

Govt agenda is Aboriginal assimilation

The case of a small Aboriginal remote community in WA accepting fuel bowsers from the Government in exchange for following certain hygiene protocols set down by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Amanda Vanstone, is being promoted as a landmark, a model to be followed. It is, in fact, a racist tactic labelled "shared responsibility", part of the Howard Government's larger objective of assimilation.

The strategy is clear: shift the blame for Indigenous marginalisation and poverty onto Aboriginal people themselves. Sanction and give impetus to the official promotion of racism, and make Aboriginal communities pay for government failure. In the case of the Howard Government – deliberate failure.

In its report, *Expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health*, Access Economics estimates that Indigenous health needs are under-funded by \$425.5 million per year. Considering that more than \$60 billion is spent on health by governments every year, this shortfall would require an increase in funding of just one per cent.

The "shared responsibility agreement" of the community, 250 kilometres south of Hall's Creek, includes having children shower daily, undertaking household pest control, acting to prevent petrol sniffing and emptying rubbish bins.

The Government's arguments are insultingly superficial and shallow. Vanstone told ABC Radio's *AM* program that "it'll be pretty clear after a year whether the community's done what they say they're going to do".

Asked if that means there will be an expectation of improved health in the community, Vanstone answered: "Absolutely. If this agreement goes ahead and it works, what could anyone complain about? A community gets what it wants – a petrol bower."

What if health conditions haven't improved? Does the Government take back the bowsers? And it gets worse. The Minister continued, "It gives them a chance for a bit of economic development – people might stop to get petrol, they can put a store there, and don't have to drive themselves 70 kilometres away to get petrol and back again."

As with other double standards – such as the lack of health or education services for Indigenous

communities – if there was a white community in remote Australia who had no access to fuel there would be a public outcry.

When asked how realistic it was to expect a tourist development to bloom in the Great Sandy Desert, Vanstone, sounding very much like a tourism commercial, said there are "a lot of Australians" who "want to know more about the Great Sandy Desert" in this "great, wide expansive country".

And when asked if the community would actually have water available to take showers every day, Vanstone had no answer: she either didn't know or didn't want to admit the community had been left without enough water.

The entrepreneur angle is also being promoted by the Labor Party, with ALP vice president Warren Mundine calling for the abandonment of communal land ownership for the objective of economic land development and profit-making enterprises.

Mundine is also on the Howard-appointed National Indigenous Council, which has been set up as a consultancy to give the Government's racist policies some credibility. This in effect means the ALP is endorsing the Government's agenda.

Larissa Behrendt is professor of law and Indigenous studies at the University of Technology, Sydney. In an opinion piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (December 8) professor Behrendt made some telling observations about the source of recent developments.

"John Howard has consistently rejected, with his policy stance on Indigenous issues, the holistic and comprehensive recommendations of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and the *Bringing Them Home* report [on the Stolen Generations]."

"He has continually dismissed and marginalised the rights agenda and those who dare to use its language."

Professor Behrendt cut through Howard-speak: "The seductive rhetoric claiming that the Government's focus is on the 'real issues' of housing, health, education and employment, while only the 'elite' have the luxury to talk about rights, has been delivered with a moralistic tone, but it has also delivered a weak basis



for attacking the plethora of socio-economic issues in Aboriginal communities.

"By rejecting the structural and systemic, the policy only focuses on problems as they occur. It is reactive and aimed at interventions rather than proactive and aimed at prevention."

In other words, Howard's "practical reconciliation" at work.

Noting the disagreements between some Aboriginal leaders and the National Indigenous Council, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission chairman Geoff Clark said this was a reflection of a situation where Indigenous people have been "reduced to beggars in our own land again".

He said that "governments are not offering any real solutions and conveniently ignoring all those major matters that we've advocated for in the last ten years or so".

Terry O'Gorman of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties warned that the Government's push to have curfews and other restrictions on Aboriginal communities would not overcome the problems they face. "It's just illogical to say social problems are going to be solved by reducing the civil liberties of people in Aboriginal communities."

Season's Greetings

We convey our warmest end of year best wishes to all readers of *The Guardian* on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia.

We continue to live in momentous times in which the people of the world are in struggle against wars, poverty, unemployment, the attacks on democratic rights, privatisation and much else by capitalist and imperialist governments.

In 2005 we face the fact that the Howard Government has been re-elected with a majority in the Senate. Attacks on the working people, the trade union movement, the Indigenous people, welfare recipients and other sections of society will be intensified.

We will fight their policies and not give up an inch. The warmongers and neo-fascists can be defeated if workers, family farmers and others whose work is exploited, join hands and fight back.

But we need a much bigger and stronger Communist Party right now. Please think about joining the Party's ranks and getting organised.

But in the immediate future many will be taking their holidays and gathering strength for the coming year.

Please accept our seasons greetings, as we wish you peace, good health and success in 2005.

Dr Hannah Middleton
President
Peter Symon
General Secretary

Guardian Dates

This is the last *Guardian* for 2004.

The first issue for 2005 will be Wednesday January 26.

We wish all readers the very best over the holiday break and happiness, good health, peace and strength for the many struggles ahead in the New Year. We would like to thank you for your support and encouragement during the past year.

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The Guardian

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Labor's final insult to workers?

Last week Labor's parliamentary industrial relations spokesman Stephen Smith insisted that Australian Workplace Agreements would be part of the ALP's post-election policy review. For appearances sake he added that Labor remained committed to collective bargaining involving trade unions but, nonetheless, the statement sent out the strong message that the parliamentary ALP is willing to take the next step being demanded by employers.

Over 500,000 Australians work under the non-union, individual contracts and the Howard Government has already pledged more resources to rapidly increase that number. Up until now, Labor's policy has been to abolish AWAs in view of the extremely disadvantaged position they put workers in during the "negotiation" of the contracts. Stephen Smith's statement is also a sign to the bosses the Labor Party might be prepared to drop any remaining meaningful associations with the organised working class.

Opposition Leader Mark Latham had already set the tone. He announced that his top priority after the election defeat in October was to go out into the business community and to sell the sincerity of Labor's commitment to "flexibility, mobility and enterprise in the Australian economy". These words are the bosses' code for lower real wages, less job security and privatisation.

While some of Latham's colleagues have been not happy with his performance during the election campaign or since, none of his front bench is publicly trying to dissuade him from this pro-business course of action. Stephen Smith's latest comments support the strategy.

Before his promotion to the post of Labor leader and his election as Prime Minister in 1983, Bob Hawke made a pilgrimage to the US. He introduced himself to all the influential government and business figures he could in order to reassure them that a Hawke Labor Government would be a very different proposition from the Whitlam-led one. There would be no questioning of the US alliance, no program of major reforms and there would be a wages and incomes Accord with the trade union movement to ensure industrial "peace". That Accord was quickly stripped of nearly all the elements favourable to workers and remained as a straightjacket on the organised working class movement. It promoted collaboration with the employers and was based on their economic outlook.

Last month US Ambassador Tom Schieffer urged Mark Latham to visit Washington and acquaint himself with the Bush Administration. Latham had previously planned to go to the US to hobnob with the academic, business and government elites that attend the Australian-American Leadership Dialogue. As it turned out, the Labor leader did not get to the influential gathering. He stayed in Australia in case Howard called an election in August.

The truth is that Mr Latham does not need to travel to the US to demonstrate his loyalty to the US or to capitalist ideology. He fancies himself as a reader of "mega-trends" in world affairs and his various books show his conviction that capitalism has won the ideological struggle convincingly and for all time. The political space he wants the Labor Party to fill is to represent the "aspirational voters" – the presumed masses of entrepreneurial contractors living in very comfortable circumstances in the outer suburbs.

In promoting these illusions, Mr Latham is accepting the threadbare propaganda of the neo-liberal social agenda. The reality ignored by Latham is of rapidly deteriorating working conditions, of long hours, increased casualisation and growing insecurity. This powerlessness on the part of workers will be exacerbated by the extension of the use of Australian Workplace Agreements and it now seems that the parliamentary Labor Party is ready to capitulate on this question as well.

There is no future for the Labor Party in travelling further down this path. And there is no future for workers and their organisations in following Labor. A real alternative must be created, and it needs to begin to be built now.

Across the policy spectrum Labor is shifting further to the right, be it on workers' rights, Medicare or Aboriginal rights (see story page 1).

The job of restoring and then extending workers' rights, of reversing the disastrous privatisation of recent decades and taking up an independent foreign policy will only be tackled when a government of progressive forces – with a strong working class orientation and active support in the community – takes office. The Communist Party is committed to building this alternative and invites those with similar hopes for a brighter future to join its ranks.

PRESS FUND

Great News! We've received a total of more than \$12,000 in contributions to the Press Fund. But wait a moment. That was the limit we set ourselves for last year's target; this year's target was \$14,000. Never mind. There are still another seven weeks to go before the Guardian collective reconvenes to face the rigours of next year's workload. So we could still make it if enough comrades dig deep (and dig often!) over the holiday break. The electricity, phone and other bills do not stop over the break. In the meantime we offer our sincere thanks to all those who contributed so selflessly over the year that's drawing to a close, and we wish you a happy and peaceful New Year. And of course, we thank all those who contributed this week, as follows:

Hannah and Denis \$35.20, Pio Pagliaca \$30, C W Reed \$50, "Round Figure" \$16.30, Tom Bartlett \$100, Angelo Attard \$20, B Appleton \$100, J&S Hale \$27

This week's total: \$378.50. Progressive total: \$12,157.

Call to action in 2005

In its final meeting for the year the CC Executive of the Communist Party of Australia drew the attention of all Party members and supporters to the "very serious situation that will develop rapidly in the immediate future as a result of the re-election of the Howard Government with a majority in the Senate".

The resolution went on to say that the Howard Government has already signalled its intention to make further savage attacks on the working class, the rights of the trade union movement and democratic rights generally, on welfare recipients, public health and public education and on the Indigenous people. Underlying all these attacks is the Government's assistance, in many forms, to the corporate sector. It is maintaining its pre-emptive strike policies and its massive increase in military preparations and expenditure.

In all these areas the Government, the media and a number of its support organisations are

conducting an ideological campaign of justification to hoodwink people to support or at least to neutralise opposition to their policies.

In this situation we urge all members and supporters to act, to become involved in the inevitable struggles that the Howard Government's policies will engender by the trade union movement, various progressive community organisations and in the Party's own campaigns.

The resolution said that the Party, in particular, must much more effectively and extensively combat the ideological campaigns of the conservatives, explain and develop class consciousness and the necessity to struggle against the policies of the Government and the leading spokespersons of capitalism.

Our priority campaigns must be to:

1 Defend democratic rights generally and the rights of the trade union movement, and the working conditions won by the trade union movement in the past;

2 Defend and support the social welfare system and its availability to pensioners, persons with disabilities, the unemployed, single parents and others without discrimination, and in particular recognising the rights of Indigenous people. We reject the conservative mantra of "mutual obligations" which is merely a cover to justify the Government's attacks;

3 Combat and expose the aggressive war drive based on the militarisation of society and the concept of pre-emptive strike.

The CC Executive called on all Party members and all Party organisations to become more active and more effective in their work.

"We call on all Party supporters to seriously consider joining the organised Party ranks as the most effective way to join in the struggle for peace, democratic rights and the conditions of work and life to which all working people are entitled", said the statement in conclusion. ✪

Fifty years as a Communist Activist

Last Sunday the Maritime Branch of the CPA wound up the year with a function in honour of veteran Harry Black. More than 50 people, many of them also veterans of the movement enjoyed the afternoon. Warren Smith was MC and Jim Donovan spoke on Harry's years in the Party, on the waterfront, in the Waterside Workers' Federation and later in the leadership of the Retired Members of the MUA (and WWF). Harry also spoke on his experiences and acknowledged the many fine comrades he struggled alongside over those years. Some were present at the function.

Harry, liked by everyone except the bosses, served in the AIF during the war, took part in many tough struggles: in the defeat of Menzies' attempt to ban the Communist Party, in support of the New Zealand

wharfies when they were locked out for 151 days, during the royal Commission (a witch hunt against Party members), the big national strikes of the 1950s, his many street meetings, on the stump in the Domain with Rupert Lockwood and Stan Moran, against Apartheid, against the Korean and Vietnam Wars. He moved the resolution opposing the loading of arms on the *Jeparit* during the Vietnam War. On the wharfs he was a member of the notorious Gang 505, the gang that made the bosses tremble in their shoes.

Throughout these many years, and in many other struggles, Harry remained a rank and filer, selling party literature, collecting party finances and planning how to get more out of the boss and it was apparent to all, he is still a great speaker and as dedicated as ever. ✪



Union stalwarts each with an amazing history of struggle: (L→R) Bob Galleghan (Painters & Dockers), Harry Black, Fred Moore (Miners), Bill Langlois (Seafarers).

Second Hospital Appeal for Iraq

The Iraqi Hospital Appeal has almost reached its first \$1000. The CPA is appealing to readers, members, supporters and friends to help raise \$5000 for medical services for the people of Iraq. The money collected will be conveyed to the Iraqi Communist Party which has set up a mobile hospital. The Appeal is one small way in which we can express our solidarity and assist the people of Iraq in their suffering. Contributions will be very welcome over the holiday period.

Many thanks to the following for their generous contributions this week:

Gwenyth Goedecke \$20, Anonymous \$25, A Attard \$25, Blacktown Branch CPA \$100, Anna Pha \$20.

This week's total \$190. Cumulative total \$983.50.

Hospital Appeal for Iraq

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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.

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

The great Redfern land grab

Peter Mac

There has surely never been an Australian Government more blatantly aligned with corporate developers than the NSW Carr Government. As the year draws to a close the people of the inner-Sydney suburb of Redfern are still reeling from the shock announcement that the government plans to completely rebuild much of the suburb. To do this they would sweep aside all normal legal and ethical constraints, override the wishes of local residents, and ignore the heritage significance of Redfern, one of the oldest suburbs in Australia.

Under the government's plans, special legislation would be passed to permit most of the area to be bulldozed and rebuilt at grossly increased densities. The works would be carried out by a special authority created by the government.

The area affected would include "the Block", home to several hundred Aboriginal people, and the Waterloo and Redfern public housing estates, which currently house thousands of elderly and disadvantaged residents.

The proposal to resume "The Block", which is currently owned by the Aboriginal Housing Cooperative, bears out claims that developers have been eyeing the area for years. Significantly, after hearing of last year's Redfern riots, state Liberal Party leader John Brogden declared that the govern-

ment should "Bring in the bulldozers!" And sure enough, this is just what the Carr Government now proposes to do, even if this means violating the rights of Aboriginal residents.

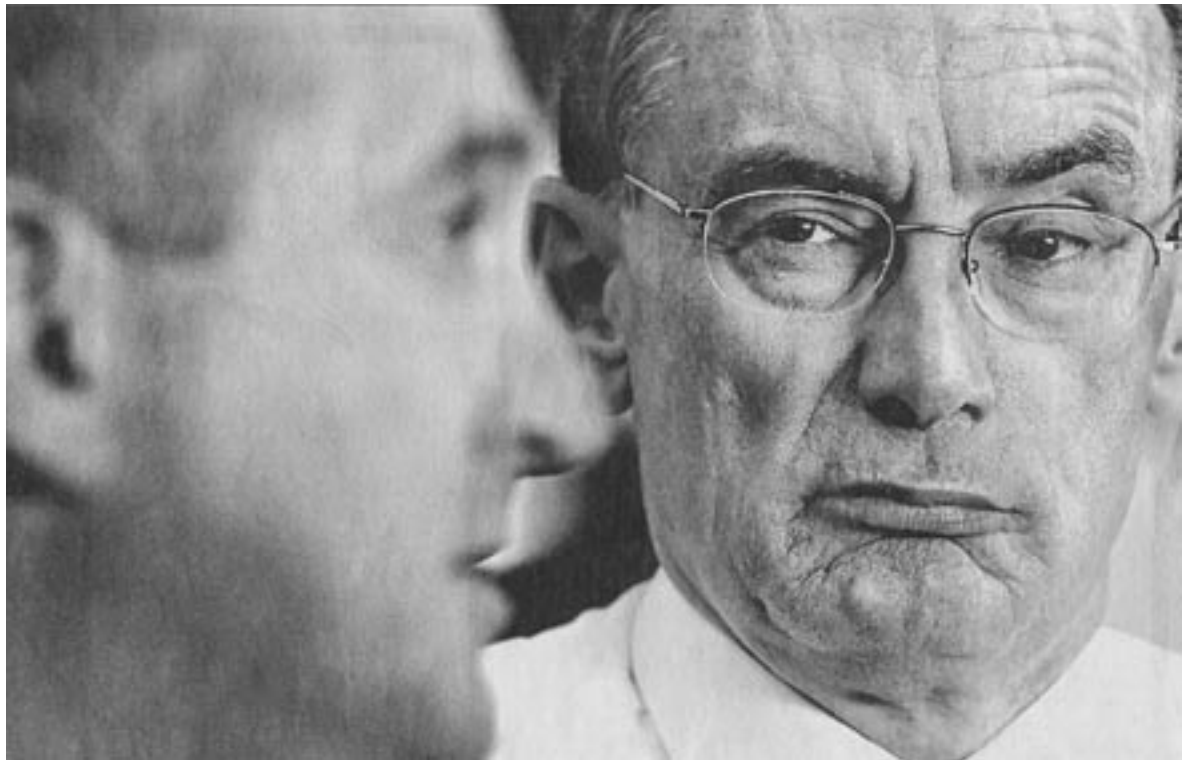
Redevelopment of the Waterloo area was the scene of bitter struggles 30 years ago, when the (then) Housing Commission attempted to demolish most of the 19th-century terrace housing and construct high-rise towers.

Some of this work was completed. However, the project was finally shelved after the far more enlightened rehabilitation of the harbourside suburb of Woolloomooloo showed that historic character could be retained and enhanced, while still achieving an increase in density, but at far lower social and economic costs.

Ironically, the huge buildings that were constructed in Waterloo at that time are now themselves the target of the Carr Government's megalomaniac redevelopment ambitions. Redevelopment of these blocks would cause major disruption and trauma for the mainly elderly residents.

The work could only be justified on narrow economic grounds if the result was an increase in housing density, but even this would only be possible by sacrificing the beautiful landscaping that was used to justify redevelopment in the 1970s.

A representative of the Redfern Legal Centre, Ms Elizabeth Morley, recently expressed deep concerns about the new authority's ability



Carr is up against a powerful coalition of resident groups

to override the NSW Heritage Act, as well as its lack of accountability in other respects. "There should be no capacity to be regulator/consent authority and developer without public scrutiny. The Minister should not have both commercial-in-confidence deals and be the approver of those deals", she commented.

In this respect the Redfern proposal is just a much larger variation of the Carr Government's many

plans for the redevelopment of other areas, despite the objections of residents and other concerned citizens.

In cases such as the proposed leasing of Sydney's historic Quarantine Station, for example, the government has shown itself only too willing to act as landlord and proponent of redevelopment while abandoning its traditional role as custodian of the cultural values of the place.

The horrific proposal to construct a major waste processing plant in the Sydney suburb of Auburn showed the government's willingness to even pass special legislation overriding a court decision against the proposal.

And now it is Redfern's turn. At the heart of the suburb there is an intersection of many different rail lines. And now it is also a place where greed, racism, callousness and philistinism all intersect in the interest of developer megabucks.

It is almost as though the Carr Government, puffed up (like its federal counterpart) with a sense of its own invincibility, has decided to "go for broke" and put into practice all its worst plans for redevelopment and privatisation.

But they are now up against a powerful coalition of resident groups and political parties, and they have also managed to alienate huge sections of the voting public by their appalling handling of issues such as redevelopment and public transport.

They think they cannot lose at the next elections, but they are in for a shock. Tomorrow is another day. ☘

Baxter protest against inhumane treatment

Asylum seekers at Baxter detention centre in Western Australia are widening their acts of distress with three Iranian refugees having joined the man who last week started the protests against their continued detention and inhumane treatment. As The Guardian went to press all three men were refusing to come down, staying out even in the cold at night. The Immigration Department has told the strikers they are to be sent back to Iran, where they face torture and death.

Another three Iranians in the centre have now sewn their lips

together, having begun a hunger strike. They are said to be soon joined by others. In a separate development 10 Arab Ahwazian Iranians (also called Indigenous Iranians) have issued their own declarations and are also part of a hunger strike.

They have sent their last will and testament to supporters, indicating explicitly that the decision to proceed with the hunger strike until death is "pre-determined", and that this is a decision by the 10 men.

Refugee advocate groups say that the protesting detainees are

being denied water and sleep by the prison camp guards.

Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR) have called for an independent negotiator and a psychiatrist to be brought in to help end the strike, which has been going for 12 days.

RAR spokesperson Bernadette Wauchope said that refugee advocates were not endorsing the actions by the detainees but understood their desperation. The protesters on the roof of the gymnasium have told supporters that other prisoners have now been prevented from bringing them water

and that guards were throwing balls at the gym ceiling to stop them from sleeping.

Another RAR spokesperson, Kathy Verran, said their health was deteriorating rapidly. "I hope that they are hospitalised and that they have independent psychiatric assessments because if they're sent to management, where they're in solitary confinement, that would just be disastrous for these guys who've already endured four years of detention and are severely depressed because of that detention." ☘

Pete's Corner



Downer's Vanuatu coup

Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer received an early Christmas present last weekend with the news that Vanuatu's controversial Prime Minister, Serge Vohor, had been overthrown.

The no-confidence vote in Parliament that removed Mr Vohor was ostensibly held over his controversial switch of diplomatic allegiance from China to Taiwan.

However, the vote comes after months of threats against the Vohor Government by Mr Downer, and just weeks after an Australian diplomatic delegation visited the country to deliver a written warning to the government outlining policies it did not find acceptable, and the threat to withhold \$31 million in aid.

Immediately after Mr Vohor's removal Mr Downer issued an effusive statement of congratulations to the new Prime Minister Ham Lini. The statement made it clear that Australia intended to intensify its interference in Vanuatu's adminis-

tration, and also offered a bribe.

"I hope to work with the Government of Vanuatu on the basis of a shared commitment to good governance and economic reform, the rule of law, the professionalism and independence of the police, judiciary and public service, freedom of the media, and the cooperation in combating crime."

"I look forward to engaging with the Vanuatu Government at an early stage to articulate our shared commitment to the core principles of the bilateral relationship, and to agree on how these will be implemented", Mr Downer said.

"I am hopeful this will clear the way for discussions on a substantial increase in the aid program for Vanuatu in 2004-05."

Mr Downer made it clear that the "implementation" of the bilateral agreement will include an increased presence of Australian government advisers and Australian Federal Police. ☘

Ion workers' future uncertain

Bob Briton

Last week automotive parts group Ion went into voluntary administration. The former darling of the share market is now in the hands of McGrath Nicol & Partners. Official spokespersons are doing their best to sound upbeat about the possibility of selling the outfit as a united going concern but vultures are circling. The Cootes gas and fuel transport business is about to be hived off in a sale reportedly worth \$151 million – not enough to avert the current crisis involving \$350 million of unsecured bank debt.

For five years the company has been on an expansion and acquisitions drive. Its debt had blown out from \$14 million to \$196 million along the way. Shares dropped 16 per cent in value in January when investors started to get nervous about the viability of it all. A \$55 million share placement was scraped together and the talk turned once more to booming profits.

Workers, too, were used to hearing good news about the ambitious company. In Adelaide, along with the rest of the community, workers at the Ion's three Castalloy plants would read the glowing reports in Murdoch's daily about the export sales and other successes of their

clever bosses. They knew that times had been tough in the past. The firm had been the recipient of cash injections from the Commonwealth's Automotive Competitiveness and Investment Scheme. A secret deal with the state government was needed to prevent Castalloy moving to Victoria in 2001.

But while Adelaide residents were reading the pure sunshine stories in *The Advertiser*, the National Australia, Westpac, Commonwealth, BNP Paribas Mizuho Corporate banks were reading more reliable information. They decided to withdraw a \$440 million funding package. It was this move that caused the long faces in government and some business circles last week. Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews declined to comment on the matter and Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane was out of Canberra and unavailable for media comment.

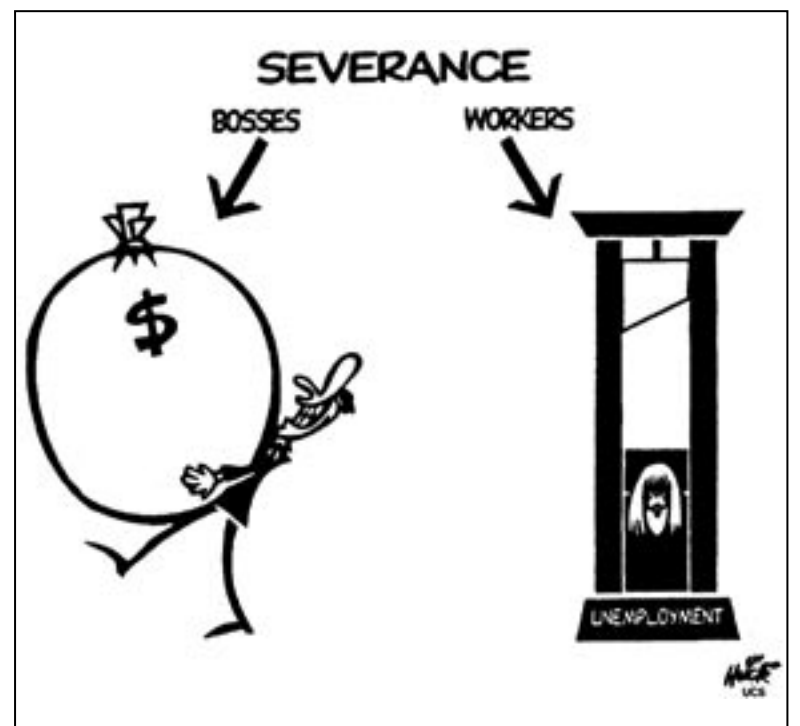
The banks' decision also prompted a meeting of Castalloy workers in the yard of the fume and grimy aluminium foundry in the Adelaide suburb of North Plympton. The Australian Workers' Union members present called on the company directors to hand back their fees for the last two years. They called on the administrators to release details of the briefing

they prepared for the company at the request of the banks. The workers also sought assurances that their wages and entitlements would come before the demands of the banks.

The "assurances" from the administrator have not been very reassuring: "... it does appear at this early stage [that] employees entitlements will be safe... There's no need for any job losses and I'm not expecting to close any of those businesses..." However, nobody is saying there will NOT be any job losses and even the future of the all-but-finished engine block plant in Altona in Victoria is in doubt. As a result, at the transmission factory in Albury and at Ion facilities as far away as New Zealand and Kentucky in the USA, workers must also wait and watch and worry.

Recently toppled Ion Managing Director Graeme Salthouse told *The Australian Financial Review* "I have found the news distressing ... I had a dream, a vision and all those things. I think it's a sad day for Australian manufacturing."

It is high time that Australian workers revived their ambitions for bringing the productive forces of the country under social ownership and out of the hands of get-rich-quick visionaries. ☘



Govt should punish negligent bosses

The South Australian Industrial Court's decision to fine construction giant Baulderstone Hornibrook a mere \$55,000 after 26-year-old Lee Alexander was killed at its Pier Hotal job at Glenelg in 2002 has prompted Australia's main construction union, the Construction Division of the CFMEU, to call on the Howard Government to pursue negligent employers rather than constantly attack unions and workers.

"The Howard Government's Building Taskforce is taking court action against workers on a Multiplex job where a worker was killed in 2003", said the union's National Secretary John Sutton.

Even though it is common practice for workers to hold a site safety audit when a worker has been killed and to meet to decide how to assist the worker's family, the Government's Taskforce wants these workers prosecuted and fined

for allegedly receiving payment during industrial action and for breaching dispute settlement procedures.

At the same time, Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews wants to introduce a raft of new measures to punish unions with higher fines and penalties. "But what is the Government doing about negligent employers whose actions contribute to the deaths of Australian workers on construction sites?", said Mr Sutton.

Baulderstone Hornibrook pleaded guilty to two counts of failing to ensure the safety of workers over the Glenelg incident. In June this year, the company was convicted for breaching its duty of care in another incident in Melbourne in August 2001, where 53-year-old Fred Smith was killed, and was fined \$375,000 by the Victorian Magistrate's Court.

The two fines combined represent 0.043 per cent of Baulderstone's billion dollar turnover.

The union warns that until governments get serious about forcing construction contractors to address their safety records, workers are going to continue to be killed at a rate of an average one per week on Australian construction jobs.

"With its multi-billion-dollar infrastructure budget, the Howard Government is in a significant position to enforce high safety standards on construction jobs", Mr Sutton noted. "This would be a worthwhile endeavour which would actually save workers' lives."

"Instead of wasting taxpayers' dollars on Building Taskforce prosecutions of workers trying to protect their safety, or hounding workers' organisations with their anti-union ideology, the Howard Government would better serve the Australian community by introducing practical measures that forced employers to take workplace safety seriously." ☘

Wilson Tuckey a disgrace

Outspoken extreme-right MP Wilson Tuckey sprang to the defence of James Hardie last week and landed in hot water.

Mr Tuckey was labelled "a disgrace" after comments he made last week during a parliamentary debate over compensation to victims of asbestos-related diseases.

Among the comments were: "For example, if a young man dies and leaves a young family behind, I fully support compensation because a bread winner had died."

"But if somebody is 70 years old, got a grown up family ... and they've got a year or two left, how much money should they get?"

"I took this opportunity to address my objections to the cargo cult mentality of modern day Australia that money fixes everything."

Mr Tuckey also described the campaign against James Hardie as a "witch hunt", and that members of parliament had no right to act as "prosecutor, judge and jury" in the James Hardie matter.

He claimed that instead James Hardie should be congratulated for

providing jobs and cheap housing for Australians.

His comments received stinging rebuke from all quarters, particularly the Asbestos Diseases Society of Victoria (ADSVIC).

"I am astounded that an elected representative can be so callous in his disregard for people suffering devastating illness through exposure to asbestos," said ADSVIC Spokesperson, Jane Staley.

"Whatever good James Hardie may have done as a company can in no way justify the evil they have done. They knowingly exposed their workers and consumers of their products to the dangers of asbestos, and then moved assets away from their victims."

"Mr Tuckey is hopelessly out of touch with basic human standards of decency."

"The message he is sending to corporate Australia is that it is OK to kill and injure people, as long as you provide jobs and profits."

"We call on him to withdraw his comments immediately, and to apologise to the thousands of Australians who are directly affected by asbestos diseases." ☘

WA

SHAKE YOUR MARACA FOR CUBA

Join the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society for their last party of the year to farewell the 2004 Brigadistas to Cuba. Dance to the outrageous Latin big band LATIN FUSION who play a fiery mix of Cuban Salsa, Merengue, Colombian Cumbia, Cha Cha Cha and originals.

Featuring German Dunovits (Timbal), Lindsay Times (Trumpet), Karla Cerna (Keyboard & Vocals), Adams Monk (Conga), Bill McAlister (Trombone), Pedro Donio (Vocals & Guitar), Peter (Sax & Flute), Carlos Cerna (Bass Guitar and Vocals) and Miguel Cayazaya (Vocals and Percussion)

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Kulcha on South Tce, above Dome Cafe

Tickets: \$ 15:00

Latin food for sale on the balcony

For info or tickets contact Vinnie 0419 812 872

Craig Johnson victimised, jailed for two years

Craig Johnson the former Victorian Secretary of the Manufacturing Workers Union is still languishing in Victoria's Loddon jail. Craig received a jail sentence of two years following an industrial dispute in which a number of workers were sacked by Johnson Tiles and then replaced by hired labourers from Skilled Engineering.

A number of workers protested to Johnson Tiles and then moved to Skilled Engineering where their office was occupied and some damage to office equipment took place.

While others involved in the dispute received very light sen-

tences Craig Johnson was singled out and victimised.

Initially he also received a relatively light sentence but in what can only be regarded as a vindictive move by the Victorian Labor Government, the director of public prosecutions appealed the light sentence and demanded a move severe jail term. The main focus of the appeal was that damage to property is a serious crime and that a severe penalty must be imposed. His jail term was increased from four months to two years.

Although this was an industrial dispute it was turned into a criminal case and Craig Johnson

was singled out from among the many other workers involved in a clear case of victimisation. The long custodial sentence imposed on Craig Johnston is a pay-back for his militant involvement in a number of industrial disputes on behalf of the workers employed in manufacturing industries.

Protests can be sent to the Premier of Victoria, the Hon Steve Bracks and to Victoria's Attorney General, the Hon Rob Hulls c/- Parliament House, Melbourne Victoria, 3000 or to Craig Johnson's solicitors, Rob Stary & Associates, PO Box 2230, Footscray Victoria 3011. ☘

Film Review by Andrew Jackson

Team America: World Police

Produced by the creators of *South Park*,
Trey Parker and Matt Stone

I have a confession, I've done something politically unsound. Perhaps I'm a victim of peer pressure, perhaps it was a momentary lapse of judgement. Or perhaps I'm the product of a generation that was brought up fed on TV sex and violence and toilet humour.

Whatever the reason...

I went into a cinema, handed over \$14, and sat through *Team America: World Police*.

(Actually, the real reason I went is because I loved the movie *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut*, went to see it three times, and to this day sing the catchy ditties to myself as I do the housework.)

But I'm more politically astute now, and I should have known better.

Rob Gowland has warned us time and again in *Worth Watching: South Park* is "An annoying mixture of right-and left-wing attitudes, the series presumably reflects the typically confused politics of the young anarchists who make it, and their belief that bad taste is "radical".

Actually, I think Rob was too kind.

If "Left Wing Communism" is an "Infantile Disorder", then middle-class American anarchism is the political equivalent of a baby in a soiled nappy.

South Park creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone like to think of themselves *above* politics and to prove the point they take aim and ridicule at not only the "American way", George W Bush, and the American Defense Forces which violate and plunder the earth (which is all great), but also the American liberal celebrities who worked tirelessly during the recent US election campaign to get rid of George W and stop the rape and plunder from happening. Helen Hunt, Sean Penn, Samuel L Jackson, Alec Baldwin, Tim Robbins, Susan Sarandon and the arch-nemesis of right-wing corporate America – Michael Moore – are all ridiculed for their activism and branded as pro-terrorism.

The reason these celebrities were targeted was because they dared stand up during the election

campaign and proclaim the slogan: "Get educated on the issues, form an opinion, then *go out and vote*".

They did not want, nor expect, the youth of America to blindly go out and vote for Kerry – in a country where voting is optional they know that you would never get people into the polling booths that way.

Instead Michael Moore trod the path of a foot-soldier of the revolution, from city to city, called mass-meetings in basketball stadiums and through a mixture of humour, drama and hyperbole *educated* the amassed youth.

He provided them with all the information they were denied in the mainstream press. There were big video screens to provide moving pictures for the semi-literate, there were pamphlets and literature for those who could read but who have been deliberately intellectually retarded by the US education system.

He did not *tell* them to vote, he made them *want* to vote.

Team America is the antithesis of this.

During the recent election campaign Trey Parker and Matt Stone put forward the slogan: "If you don't have an opinion, don't vote".

This kind of "anarchism" encourages selfish, petty-bourgeois individualism of the worst kind. The result? Another generation of self-absorbed, apathetic American youth, pumped up on caffeine, glued to the TV eating microwave pizza, with a "F*** you" attitude to the outside world.

And this is *exactly* what the ruling class wants – Bush and his spinmeisters couldn't have come up with a better campaign themselves!

And movies like *Team America: World Police* fit very nicely into their masterplan.

Don't see this film. Don't let your children see this film (lock them up if necessary!).

Get off the couch, throw out the junk food, spend your \$14 on Mike Moore's latest book and join the fight against fascism.

Really, it's so much more satisfying. ☺



The photograph shown above – *They sent me to War* – is part of an exhibition currently on display until February 26 at the Adelaide Fasta Pasta restaurant in the basement at 131 Pirie St. The theme is *Sydney – Spring 2004* and is by activist/photographer Fernando M Gonçalves, whose images have appeared frequently in *The Guardian* with the acknowledgement AVANTE MEDIA Australia. Carolyn Ramsey – Planning Officer, Arts and Living Culture for the Adelaide City Council – opened the exhibition last Saturday evening with well-known Adelaide visual artist Gavin Malone as Master of Ceremonies. Over 70 people attended the launch.

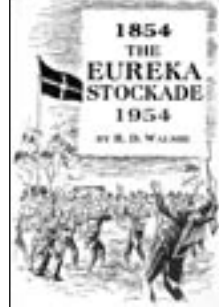
Millionaire businessman Richard Pratt, head of the Pratt Water Group, has commissioned a report which advocates government-written Water Bonds to fund a national irrigation refurbishment program. The report also calls for a review of the Murray River cap and the Saved Water Trading Schemes to allow private investors to trade water on the open market. According to Pratt, "Water is subject to the same basic drivers which affect any business – demand, supply and cost."

News Ltd's *Australian* newspaper is a virulent promoter of the assimilation of Indigenous people and their culture, but the huge contradictions in capitalism keep surfacing even as the paper pushes its vicious campaign. Thus on page one of the December 9 issue there is an attack on ATSI under the headline, "Ex-minister, black chief caught up in 'missing' half million", alleging an ATSI commissioner was involved in theft. The story directly below it has the header "Hardie in sight of \$2 bn deal", about James Hardie's massive corporate theft of compensation for asbestos victims, no attack on anyone here. Corporate crimes of such proportions take place all the time as a "normal" part of a system based on theft.

The Federal Government has ordered a review of its \$460 million rescue package of medical insurer United, formerly UMP after other medical insurers complained that it was using the money to undercut its competitors. Last month United announced that it would slash its premiums by an average 20 per cent after a big rebound in its finances. The other four major indemnity organisations said this was only possible because of the Government's bailout. A pretty good argument for government-funded, state control of medical insurance.

For those who have been wondering about why there are great big white barricades around Parliament House in Canberra, the answer is that for the last two years Parliament House has been subjected to an \$11.7 million security upgrade. Part of the upgrade is the construction of a reinforced concrete wall meant to stop any explosive-packed vehicle – including a Sherman Tank or a monster truck – from driving up the slopes that cover Parliament House. It is also designed to stop the general public from entering the grassed area unless they undergo a full security check. And the Government keeps insisting that Australia has not become a more likely terrorist target because of support for the US war on terrorism.


CAPTIALIST HOG OF THE YEAR: is James Hardie Industries, which it was revealed this year developed an elaborate scam to cheat thousands of asbestos victims out of compensation after setting up another so-called clean company in the Netherlands and moving off-shore. Adding insult to injury, it left behind a cash-strapped fund for victims and a company chairperson with a script full of denials and corporate spin.



THE EUREKA STOCKADE 1854-1954 by R.D. Walshe

This important booklet by R.D. Walshe was originally produced for the 100th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade. With an incisive political analysis, Bob Walshe traces the development of the diggers' struggle and the political implications of the Stockade for the movement for independence and democracy in Australia then and today. Walshe writes: "Eureka Stockade was the heroic forerunner of independent working-class activity in Australia." and "There is much 'unfinished business' of the Eureka Stockade, and it would be heresy against good Australianism to take for granted the freedoms which come to us from past fighters in the Eureka tradition." The Communist Party of Australia has republished the booklet as a contribution to the 150th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade.

\$6 plus \$2 postage & packing



EUREKA – 150TH ANNIVERSARY 1854-2004
– A PORTFOLIO OF PRINTS

This portfolio includes 13 lino-cuts of the events of the Eureka Stockade and historical commentary on this momentous occasion. The artists who contributed were Noel Counihan, Peter Miller, Pat O'Connor, Ailsa O'Connor, Mary Zuvella (Hammond), Len Gale, Ray Wenban, Naomi Shipp and Maurice Carter.

Originally produced by the Melbourne Popular Art Group in 1954 for the 100th anniversary, the Communist Party of Australia has republished the portfolio as a contribution to the 150th anniversary of the Eureka Stockade.

\$20 plus \$3.40 postage & packing

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Message on West Papuan National Day

Rex Rumakiek
West Papuan Representative for the UN Lobby

Today, 1st of December is the West Papuan National Day. West Papuan people, in the country and abroad are celebrating. Their support groups around the world are also celebrating as a gesture of solidarity with the West Papuan struggle for independence and against Indonesian Colonialism and Military brutalities.

In Vanuatu there was a big Solidarity March on Monday and today there will be a big Ceremony at the Port Vila Municipal Stadium. The Foreign Minister Hon. Barak Sope will address the people and some 400 Chiefs who came from all over Vanuatu for this occasion. There will be String Bands and Cultural activities for the next three days to show their solidarity with the people of West Papua.

The decision for this celebration was taken by the Melanesian NGOs and Chief Conference held in Tanna island from October 29 to November 6. It was decided that this occasion must be observed throughout Melanesia.

First of December is important

in the West Papuan struggle because it was the birth day of the much cherished Morning Star Flag, that many Papuans had defended with their lives.

Forty-three years ago today, the Morning Star Flag was raised for the first time by democratically elected leaders of what was then known as Netherlands Nieuw Guinea or Dutch New Guinea. The Morning Star flag was flown along side the Dutch National flag.

It was also on this occasion that the leaders decided to change the name of Dutch New Guinea to Papua (West Papua). One year later, through the US-sponsored New York Agreement (NYA), West Papua was transferred to Indonesia after seven months of interim UN Administration.

The Indonesian control was only temporary pending an act of self-determination by 1969. According to the NYA, men and women of West Papua would democratically cast their votes in a Referendum to determine the political status of West Papua. But Indonesia defied the New York Agreement and annexed West Papua (1963) the moment the

Territory was effectively placed under its control.

The UN Secretary General's office and the Netherlands did nothing to rectify the situation. Like the case of Rwanda, West Papuan people were abandoned by the UN to a brutal Military regime. In 1969, Indonesia organised a fraudulent Act of Free Choice where a hand picked 1022 people were forced to accept Indonesian annexation.

Currently there is a big International campaign for the UN Secretary General to review the UN role in that fraudulent exercise. There are some 79 NGOs and 134 Parliamentarians joining the campaign and the numbers are increasing.

Led by their National Independence Movement, the OPM and later joined by the Papua Presidium Council, the PDP are still resisting the Indonesia occupation. Between 100,000 and 300,000 people have died in this struggle.

On UN Human Rights Day December 10, 2003, the Faculty of Law of Yale University in the US, after a long study and analysis of Human Rights Violations in West Papua, resolved that Indonesia has committed Crimes Against Humanity and possible Act of Genocide in West Papua.

In April this year a number of prominent NGOs such as West Papua's own Institute of Human Rights Study and Advocacy, the ELSHAM, US Human Rights Watch, Tapol of England, Indonesia Watch of Germany, ICJ declared in Geneva that Indonesia had indeed committed Acts of Genocide in West Papua.

Regardless of International protest and official pressures Military



West Papuan independence fighters

violations are still continuing. At this very moment, thousands innocence lives are at stake in the Highlands of West Papua where a secret Military operation has been conducted.

Like many other operations in the past, the Military completely burn down every village, including Clinics, Schools, Churches, destroy food crops and kill animals, making

sure that the fleeing people have nothing to return to.

In the past many people died from starvation and sickness because of malnutrition after being hiding in the cold mountains for too long. For the sake of humanity, if this is not Genocide I really don't know what it is.

Issued in Suva, Fiji Islands
on 1 December 2004 ✪

The Military completely burn down every village, destroy food crops and kill animals, making sure that the fleeing people have nothing to return to.

Bush plan for Social Security: divide and profit

Art Perlo

At the Republican Convention, President Bush said, "We must strengthen Social Security by allowing younger workers to save some of their taxes in a personal account".

Social Security does not need strengthening – it needs protecting. Without any changes, the Social Security trust fund will be able to pay full benefits for the next 40 years. With relatively minor adjustments, it can continue indefinitely. There are few government programs – or corporations, for that matter – that can be as confident. But Social Security does need protecting from Wall Street vultures and their White House and congressional agents.

Bush's plan will, in fact, weaken

Social Security. It will endanger benefits for current recipients, as well as for younger workers and those just coming into the workforce. Bush's broader agenda is to divide younger and older workers, undermining the growing movement around working family issues.

Bush has given no details, but his plan will involve allowing younger workers to divert a portion of their payroll taxes into individual investment accounts they will "own". This will be a bonanza for the investment firms administering the program – a good deal for them, but a bad deal for a young worker, because the scheme transfers even more wealth from the working class to the owning class. Here's how:

Most stock is owned by the wealthiest families. Under the Bush

plan, payroll taxes from millions of workers will be invested in the stock market. The money will go to buy stock from rich people who now own it. With increased demand for the stock, the price will go up, helping existing stockholders receive an extra profit when they sell their shares. The worker-investors who buy the stock will be paying inflated prices – more than the stock is worth.

Meanwhile, the big Wall Street investment banks will be managing the millions of individual workers' accounts. Every time a share of stock is bought or sold, these fund managers will skim a percentage off the top. Every year, a small management fee will be charged to each account. Multiply that by billions of transactions in tens of

millions of accounts, and it adds up to a very nice piece of change for Wall Street.

The advocates of privatisation claim that over time there will be far greater returns from personal investment accounts than from Social Security. But economist Dean Baker of the Center for Economic and Policy Research debunked this idea three years ago. In testimony to the president's commission on Social Security, Baker showed that, based on projections from the Social Security trustees' own report, inflation-adjusted stock returns would be only half the seven percent figure used by privatisation advocates. After deducting management fees, the return on individual accounts would be lower than the three percent real return that Social Security is projected to receive from government bonds.

Collective responsibility

But the insidious nature of Bush's plan cannot be measured simply in dollars. For 70 years, Social Security has been the embodiment of working-class solidarity. It is a promise that collectively, we will provide at least a subsistence living standard to those

who are disabled, elderly or survivors of the premature death of a family breadwinner.

Personal investment accounts are designed to undermine the political support for this solidarity. Workers will be encouraged to follow the stock market, and place higher priority on growing corporate profits than on protecting wages and benefits. Working class solidarity will be replaced with the dog-eat-dog, I-win-you-lose mentality of the stock market – and there will be far more losers than winners.

This doesn't have to happen. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, in a post-election letter, promised, "We'll take the commitment, heart and solidarity of construction workers, teachers, janitors, engineers, firefighters, nurses and others phone-banking and walking neighbourhoods together – and we'll turn them into success on the issues that shape working families' lives", issues that include the need to "strengthen retirement security instead of privatising Social Security".

This growing commitment can be the heart of a movement that can not only preserve retirement security, but win universal health care as well.

People's Weekly World, paper of the Communist Party USA ✪



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Ukraine: Ultra-right groups support Yushchenko

Justus Leicht

In its enthusiasm for the Ukrainian opposition, the Western media has conveniently overlooked the fact that ultra-right groups are active inside the opposition movement known as the "Orange Revolution".

Members of fascist organisations represent a small minority among opposition supporters and have not played a leading role in the ongoing demonstrations in Kiev. Nevertheless, their participation in the mass rallies is not coincidental.

They are neither unwanted fellow travellers, nor troublemakers smuggled in by the regime of President Leonid Kuchma. Both of the most prominent opposition leaders, former prime minister Viktor Yushchenko and multi-millionaire and former deputy prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko, have maintained political relations for several years with organisations that have

as the political exile organisation of the "Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists – Stepan Bandera fraction". The followers of Bandera espouse a fascist ideology and a militantly anti-communist, anti-Russian and anti-Polish policy.

Bandera's movement fought in the Second World War – initially on the side of Nazi Germany against the Soviets – and demanded "independence" for the Ukraine in those regions invaded by the German army.

Following the conquest of Ukraine, the Nazis no longer needed the assistance of "Slavic sub-humans". They rejected independence for Ukraine and began to persecute Ukrainian nationalists.

The Bandera faction was forced to oppose the German army, but during and after the war it focused its activities against the Soviet army.

This is the tradition which the KUN represents.

Up until July of this year,

tion campaign, the party changed its name and symbol.

Nevertheless, in July, Tyahnybok publicly praised nationalist Ukrainian partisans in the Second World War who had "cleansed the country of Russians and Jews".

"There is a need", he explained, "for Ukraine to be finally returned to Ukrainians" and liberated from the "Muscovite Jewish mafia that runs Ukraine today".

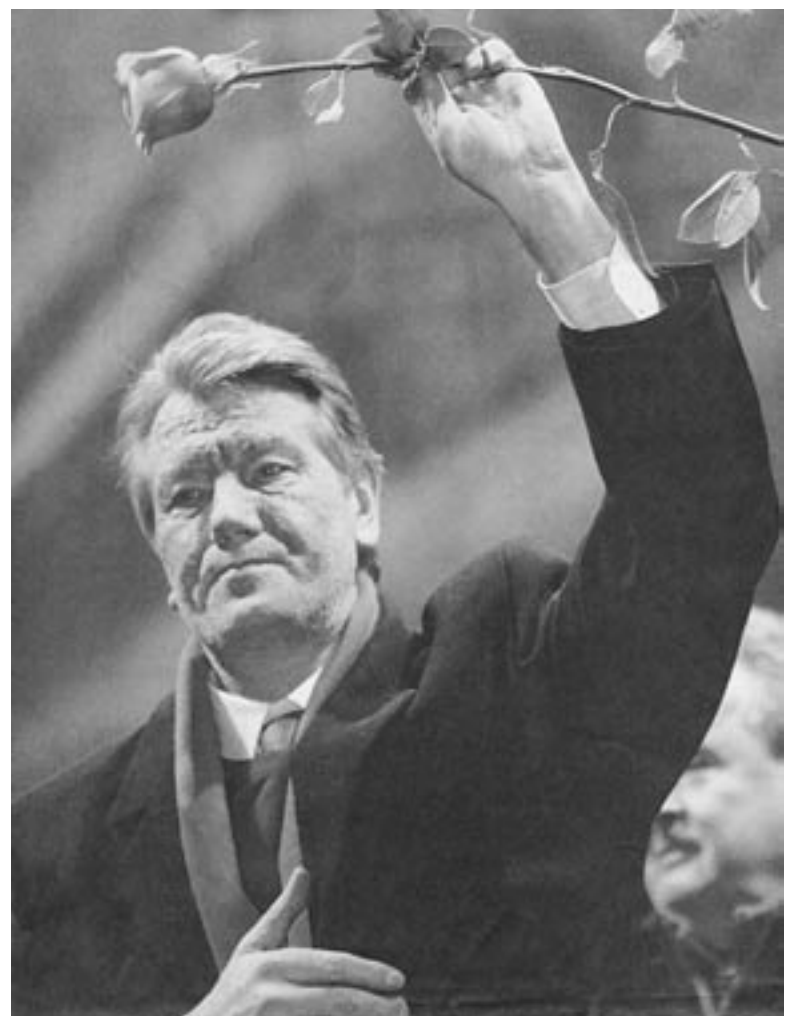
Media outlets close to the government took up this statement to attack the opposition. As a result, Yushchenko banned Tyahnybok and his group from "Our Ukraine".

The forces aligned with Yulia Tymoshenko also include extreme right-wing organisations, e.g., the "Ukrainian Conservative Republican Party" (UCRP), which was founded in 1992 by the former dissident Stepan Khmara.

The group is fanatically anti-communist and calls for the "overthrow of the Russian Empire". In the course of public protests against Russia, the UCRP collaborated with the "Ukrainian National Assembly – Self-Defence" (UNA UNSO), led by Andrei Shkil, which likewise belongs to the bloc headed by Tymoshenko.

The Ukrainian National Assembly was created in 1990, and its paramilitary arm (UNA UNSO) in 1991, following the attempted putsch in Moscow. It is reputed to have more than 1000 fighters, who are alleged to have been active in the first Chechnya war on the side of the Chechens, in the Yugoslavia war on the side of the Croats, and also in Georgia.

The English-language section of its web site includes such items as a statement of solidarity with the Chilean ex-dictator General Augusto



Yushchenko – backed by fascists

Nevertheless, in July, Tyahnybok publicly praised nationalist Ukrainian partisans in the Second World War who had "cleansed the country of Russians and Jews".

expressed and defended fascist and anti-Semitic viewpoints.

Alongside anti-communists, neo-liberals and Christian Democratic parties, Yushchenko's parliamentary group "Our Ukraine" includes an organisation calling itself the "Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists" (KUN).

The KUN was founded in 1992

Yushchenko's "Our Ukraine" included a second fascist group, the "All-Ukrainian Party of Liberty" (Svoboda), led by Oleh Tyahnybok.

It was originally called the "Ukrainian National Socialist Party" (SNPU), and used a combination of a trident and swastika as its party symbol. At the start of 2004, in preparation for the presidential elec-

Pinochet, a report on a congress of the UNA UNSO, at which the organisation signed an agreement for "friendship and cooperation" with representatives of the German neo-Fascist NPD, and a long essay on the ideology and politics of UNA UNSO.

The essay states that Andrei Shkil, the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Nationalist*, sports the emblem of the Ukrainian division of the Nazi SS Galicia.

In the *Nationalist*, Shkil not only praises the racist ideologists Count Gobineau and Walter Darré, but also the book *Mein Kampf* and its author (Hitler's name is not mentioned) for "re-examining these ideas (of Gobineau and Darré) at the highest level". It is therefore not surprising that Shkil has used his position as parliamentary delegate to call for

the transfer of the bodies of Stepan Bandera and Simon Petlyura.

The latter's troops fought against the Bolsheviks in 1918-19 and killed some 30,000 Jews in pogroms.

In March 2001, Shkil and his organisation generated headlines when they fought street battles with the police in the course of protests against President Kuchma.

As a result, Shkil was condemned 18 months later to a term of imprisonment. Following the sentencing of Shkil, Yushchenko and other politicians of the opposition condemned the court decision as a political judgment.

Speaking in parliament, Tymoshenko called 15 members of Shkil's organisation sentenced to prison terms of 2-5 years "the best representatives of the nation".

Book burning in the 21st century

Steven J Ross

One of the marks of authoritarian regimes is their effort to stop the spread of knowledge and free speech. In May 1933, Nazi sympathisers in Berlin burned 20,000 "degenerate" books, many of them written by Jews and anti-fascists such as Albert Einstein, Bertolt Brecht and Franz Kafka. Here at home [US], slaveholders were so frightened by the power of the word that throughout the antebellum South legislatures made it a crime to teach slaves to read and write.

Now, Lynne Cheney, Vice President Dick Cheney's wife and the former head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, has placed herself in the company of dictators and slaveholders. At her urging, the Education Department destroyed more than 300,000 copies of a booklet designed to help parents and children learn more about America's past.

Cheney objected to the booklet's reference to the National Standards for History, guidelines for teaching history in secondary schools that

were developed at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in the 1990s and that suggest that American history should be taught with an eye not only to America's successes but to its struggles and dark moments as well.

Cheney could learn important lessons from the kind of history she apparently finds so un-American.

One is that the lines between authoritarianism and democracy have never been as sharply drawn as we might think. In his latest novel, *The Plot Against America*, Philip Roth describes what the United States might have been like if voters had spurned Franklin D Roosevelt and elected Charles A Lindbergh, an anti-Semite and admirer of Adolf Hitler, as their president in 1940.

In 1935, Sinclair Lewis' *It Can't Happen Here* presented a scenario in which newly elected President Berzelius "Buzz" Windrip, the demagogic darling of big business and religious extremists, stripped Americans of their rights, destroying the power of the legislature and judiciary and installing a fascist dictatorship.

What was so horrible about the National Standards for History that any reference to them would merit the mass destruction of several hundred thousand volumes of knowledge?

According to Cheney, the standards failed to recognise the achievements of America's traditional heroes and focused instead on the accomplishments of women, minorities and radicals such as Harriet Tubman, the former slave who helped found the Underground Railroad. As Cheney wrote in 1994, "We are a better people than the national standards indicate, and our children deserve to know it".

Cheney insisted that the standards focused too much on the negatives of the past, on the presence of such stains on our democratic legacy as the Ku Klux Klan and McCarthyism, and not enough on great heroic figures such as Paul Revere, General Robert E Lee and the Wright brothers.

What Cheney really opposes is the prominent place that "social history" has assumed over the last 30 years. Known among its practitioners as "history from the

bottom up", social historians argue that American history has too often been taught as the history of famous white men, political parties and industrialists.

Far less attention has been paid to the history of the "ordinary" people who helped build our nation. Social historians do not reject the important contributions of the former, as Cheney has repeatedly insisted.

Rather, they suggest that there are two American histories worth knowing: the history of the nation and the history of its peoples. The latter is composed of a number of different histories: the history of rich and poor; of employers and employees; of men and women; of Blacks, whites, Asians and Indians; of Protestants, Catholics and Jews.

As someone who has taught, written about and studied history for more than 25 years, I would suggest that good historical writing tries to help us understand the full contours of the past, paying equal attention to our triumphs and tragedies.

Historians should not be afraid

to hail the heroic figures of the past, but those should also include the less-than-famous men and women who struggled on behalf of democracy.

Likewise, historians should never avoid dealing with the dark stories of our past — such as slavery, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and McCarthyism. As our founding fathers understood, democracies are not perfect; they only grow stronger by learning from the mistakes of the past.

Destroying books that disagree with one's vision of history will never take us closer to truth and freedom. As President Eisenhower warned Dartmouth College graduates in June 1953: "Don't think you're going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed". His words remain true today.

Steven J. Ross is chairman of the history department at the University of Southern California and author of *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America*. *People's Weekly World* ☪

The State of the World's Children

A new UNICEF report shows that more than half the world's children are suffering extreme deprivations from poverty, war and HIV/AIDS, conditions that are effectively denying children a childhood and holding back the development of nations.

Launching the annual report on *The State of the World's Children*, UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy said more than one billion children are denied the healthy and protected upbringing promised by 1989's *Convention on the Rights of the Child* – the world's most widely adopted human rights treaty.

"Poverty doesn't come from nowhere; war doesn't emerge from nothing; AIDS doesn't spread by choice of its own. These are our choices", said Ms Bellamy.

"When half the world's children are growing up hungry and unhealthy, when schools have become targets and whole villages are being emptied by AIDS, we've failed to deliver on the promise of childhood."

The report – entitled *Childhood Under Threat* – examines three of the most widespread and devastating factors threatening childhood today: HIV/AIDS, conflict, and poverty.

Seven Deadly Deprivations

The report argues that children experience poverty differently from adults and that traditional income or consumption measurements do not capture how poverty actually impacts on childhood.

It instead offers an analysis of the seven basic "deprivations" that children do feel and which powerfully impact on their futures.

Working with researchers at the London School of Economics and Bristol University, UNICEF concluded that more than half the children in the developing world are

severely deprived of one or more of the goods and services essential to childhood.

- 640 million children do not have adequate shelter
- 500 million children have no access to sanitation
- 400 million children do not have access to safe water
- 300 million children lack access to information (TV, radio or newspapers)
- 270 million children have no access to health care services
- 140 million children, the majority of them girls, have never been to school
- 90 million children are severely food deprived.

Even more disturbing is the fact that at least 700 million children suffer from at least *two or more* of the deprivations, the report states.

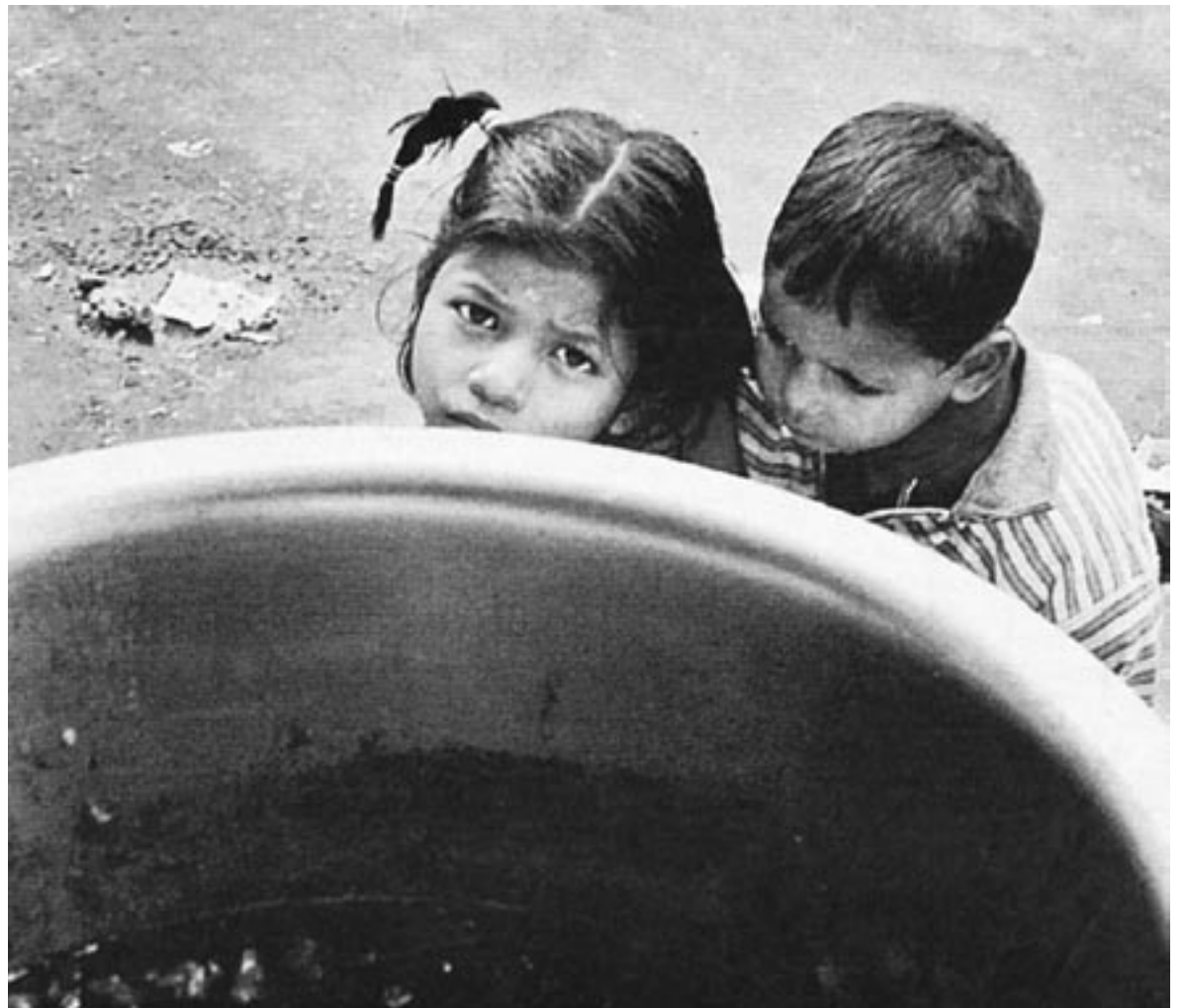
The report also makes clear that poverty is not exclusive to developing countries. In 11 of 15 industrialised nations for which comparable data are available, the proportion of children living in low-income households during the last decade has risen.

A Growing War on Childhood

Extreme poverty is also among the central elements in the emergence of conflict, especially within countries, as armed factions vie for ill-managed national resources.

The impact on children has been high: nearly half of the 3.6 million people killed in war since 1990 have been children, according to the report.

The report also examines trends in child soldiers, rape as a weapon of war, war crimes against children, and the damage caused by sanctions, among other issues, and finds that although some progress has been made it has been far from sufficient to ameliorate the impact of war on children's lives.



For example, hundreds of thousands of children are still recruited or abducted as soldiers, suffer sexual violence, are victims of landmines, are forced to witness violence and killing and are often orphaned by violence. In the 1990s, around 20 million children were forced by conflict to leave their homes.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on children is seen most dramatically in the wave of AIDS orphans that has now grown to 15 million worldwide.

The death of a parent pervades every aspect of a child's life, but children suffer the pernicious effects of HIV/AIDS long before they are orphaned. Because of the financial pressures created by a caregiver's illness, many children whose families are affected by HIV/AIDS, especially girls, are forced to drop out of school in order to work or care for their families. They face an increased risk of engaging in hazardous labour and of being otherwise exploited.

HIV/AIDS is not only killing parents – many of the ailing and dying are teachers, health workers and other adults on whom children rely.

Because of the time lag between HIV infection and death from AIDS, the crisis will worsen for at least the next decade, even if new infections were to immediately stabilise or begin to fall.

For full report available at www.unicef.org

Why is the govt spying on us?

Tim Wheeler

Peace and justice leaders across the nation hailed an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) project to spotlight FBI spying and infiltration of grassroots organisations that oppose the Iraq war and other right-wing policies of George W Bush.

The ACLU has filed Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests with the FBI in 10 states and the District of Columbia asking for release of files of illegal FBI surveillance of law-abiding organisations over the past four years.

Attorney General John Ashcroft seized on the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to ram through the *USA Patriot Act*, and FBI spying and infiltration was drastically escalated.

"We have evidence that the FBI and local police – working through so-called Joint Terrorism Task Forces – are spying on environmental, political, and faith-based groups", the ACLU said in a statement. "We think the public deserves to know more about who is being investigated and why."

Benjamin Stone, executive director of the Iowa Civil Liberties Union, told the *People's Weekly World* newspaper in a phone interview, "Making government

accountable is one of the ACLU's highest priorities. We want to help the citizens of this nation understand the kind of tactics the FBI is using in the name of 'war on terrorism'."

He recalled the subpoenas obtained by the FBI task force in Des Moines last February targeting a peace group at Drake University as well as the Iowa Peace Network

"Surveillance of innocent people is unacceptable and should not be tolerated", Stone said. "We still live in a representative democracy. People need to remember that because if we forget, it's going to be hard to hold on to it."

"Under seige"

"People are treated as suspects because their views are contrary to

Ashcroft and the FBI put the Arab and Muslim communities "under siege" with massive religious and racial profiling in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

Thousands have been detained and interrogated solely based on their religion or national origin. "While all of us, as Americans, desire a safe and secure homeland, we simply cannot tolerate members

against Oregon's Muslim community and peace movement.

Among the victims is Lumumba Ford, whose parents are respected leaders of Portland's African American community. Ford has a master's degree from The John Hopkins University Center in Nanjing, China, and is fluent in Chinese. He is married and a father. He converted to Islam several years ago. FBI stoolpigeons testified in the "Portland Seven" trial that he was a member of al Qaida.

Ford is now serving an 18-year sentence. His "crime" was being arrested in China on his way to Afghanistan. "They never accused my son of a single act of terrorism", said Sandra Ford. "But they said he is a 'member of al Qaida'. They know it is a lie. The government has decided that anyone who is a Muslim is a terrorist. It's another case of railroading you if you are poor and Black."

Last spring, the city was rocked by the FBI's arrest of Portland attorney Brandon Mayfield, a Muslim convert falsely accused of involvement in the Madrid train bombing. He was jailed for weeks without legal representation. He was released and the FBI apologised for falsely accusing him of terrorism.

Abridged
People's Weekly World

and Catholic Peace Ministries. The subpoenas ordered Drake University to turn over any records, including surveillance by campus security, about a November 11, 2003, campus meeting titled "Stop the Occupation! Bring the Iowa Guard Home".

The following day, 12 people were arrested on "trespassing" charges while peacefully protesting the Iraq war at a nearby National Guard base. The nationwide outcry against the subpoenas was so loud that the subpoenas were withdrawn.

those of the administration", said Reverend Calvin Morris, Executive Director of the Community Renewal Society. "The administration proclaims a 'state of emergency'. But we are not in that situation at all and we should challenge that assumption. Freedom is not served when we become a police state, when we become like those we are struggling against."

Kareem Irfan, chair of the Council of Islamic Organisations of Greater Chicago, charged that

of our community being singled out for FBI spying and investigation on the basis of racial or ethnic background or simply for practicing our faith or speaking out on matters of public concern", he said.

In Portland, the City Council is scheduled to debate whether to renew cooperation with the Portland Police Department with the FBI's Terrorism Task Forces. Also in Portland, 17 peace and justice groups are demanding that the FBI lay bare its spying and infiltration

He was jailed for weeks without legal representation. He was released and the FBI apologised for falsely accusing him of terrorism.

Haitian Govt releases priest

Tim Pelzer

The Haitian government finally released Father Gerard Jean-Juste on November 29 after imprisoning him for six weeks on trumped-up charges. A judge ruled that there was no evidence to support government charges against him of inciting violence and importing arms.

Police arrested Jean-Juste on October 13 in his Port-au-Prince parish. Human rights activists had launched an international campaign to secure the Haitian priest's release from prison.

Upon his release, Jean-Juste rejected "deliberately false accusations" made against him and accused the government of having violated the principles that govern the state's relationship with the church.

According to observers, despite Jean-Juste's release, Haiti's justice system has disintegrated under the new regime.

"There is no question that the legal system in Haiti is in serious difficulty", Bill Quigley, a law professor at Loyola University in New Orleans and an adviser to Jean-Juste's legal team, told the *People's Weekly World*.

"Though Haiti has a great set of constitutional and statutory laws, they are routinely ignored. The requirement of the Haitian constitution that all arrested people see a judge within 48 hours is regularly violated by months of detention without seeing a judge", Quigley said.

"The poor fill the jails and are supplemented by many political prisoners. I visited the national penitentiary in late September and there were 850 people in there – all but 25 were still waiting to see a judge for

the first time. When I visited again two weeks later, there were 1050 in prison – all but 28 waiting to see a judge."

A human rights monitor based in Haiti, who did not want to give her name, agreed with Quigley's assessment and said Jean-Juste's case is not exceptional.

In other developments:

• According to a recently posted Office of Transition Initiatives report on the US Agency for International Development's web site, members of the Kosovo Protection Corps (formerly the Kosovo Liberation Army) are being employed by the agency

Where judges have ordered the release of political prisoners, these orders have been ignored either by higher officials or the police

"What is important to remember is that in other cases where judges have ordered the release of political prisoners, these orders have been ignored either by higher officials or the police", she said.

"In the case of Jacques Mathelier, a delegate from Les Cayes, for example, a judge ordered his release from jail on July 12. Instead of releasing him, he was transferred to Port-au-Prince where he remains in prison."

The lack of law and order in Haiti prompted UN General Secretary Kofi Annan to recently call on the government to free Lavalas Party political prisoners arrested without charges. Lavalas is the party of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted from power on February 29 and is currently in exile. Annan also criticised the country's justice system for being "dysfunctional" and the police for operating "outside the purview of the rule of law."

in Haiti to assist in the reintegration of members of the country's disbanded military. The KLA has reportedly carried out terrorist attacks throughout the Balkans and has ties to al Qaida.

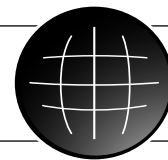
• According to Michael Brewer, an American in Port-au-Prince who runs Haitian Street Kids Inc, which cares for homeless children, former soldiers are murdering street kids.

• Thousands of Haitians marched in Port-au-Prince November 26, demanding the return of deposed President Aristide.

• On December 1, police opened fire on prisoners who had organised a demonstration at the National Penitentiary in Port-au-Prince, killing 10 or more prisoners, according to AHP News. Prisoners were protesting against poor living conditions and that they have been held for months without being brought before a judge. *People's Weekly World* ☉



Former soldiers are murdering homeless kids



Global briefs

BRITAIN: The first British lawyer to visit the American detention centre at Guantanamo Bay has accused Foreign Office officials of complicity in an offence against humanity. Clive Stafford Smith, who also holds American citizenship, was cleared to visit his client Moazzam Begg at the base in Cuba last month. Under American law, Stafford Smith is not allowed to reveal what his client told him until written statements lodged last week with a government censor in Washington have been cleared. However, the lawyer said that the conditions under which his client was being held were "worse than any death row I have ever seen". Mr Begg had been held in solitary for more than 18 months, said Mr Stafford Smith. Mr Begg, 36, a teacher from Birmingham, claims he has been tortured by US military personnel.

INDIA: Protests marked the 20th anniversary of the world's worst industrial accident — the leak of toxic gases December 3, 1984, at the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India. The gas leak killed 2000 people instantly and over 20,000 in the years since. Union Carbide is now a subsidiary of US-based Dow Chemical. Survivors, relatives of the dead, and rights activists marched through Bhopal shouting, "Don't forget the victims of the genocide in Bhopal", "Death to Dow", and "We will win, we will fight!" Survivors' leader Rashida Bee said that protesters would keep up the fight until victims' demands for compensation, medical care and rehabilitation are met. "Lethal chemicals are still lying around at the plant, some in the open", Bee said. "Every time it rains these poisonous chemicals are leaked into the soil, affecting groundwater resources in the area."

ITALY: Millions of workers brought Italy to a virtual standstill November 30 as they staged a one-day strike against Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's plan to slash US\$8 billion from public sector spending next year. The measures include sharply reduced spending together with tax cuts. Workers marched, many in pouring rain, in some 70 cities around the country. In Venice 40,000 turned out despite a flooded main square. In Rome, marchers shouting anti-Berlusconi slogans carried banners reading, "Where is my contract?" and "The government is a thief". In Turin, a northern industrial city, 55,000 marched and unions said 80 percent of public workers sector observed the strike. The stoppage was the fourth general strike over economic issues in Italy since Berlusconi became Prime Minister in 2001.

INDIAN OCEAN: Five Indian Ocean countries — Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion and the Seychelles — have set up the first-ever regional "observatory" to monitor progress in improving the lives of some 9.5 million children in the island nations. The observatory, a joint initiative by the Indian Ocean Commission, the University of Mauritius and UNICEF, will pool expertise from the five nations to compile and analyze data on the plight of children and the results of initiatives to improve their lives.

US law aimed at North Korea

Dan Margolis

President Bush recently signed the "North Korea Human Rights Act of 2004" (NKHRA), which earmarks over US\$23 million a year for what many see as interference in the internal affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Critics and supporters alike say it is aimed not at human rights, but at destabilising and even overthrowing the DPRK Government.

The new law puts the United States at odds with other members of the six-party talks on the Korean nuclear issue, including a US ally, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), as well as others who would like to see a return to peaceful negotiations between the North and South.

The bill, the opening section of which reads like Cold-War-era propaganda, will give millions of dollars over each of the next four years to non-governmental organisations working within DPRK to promote "human rights, democracy, rule of law, and the development of a market economy".

Critics charge that despite the flowery words, the real agenda of the new law is to promote regime change. For example, funding is earmarked for the smuggling of radio receivers into the nation to receive broadcasts of Radio Free Asia (RFA), an anti-communist, US-controlled station. RFA will also receive new funding.

Michael Horowitz, one of the architects of the NKHRA, openly states that the aim of the new law is to more actively work to destabilise the DPRK Government.

In an interview with *Christianity Today*, an evangelical magazine, Horowitz describes the Act as a "miracle", and gives a glimpse of the motives behind it: "This ran directly contrary to the views of people who want to resuscitate the so-called 'framework agreement' that the Clinton administration had", Horowitz said.

"And it ran directly contrary to the Sunshine Policy, so called, of the South Korean government, which had repeatedly said, had literally said, that a high policy priority the South Korean Government, indeed its highest policy priority, was to keep the Pyongyang regime in business because the economic consequences to South Korea of the collapse of the North would be too troublesome, too grave."

The DPRK's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reacted angrily to the Act, saying it shows the falsity of the Bush administration's claims that the US has no intention of overthrowing or invading the North. "The US has left the dialogue and negotiation for the solution to the nuclear issue meaningless by freely adopting the 'North Korean Human Rights Act' and legally making the 'destruc-

tion' and 'overthrow' of the system of the DPRK its policy", the KCNA said.

The NKHRA comes at a time when there is marked increase in desire in South Korea from both the people and the ruling Uri Party for friendly dialogue with their compatriots in the DPRK.

According to the December 6 issue of *Korea Times*, South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun, who came to power on the basis of peace with the North and promises of better labour policies, said the South does not support a regime change in the North.

He told *JoongAng Daily*, another South Korean paper, "The United States and some Western countries harbour the idea that the North Korean system should collapse; that is why Pyongyang is nervous and in crisis mode. ... Unlike those Western countries, China and South Korea do not want to see North Korea collapse."

Another sign of the South Korea's hopes for peace with the North came when the leading Uri Party and the Democratic Labor Party introduced a Bill for the abolition of the National Security Law, one of the last vestiges of the old military dictatorship that ended in the 1980s.

The old law criminalises a wide variety of actions, including acts of friendship with the north, as "aiding the enemy". *People's Weekly World* ☉

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

email: guardian@cpa.org.au



Reality check

TV stations are forever looking for programs to bring in the much-desired advertising dollars. "Reality" shows seem to be very popular with some people.

There is an American program that takes a middle-class American family and sends it away to spend a week among people who have a very different way of life and very few creature comforts (compared to their visitors). The guest family and their children either buckle under the unusual circumstances or try and learn (with respect) to understand the way other people live and why they do things in a particular way.

It might be a very popular program in Australia if our politicians are given an opportunity to take part in a similar program. They do not even have to leave the country for that – there are many remote locations where they (and their families) could spend their Christmas break. Think of all the positive things that can happen – Mr Howard and his colleagues will finally learn how real people live, instead of spending about \$13 million in the first six months of 2004 on travel (mainly overseas). Let's see how "mutual obligation" works. Let them swap places with disadvantaged people

and try to survive on what they have or don't have.

Personally, I'd like to see Senator Vanstone sent to the most distant and harshest place in Australia and left there to fend for herself. With a petrol station about 70 km away, a clapped-out car, several mouths to feed and no doctors or decent facilities of any sort. But I'm sure she'd be washing her face twice a day – dust or no dust. I'd love to see that.

Sandi Ryan
Sydney, NSW

Govt ignores warnings

Despite warnings that Australia is facing a desperate shortage of professionals – particularly in the sciences – the Howard Government continues to pursue policies which deter people from studying.

Figures released last week show that the number of people applying to attend Australian universities in 2005 has dropped by three percent. This figure includes a five percent drop in mature-age applicants and a massive nine percent drop in all applicants in Western Australia.

Analysts (should we say here capitalist analysts) attribute the drop-off to the "booming economy": "Jobs are plentiful, plenty of opportunity, lots of overtime – [people see] no need to study, and haven't got the time anyway".

The 600,000 unemployed in this country might beg to differ, but that's beside the point.

Labor Education Spokesperson Jenny Macklin was closer to the mark: "The Howard Government's massive fee hikes mean that young [students] will be graduating with massive debts, making it so much

harder for them to start a family, buy a house and get ahead.

She is talking, of course, about the 25 percent surcharge the Coalition Government is allowing universities to charge on top of HECS fees from next year.

The costs are now mind-boggling: for example, to complete a basic three-year government-subsidised Science degree you will end up \$20,000 in debt. For a four-year specialist degree another 33 percent.

And with Howard now having control of the Senate there is a very good chance that four years down the track there will be no government subsidy at all.

Figures also show that Australians now owe more on HECS than their credit cards, \$9.1 billion compared to \$7.3 billion – and those are 2002 figures.

Frankly, this is insane.

We need to ask our politicians these serious questions:

Where are our 75,000 scientists going to come from Mr Howard?

Ms Macklin: will Labor admit its error and scrap the HECS scheme entirely?

Being two sides of the same coin, neither of these big parties of capitalism can give an answer favorable to the Australian people. They will pursue a free-market education system regardless of the long-term damage it will do to our future intellectual capital.

Although we have three years until the next federal election we cannot afford to waste a minute of it. Our campaign for a people's government with pro-people policies must begin now!

Andrew Lennox
Sydney, NSW

Politically Correct does not mean Left

Marcus Browning (Letters 8-12-04) makes the mistake of regarding the likes of Clover Moore and such "politically correct" elements as left or progressive in burying Santa Claus and other items of Christmas, particularly street decorations.

However, Lenin, (*Collected Works* Vol.10) states: "No amount of preaching can enlighten the proletariat, if it is not enlightened by its own struggle against the dark forces of capitalism That is why we do not and should not prohibit proletarians who still retain vestiges of their old prejudices from our Party. We shall always preach the scientific world outlook, and it is essential to combat the inconsistencies of various "Christians". But that does not mean in the least that the religious question ought to be advanced to

first place, where it does not belong at all; nor that we should allow the forces of the really revolutionary economic and political struggle to be split up on account of third-rate opinions or senseless ideas, losing all political importance, rapidly being sweep out as rubbish by the very course of economic development."

I agree with much of what Marcus says, but since virtually all who believe in Santa Claus cease to do so by the age of 15 at most, it should be safe for atheists and the few religious socialists to wish us a Merry Christmas. It is also true that it is capitalist exploitation of man by man which makes many unable to afford ham and turkey on Christmas Day. I doubt if Clover Moore and her ilk regard that as a class question, which every Communist should.

Tomas O'Gliasia
Mt Druitt, NSW



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Culture & Life

by
Rob Gowland

Christmas riches

As I write this, wealth is very much in the news. Kerry Packer is trying to use his financial muscle to bulldoze the NSW Government into letting him build a private town on public land in a national park, for heaven's sake. Basically, his Perisher Blue outfit is making a bid to grab the whole of the NSW snow-fields tourism business.

Like all entrepreneurs, good old Kerry is not interested in "unimproved" nature – there's just not sufficient money in it. He wants to "improve" Perisher out of sight: his development proposal includes an apartment complex with no less than 850 beds, a supermarket, bars, boutiques, skating rink, cinema and a real estate agency.

If it goes ahead, his patrons will be able to enjoy themselves "on the snowfields" without ever having to actually go outdoors. All he'll need then will be an indoor ski run!

And why a real estate agency? An eye on future development, perhaps? Makes you think, doesn't it?

Having the future of our alpine highlands in the hands of Kerry Packer or any of his ilk is a very worrying thought.

Other people with more money than they should have were also in the news: Nicole Kidman has rented a holiday house at Palm Beach north of Sydney for Christmas – at a rental of \$38,000 a week!

Built in the '20s, *Kalua*, the tasteful little shack she has chosen, features a two-bedroom cabana, cooks' quarters, golf putting range, an in-ground swimming pool and a full-sized tennis court. Now, Ms Kidman is quite a good film actress, but spending the equivalent of a lot of people's annual income on your weekly rent is nothing more than gross extravagance.

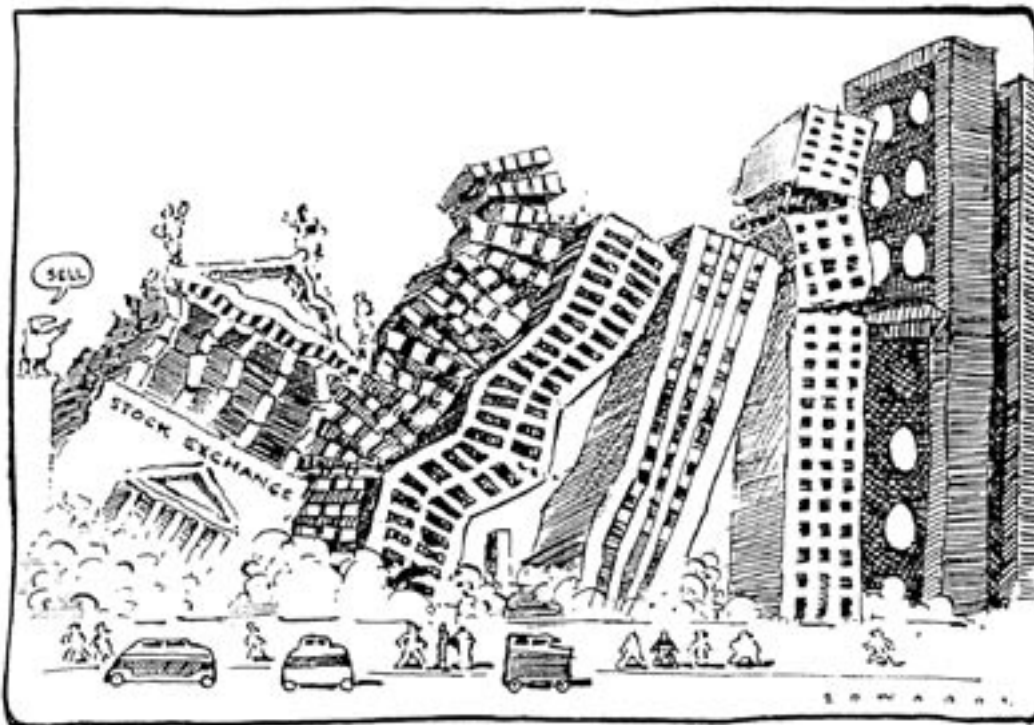
And this at a time when the National Centre for Social and Economic Modeling (NATSEM) reports that many families in Sydney pay about 50 percent of their weekly wage on their mortgage. And that's without cooks' quarters or a golf putting range.

NATSEM also reports that a staggering two-thirds of Australians have some form of debt.

Nicole Kidman is not the only high-flyer living well this Christmas, however. L J Hooker reports that *Karala*, another hideously overpriced mansion on Sydney's northern peninsula, has also been "snapped up" for the holiday season. Although, let's be fair, *Karala* is cheaper: it rents for a measly \$28,000 a week.

In fact, conspicuous consumption among what the *Sunday Telegraph* is pleased to call "A-list celebrities" is rife on the peninsula. "A-list celebrities" of course are not necessarily people who do anything significant; they are most often people who are famous merely for being famous – or for being rich.

Their habit of lavishly spending the wealth that other people worked to create is not new, especially on the peninsula: last year, according to the *Tele*, "Paul Tudor-Jones II leased five houses in Palm Beach, including *Kalua*, two \$25,000 a week villas, a \$10,000 a week cottage for his butlers and maids and a \$5000 a week house for his tennis coach".



Now there's a "tennis coach" who knows when he's on to a good thing!

And what does Mr Tudor-Jones do to deserve this kind of luxury? He's a hedge-fund trader, isn't he. Capitalist manipulation and speculation evidently pays off for some.

Meanwhile, as reported in the same edition of the same newspaper, Federal Treasurer Peter Costello was solemnly advising parents of ordinary Australians to conserve money by giving their kids cheap Christmas presents or even none at all. (He's all heart, but everyone knows that.)

Costello, of course, has every reason to be anxious about the state of the economy: capitalist pundits are talking openly about looming recession. Economic growth is at its slowest rate since 2000; exports

are in the doldrums – in fact, we've had no less than 30 trade deficits in a row!

Costello's advice not to spend too much this Christmas seems to have been taken to heart by one major institution at any rate: the National Australia Bank, the largest bank in the country.

The NAB has cancelled at least one departmental Christmas party (in the financial services technology department), banned workers from sending one another Christmas cards and presents through the bank's internal mail system (Boy, I bet that cost the bank a lot of money!) and prevented bank employees from participating in its annual free share scheme.

The NAB, you have to understand, only made a profit of \$3.18 billion last year, so I am sure we

can all sympathise with its desire to "keep discretionary spending tightly under control".

By golly, if I'd only cleared \$3.18 billion last year I'd be guarding every penny of my money, let me tell you. I mean, it's practically nothing, isn't it?

The CEO of the NAB, just as a matter of interest, is paid around \$7 million a year. Do you think, if he scrimped and saved all year, he could possibly pay for the cancelled staff Christmas party?

Unless staff Christmas parties have become significantly more lavish than when I worked in the financial services industry, he could probably pay for it out of petty cash! No doubt the staff of the NAB's financial services technology department are pondering that very question. ☺

SPA Books – Summer Highlights



BioTerror – Manufacturing wars the American way

Published in association with the Institute for Media Analysis. The editors of this book were co-founders of *Covert Action*. If you thought that the US opposes chemical and biological warfare, this book will shock that idea away. It details how the US has been a pioneer in both chemical and biological weapons.

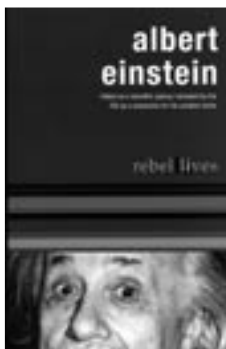
\$17 + 1.50 p&p



The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists Robert Tressel

New stock just arrived. This is a must have book for any Socialist. It was written nearly one hundred years ago and is a tale of the destitute and poor in the South of England. But Tressel doesn't simply catalogue the desperation caused by capitalism – he uses the book to fight against an unjust system and for its replacement by a socialist society. Its message is as relevant today as it was in Britain in 1906.

742 pages - \$27.50 + \$6.50 p&p



Albert Einstein Rebel Lives

You don't have to be Einstein ... to know he was a giant in the world of science and physics. This book takes a new, subversive look at *Time* magazine's "Person of the Century", who earned a record with the FBI as a socialist enemy of the state.

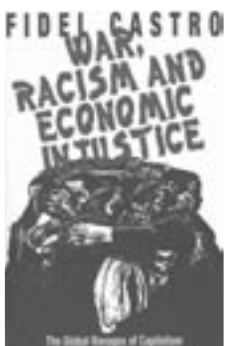
88 pages - \$16.00 + \$2.00 p&p



People Vs Profits Victor Perlo

If you find political economy daunting then this is the easy to read and very digestible book for you. It covers a broad range of topics including economic crises, the dollar crisis, living conditions, labour and industry, productivity, wages, racism, education, militarism, oil, taxes, big business profiteering, mergers, income differentials and much more. His arguments are based on solid facts, not rhetoric. His examples are American but change a few words and you have Australia. An excellent gift or holiday reading.

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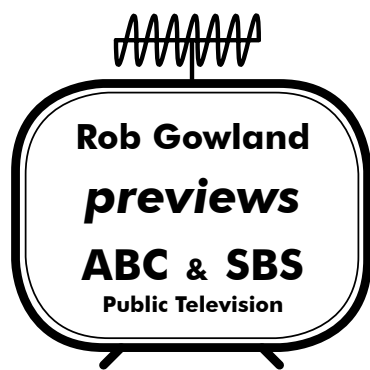
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Sun December 19 ~
Sat January 8

Once again, SBS provided no preview tapes, so this extended Christmas-New Year edition of *Worth Watching* includes only programs on the ABC.

Of the various new shows that I was able to preview for this *Worth Watching*, the one that stood out was *Rose And Maloney* (ABC 8.30pm Tuesdays from December 14). It's yet another cop show with a difference, but it's excitingly told, intriguingly scripted and, in the first two episodes at least, the coppers are among the baddies.

Sarah Lancashire plays Rose Linden, an investigator for the Criminal Justice Review Agency, which investigates possible miscarriages of justice. Understandably, the Agency is not popular with the police force.

Rose is a maverick whose methods infuriate her boss Derek (played by Daniel Hill); her boyfriend is doing life in prison; she has lost her driving licence and keeps forgetting to take her diabetes medication.

There is ambiguous sexual tension in her obsessive stalking of gangster Jonathan Rathman (Michael Nardone) and his stalking of her. Moments after she had successfully had Rathman's conviction for torture and murder overturned, he smugly confided to her that he did in fact commit the crime.

She tries to resign and her boss transfers her to work with mousey time-and-motion expert Maloney (Phil Davis) on designing office management procedures. Before he quite knows what has happened, Maloney finds he's risking his life in Rose's unauthorised investigations.

I will certainly be watching future episodes.

The value of the monarchy to the British ruling class is immense. How many crimes have been committed over the last couple

of centuries to keep its image free of damaging scandal will probably never be known, but occasionally some can be glimpsed at least.

The Jack the Ripper revelations have been successfully pooh-poohed or otherwise obscured, but the callous cover-up over the theft of the Regalia of the Order of St Patrick from Dublin Castle is much better documented.

The priceless gems of the Regalia, popularly known as "the Irish Crown Jewels", were a gift to the Order from the British monarchy. They were stolen in 1907, on the eve of a visit by Edward VII.

The Scotland Yard investigation was abruptly terminated and its report suppressed; numerous documents have been secretly removed from the files. No one was ever charged and the jewels never recovered.

But, as *The Strange Case of the Irish Crown Jewels* (ABC 8.30pm Wednesday December 29) shows, both the brains behind the theft and the actual thief were quickly known.

But the hypocrisy of a ruling class that widely practiced homosexuality behind closed doors while loudly, even savagely, condemning it in public came into play when the King's brother-in-law became implicated in a homosexual relationship with the chief suspect.

It's an intriguing tale, not least the little side-light that the Irish Government was offered the jewels by an anonymous source in 1926 for a piddling £3000 – and turned the offer down! Apparently they were not willing to shell out good money for the tawdry emblems of Irish subjugation to Britain.

If true, they missed out on a bargain.

The Airships (ABC 9.30pm Wednesdays from December 29) is an Australian-made three-part series on the past, present and future of lighter-than-air ships. Narrated by Robin Williams, it devotes most of its time, naturally enough, to the dramatic and fateful history of the airship.

Designed initially as a super-weapon that would give Germany superiority over France and Britain, the giant dirigible became after WW1 a subject of commercial as well as military competition.

German and US companies cooperated to thwart Franco-British attempts to prevent the further development of the Zeppelin. The US jealously guarded its monopoly on the supply of non-inflammable helium, forcing European airships



Sarah Lancashire plays Rose Linden in *Rose And Maloney* (ABC 8.30pm Tuesdays from December 14)

to use the far more volatile and dangerous hydrogen.

The second episode includes coverage of the attempt by Italian airship designer Umberto Nobile to fly an airship to the North Pole. His ship crashed on its way back from the Pole, the survivors being rescued by a Soviet icebreaker after a month of privation on the ice.

Never seen-before footage from the round-the-world trip of the *Graf Zeppelin* at the end of the '20s is also included in the second episode, along with the crash of the *R-101* which ended British involvement in airship production.

The third episode includes the extraordinary scenes of the destruction of the giant Nazi airship *Hindenburg* as it came in to land at Lakehurst, New York in 1936. Made even more dramatic by the distress of the newsreel commentator, this is famous footage of a horrifying event.

The final part of the last episode shows the military still looking at airships as possible weapons: with US and Japanese plans for giant airships in the stratosphere carrying surveillance cameras and presumably top-secret weaponry.

On paper, *Any Time Now* (ABC 8.30pm Thursdays from December 30) did not look all that inviting. I am naturally suspicious of any program that needed four writers.

However, on screen it works quite well. It is essentially a sophisticated soap opera, about three young (well, 30ish) women friends in Dublin, their relations with each other, with their own and one another's lovers, and with their various parents, employers, etc.

It sounds trite, and certainly it is as skin deep as only TV drama can be, but its central characters (unlike their usual American equivalents) are concerned with serious issues like earning a living, paying the rent and looking after a child while holding down a job.

The ABC is billing it as a "comedy drama series", but I think "light drama" would be more accurate. For all the lightness of tone, there is little comedy in it.

Whether *Any Time Now* takes

off will depend on how people respond to the characters. Me, I was not all that rapt. Perhaps it will grow on me in time. We shall see.

It is said that there are more Scottish pipe bands in Australia than there are in Scotland. I suspect that statistic is not true, but what is true is that when British imperialism subjugated the Highlands and forced so many Scots to go abroad, Scottish culture and music went with them.

The British Empire scattered Scottish regiments all over the globe and spread Scottish military bands in their wake.

This is well demonstrated by *The Edinburgh Military Tattoo 2004* (ABC 7.30pm Saturday January 1), which, in addition to pipe bands from all over the British Isles and New Zealand, features a tartan-clad band of Ghurkas.

This year's display (which actually took place almost a year ago) is very cosmopolitan, with big-band swing from Canada, highland dancers from Australia, the South African Navy Band and the band and cultural dancing group of the Chinese People's Liberation Army.

The Chinese band plays very Western-sounding music, until they bring out the big Chinese drums. And the South African Navy Band (which includes splendid singers) does a set that includes *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* and something with the unlikely title *Pretoria Rules The Waves* (do I detect a British influence here too?).

But as always, the main feature of the Tattoo is the display of massed pipes and drums. And what a stirring sound that is!

The dumbing down of US culture is now spreading relentlessly to the ABC, as its curtailed budget and other government-imposed pressures mean that it has been obliged to abandon its own high production standards in favour of buying in US-made cable TV fodder.

In these programs, anything at all out of the ordinary is an excuse for conjecture about aliens, everything is over-dramatised to absurd lengths and scientists are forever being baffled or amazed.

You have to filter out great loads of rubbish and nonsense to get to the kernel of fact that often (but not always) lies at the heart of these programs. It is not always worth the effort.

Skulduggery (ABC 8.30pm Wednesday January 5) is one of the latter sort: when the commentator starts telling us that "some people believe" the elongated skulls of one of the pre-Columbian societies in Peru are evidence of interbreeding with aliens from outer space, it is time to scream – and to protest to the ABC: why are you running this rubbish?

Are you no longer concerned to educate, or to raise the cultural level of the community? Apparently not.

The Tiger Aspect production for the BBC of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (ABC 8.30pm Friday January 7) does have the distinction of being set in the year it was written, 1901.

More importantly, Allan Cubitt's adaptation portrays Holmes and Watson for once as Doyle conceived them to be: young men, both in their 30s. They are played by Australian actor Richard Roxburgh (Holmes) and Ian Hart (Watson) with considerable vigour, which is certainly not out of place in a story involving an escaped convict, quicksand, several murders and an enormous hound from Hell.

David Atwood directs this Tiger Aspect production for the BBC with panache and an excellent feeling for period mystery atmosphere (rain or swirling fog on the moors, gloomy windswept formal gardens at night, large houses with creaking floorboards and mysterious servants).

The program shows its modernity by its frankness in depicting Holmes' morphine addiction, but curiously fails to show the great detective being all that cerebral. In fact, at times, we could almost be watching an adaptation of one of the adventures of Holmes' great literary rival, the action-oriented Sexton Blake.

But these are flaws in the original story rather than in the adaptation. All in all, it's a damn good period adventure mystery. ☼

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