism.uts.edu.au  
manufacturingfear@yahoo.com James Goodman 02 9514 2714

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

November 26

ACEH AND WEST PAPUA – STRUGGLES FOR FREEDOM

Dr Nurdin Rahman Human Rights Activist,  
formerly Lecturer English, Uni Aceh  
John Martinkas Journalist and film maker,  
author of works on East Timor, Iraq

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

## CFMEU Mining & Energy produces its first two DVDs

### The Union: Fighting For A Fair Go

The CFMEU Mining & Energy Union has produced its first ever set of DVDs, which were premiered at its National Convention earlier this month. The DVDs are now available to the public.

The first, *The Union: Fighting For A Fair Go*, celebrates the 150th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade and traces the struggles and gains of Australian mining and energy workers in the first four years of the new Millennium

In particular, it examines the sharp conflicts between the Union and four giant multinationals – Rio Tinto; BHP Billiton; Anglo American and Xstrata – the four biggest coal producers in the world today. It also focuses on the front line experience of rank and file workers and their families in a broad range of conflicts and the benefits that have flowed not only directly to them, but to their communities too.

The film also deals with the difficult challenges facing mining and energy workers today in coping with an aggressive anti-union climate with rogue contractors and employers who are hell bent on the destruction of collective bargaining.

The film features Union leaders and rank and file activists speaking about the following:

- Rio Tinto campaign;
- BHP campaign;
- Anglo campaign;
- Xstrata campaign;
- The Pilbara;
- Roche and rogue contractors campaign;
- Winning over non-union workers;
- A Union for our families too.

*The Union: Fighting For A Fair Go* is a film that documents the courage and determination of Australian workers and their families in facing down the aggression of ruthless employers and giant greedy multinationals.

It is a film that celebrates the fighting spirit of Australians for a Fair Go.

Directed by Paddy Gorman and Russ Hermann

Produced for the CFMEU Mining and Energy by Spontaneous Productions

Running time – 34 Minutes

**Cost: \$20 (please add another \$5 for post and packaging)**

Cheques and Money Orders should be made payable to CFMEU Mining and Energy

Send orders to CFMEU Mining and Energy, PO Box Q1641, Sydney NSW 1230



### The Human Cost Of Mining

Whenever business discusses the mining industry it is always in terms of dollars and cents. Economic rationalists never consider the human cost of mining.

This short film looks at the real cost of mining – the human cost – which has been borne by hundreds of thousands of Australian families who have lost loved ones or watched them suffer from crippling injuries and debilitating disease incurred in the mining industry.

As mining companies look to increase their profits they still maintain a lethal disregard for the welfare and safety of their employees in Australia.

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The Human Cost Of Mining reminds us of the need to continue to fight for the right to a safe and healthy workplace.

Directed by Paddy Gorman and Russ Hermann.

Produced for the CFMEU Mining and Energy Union by Spontaneous Productions

Running time – 18 Minutes

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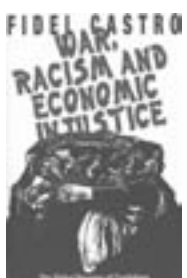
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