

NO WAR ON IRAQ!

**Not in the US's
name!**

**Not in the UN's
name!**

**Not in my
name!**

Any war on Iraq
would mean:

- Mass death and
destruction
- High risk nuclear
weapons used
- Use of depleted
uranium weapons
- US control of Iraqi oil
- US occupation of Iraq
- Destruction of
United Nations
- War across
the Middle East
- War without end
- A major threat
to the world



See Centre Pages for Special Peace Liftout

Opposing Bush's war is not anti-Americanism

Last week's episode in which the US Ambassador, Mr Schieffer, took the Labor Party to task for allegedly promoting anti-Americanism is not only an interference in Australia's domestic affairs but shows that the United States accepts nothing less than complete subservience from other countries.

If the US is prepared to haul the ALP over the coals, what will it do to other states that have a much more independent and better position than does Australia?

The offensive remarks of the US Ambassador may have been encouraged by several columnists in the *Sydney Morning Herald* such as Gerard Henderson who attempted last week to almost criminalise anyone who disagrees with the US war against Iraq.

There is another America – the many who oppose war and will be on the streets this coming weekend in their tens of thousands. One report anticipates that as many as one million will march against war in New York. There is the America of working people who are the victims of the corporations and who have been thrown out of work and swindled out of their entitlements just as many have been in Australia.

It is hardly fair for Mr Schieffer to criticise the Labor Party leadership when it continues to staunchly support the US alliance as the main pillar of its foreign policy. Furthermore, the Labor Party's leadership does not oppose war on Iraq on principle and what is more, it rushed to accept every word uttered by Colin Powell when speaking to the UN Security Council last week.

Even a child could see that Powell's so-called evidence is nothing more than a concoction of lies and innuendo, all designed to justify a US war and to stampede the other members of the UN Security Council into voting for war or at least abstaining – which, in the circumstances, also amounts to a vote for war.

Opposition to Bush's war is not anti-Americanism but rejection of the America of Bush, Rumsfeld, and the oil corporations, the America of aggression and standoff.

Mr Schieffer has shown what the US alliance is all about in practice – mindless support for whatever the US leaders decide to do in their interests. The US alliance does not protect Australia as has been trumpeted. Being tied to American coat tails however, has dragged Australia into war in Korea and Vietnam, into the 1991 Gulf War and now, it seems, into a second war in the Middle East.

So long as Australia remains encumbered with the US alliance it will be impossible to develop the friendships needed to maintain Australia's real interests in the Asia-Pacific region. There are already indications that Australia is becoming isolated from Asian countries as they build their economies and assert their independence from their former colonial masters. Participation in a war against Iraq will intensify this process.

It is not simply the grovelling attitude of John Howard personally that is at fault. It is the policy of tying Australia's foreign policy to the US alliance that inevitably puts Australia at odds with Asia and the Pacific and is seen to make Australia subservient to American dictation.

Mr Schieffer's remarks are a clear indication of how the US sees its relationship with Australia and other countries. Do as we say, or else.

The massive opposition to Bush's war plans is an extremely healthy sign that the Australian people care about peace and our independence and are not going to be mindlessly stampeded into a war that has no justification. War against Iraq and other countries will ultimately bring down on the heads of the Australian people much suffering as well as being a calamity for the people of many other countries.

Now is a time of decision that could determine the way ahead for generations – either America's war without end or the path towards peace in which the call of the Charter of the United Nations to eliminate the war option is upheld.

PRESS FUND

Why did UN inspectors recently examine Iraq's Al Dohra oil facility? Were they really seeking "weapons of mass destruction" there? The US aims to capture the Iraqi oil fields, but they'd need up-to-date information about them, so perhaps they had some little helpers among the weapons inspectors. We need our helpers too, of course, so please, send us what you can for *The Guardian's* next issue and help us to play our part in defeating the warmongers! This week we thank the following for her generous contribution:

June Ayres \$10

This week's total: \$10. Progressive total: \$1780

Nuclear dump scandal drags on

The war of words between the Federal and SA State Governments over the planned national nuclear waste dump has intensified in recent weeks.

by Bob Briton

Last month federal Science Minister Peter McGauran released a report that purported to consider 667 public submissions on the privately built and run national radioactive waste "repository" to be constructed on a site 45km from Woomera.

Predictably, McGauran went public with claims that the report backed his choice of Site 52A inside the militarised Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA).

However, it appears that, among the (mostly opposed) submissions, were a number of very disturbing ones from highly placed sources. The Department of Defence, for example, put in writing its concerns that a shallow trench containing 5.7 million litres of radioactive waste would be located just three kilometres from a site currently used for military and commercial missile testing.

Range E Target Area is also used by the RAAF for tests of ballistic weapons weighing up to 910kg. The area is no stranger to accidents, either. Last July, a Japanese rocket weighing more than five tonnes crashed spectacularly just eight kilometres from where the Commonwealth has decided to put the dump.

Not unexpectedly, "defence" industry representatives have also come out in opposition to this clear threat to the future of their \$2 billion

investment in the area made over a number of years.

The Federal Science Minister originally denied the existence of the Department of Defence document but a spokesperson for Senator Hill let the cat out of the bag by saying that it was an "internal government submission" and instructing the media to direct all its queries about the Environmental Impact Statement process to the Minister for the Environment.

McGauran is also playing down the involvement of public relations

consultants, Hill and Knowlton, in a \$300,000 publicly funded campaign to weaken the community's overwhelming opposition to the dump. "Hill and Knowlton are carrying out media monitoring work", he told the press earlier this month.

The buck-passing and attempted cover-ups have incensed opponents of the dump. SA Premier Mike Rann wants to obtain the Department of Defence document under Freedom of Information legislation. He is still committed to the holding a referendum if the Commonwealth presses ahead with stage two – a dump for high level, so-called "Long Lived Intermediate Level Waste".



Psycho babble and "anti-Americanism"

"Anti-Americanism" is one of the more recent contrivances to emerge from the pro-war propaganda machine. Fully briefed, Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer has told us that those opposing a war on Iraq have been indoctrinated into this virulent form of prejudice.

by Tom Pearson

Lest we miss the thrust of Downer's profound observation, certain newspaper columnists have patriotically come to the fore to rid us of this terrible stain on our history and character.

Gerard Henderson in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (4.2.03) used the occasion to attack novelist Graham Greene, the film based on his book *The Quiet American* and its director, Phillip Noyce. Over at *The Australian* newspaper Greg Sheridan (6.2.03) announced that we are sick and need our heads examined.

"Anti-Americanism should be studied as a serious psychological affliction, a pathological condition which paralyses the mind's analytical capacity", said Sheridan. Nothing less than a case of mass psychosis.

Henderson and his Sydney Institute think tank are in the constant throes of rewriting history for the glory of imperialist conquest. This involves denigrating socialism and its supporters, past and present.

As such his column is a witch hunt straight out of the Cold War: a vendetta in which he names names, compiling a blacklist for the settling of scores and the muddying of reputations.

The Quiet American is set in Vietnam during the death throes of French colonial occupation, and when the US was preparing the

ground for what became one of its dirtiest and bloodiest military aggressions.

Henderson sweeps this aside in order to label Noyce and Greene anti-American. He attacks Noyce's film for not portraying communist fighters in Vietnam as murderers and terrorists, implying that Noyce, because of his progressive leanings, was, and still is, part of a communist conspiracy.

Sheridan's angle is to tally up all of the people around the world who he considers should be getting the treatment. In Australia it's the "chattering classes" (those opposing and speaking out against the war).

Then there are those in America who oppose the war; the anti-Americanism of Europe; "Arab anti-Americanism"; and an affliction he calls universal anti-Americanism because "the US is so rich and so big, whatever you don't like in human nature you can find in abundance there".

Sheridan then applies the Freudian test to a demographic: spoiled Western baby boomers who "have never passed psychologically beyond the stage of adolescence with the US as their simultaneously forbidding and indulgent parents."

There are those who simply hate George W Bush, which according to Sheridan equates to being anti-

Christian. By Sheridan's own reckoning pretty much the whole world is against the USA.

But the peddlers of this anti-Americanism theory have carefully stepped around a fundamental question.

This is their avoidance of the word "people" and its replacement with categories based on race (Arab), on place (Europe), generation (baby boomers) vague allusions (the chattering classes) and psycho babble.

The people of Australia were by and large horrified by the terrorist attacks on September 11 and sympathetic toward the victims.

Where was this anti-Americanism when Australian firefighters traveled to the US and worked side by side with their fellow firefighters in New York, and when the US firefighters came here to help out during the recent fires?

Or when Australian maritime workers went to the US to rally in solidarity with American dock workers who were under attack by waterfront employers and the Bush administration?

When the likes of Downer, Henderson and Sheridan lecture us on anti-Americanism, they mean we should embrace George W Bush and the ruling class he represents.

Unlike Bush and co who are exploiting the tragedy and horror of those attacks (as the Howard Government has exploited the attack in Bali) for their own murderous ends, the people's response is a practical expression of the bond between the world's most profuse class, the working class.

A dirty piece of business

It comes with a letter from the Prime Minister and a fridge magnet list of emergency numbers. But even the front cover of the "Let's look out for Australia" terror package mailed to all of us good citizens, with its photos below the sub-heading, "Protecting our way of life from a possible terrorist attack" – a beach scene, a barbecue, laughing school children, a cop, a soldier – tells us that this is a dirty piece of business.

by Tom Pearson

Inside more pics – the Aussie flag with its patriotic union jack held aloft by children on a beach, a family cricket match, and someone I took to be an example of what your garden variety terrorist suspect might look like – close-set eyes, thin lips, dark coat. But it turned out to be the bloke from the terrorist warning adverts on television.

Inside, the booklet helpfully lists all the means that the Howard Government is using to take away our way of life: increased powers to ASIO and ASIS; and new commando forces, including Special Operations Command, Special Forces, Incident Response Regiment and the Tactical Response Group.

New power to the Federal Police

and a new combined Federal, State and Territory force, a raft of new laws that wipe out our basic rights as citizens.

Now, the thing about all these new military and police forces – and their incredible power to act without any public scrutiny or accountability – is that they're domestic. They're all ours, or more to the point, we're all theirs.

In other words, as well as aiming to frighten people, the booklets and television ads are meant to make the public swallow the utterly false premise that it is necessary for the state to have total control over our lives, in the name of security.

The booklet also introduces us to the some of the unelected figures who will enforce the control,

putting a human face on the terror machine. One stares out at you on page four: Major General Duncan Lewis, Commander Special Operations Command, who informs us, "The new command is prepared to respond quickly, in support of the civil authority, in the event of a terrorist attack."

What the General doesn't tell us is that strikes, protests and any form of dissent are included in the definition of responding to "terrorism".

Another, on the "Be alert, but not alarmed" page is Dennis Richardson, Director-General of ASIO, who tells us, "Terrorism takes many forms and there is no definitive list of what to look for." This apparently meaningless piece of advice from the head of Australia's newly vested secret police, has its purpose.

In order to cultivate fear and suspicion the concrete must be avoided in favour of the vaguely abstract. Because terrorism can "take many forms" it means it can be anybody: your workmate, your neighbour, the



bloke at the pub, your significant other, your kids.

So we get another uniform on page eight, Mick Keelty, head of the Australian Federal Police, who reinforces the "need to work together against terrorism".

In practice they want the community to work *against* itself. The word "suspicious" appears so many times throughout the booklet the authors must have taken out a copy-right on it.

The question is, what to do? One angry citizen has composed an e-mail message to be sent to the address of the National Security Hotline on the back of the booklet. It says:

"I have been invited by the Prime Minister to notify you of possible terrorist activity.

Accordingly I wish to inform you that George W Bush and his administration, Tony Blair and his cabinet and John Howard and his cabinet are intending to invade Iraq contrary to the provisions of international law, and have openly admitted to threatening military action against Iraq with the view to forcing the government of Iraq, and its people, to behave in a particular way. This constitutes terrorism within the meaning of that term as defined by the United Nations. I urge you to take steps to prevent the threatened acts of terrorism from taking place."

You could also slap "return to sender" on the package and pop it into your local mail box. ☺

Greek Australians rally against the war

Over 500 people of Greek Australian background, each wearing purple ribbons for peace, denounced plans for a US-led war on Iraq and called on the Australian Government to withdraw from active support of US war plans and bring home the Australian troops and military personnel.

The packed meeting at the Cyprus Community Club in Sydney last Sunday night was organised by the Greek Australian Peace Committee.

Speakers included: Dr Carmen Lawrence, former ALP frontbencher; Greens Senator Kerry Nettle; Democrats Senator Aden Ridgeway; Dr Hannah Middleton of the Walk Against the War Coalition and President of the Communist Party of Australia; trade union leader Angelo Gavrielatos; and representatives of the Greek Orthodox Community and the Cypriot Community.

authorities. She stressed that the US has no right to invade Iraq and change the regime.

Introducing his speech in an Aboriginal language, Senator Ridgeway applauded Dr Lawrence for resigning from Shadow Cabinet on the basis of principles.

Dr Middleton expressed optimism that the voice of the people in Australia and around the world will have a significant impact in stopping the war.

She said that the US has helped to proliferate weapons of mass destruction, including in Iraq, and now turns

name of world peace and referred to the ongoing struggle in Cyprus for independence and freedom from foreign invasion.

The meeting called on all Greek Australians in Sydney to participate in the Walk Against the War on Sunday February 16 and contribute further to the success of the people's movement in stopping the war.

The following resolution, addressed to the Prime Minister, was adopted unanimously by the meeting:

"This mass meeting of over 500 Greek Australians in Sydney on 9th February 2003 expresses strong opposition to the planned US military attack on Iraq and the support of the Australian Government for such an attack.

"We believe that the threat posed by the Iraqi regime has been taken out of proportion by the US Administration and does not warrant a military bombardment and invasion, which would breach Iraqi sovereignty and lead to the loss of many lives.

"We believe that the US has its own agenda for Iraq, which is not motivated by the principles of peaceful international relations.

"A military attack on Iraq will not solve problems, but will lead to more problems in many parts of the world. Peace will not be enhanced; there will inevitably be an escalation of violence including terrorism.

"We ask you to take heed of the growing tide of public opinion in Australia and around the world against an attack on Iraq. There is a significant gap between the plans of the US leadership and the aspirations of the people of the world for peace and stability.

"We believe that it is not in the interests of Australia to be part of a US-led military attack on Iraq and we call on the Australian Government to withdraw its support and bring home the Australian troops." ☺

Significant court win for asylum seekers

The terrible problems facing those seeking asylum in Australia continue to make front-page news. Desperate asylum seekers continue to seek release from the government's infamous detention centres, and (in some cases assisted by local people) they resort to breaking out of their confinement.

by Peter Mac

Others continue the nightmare process of seeking judicial review of their cases. The long-suffering Baktiari family, for example, took their case to the High Court, only to have the Court reject their claim that the Minister for Immigration was wrong to refuse to issue them a protection visa.

However, the High Court of Australia last week issued a highly significant ruling in a case that overturned the Howard Government's infamous amendments to the Immigration Act.

Lawyers who mounted the case against the Act had argued that the amendments were unconstitutional and should therefore be declared invalid by the Court.

The Court rejected this argument, and ultimately awarded 75 percent of the Government's costs against the plaintiff. For this reason the Minister for Immigration, Phillip Ruddock, greeted the Court's decision as a victory for the government.

The Court ruled that the government was entitled to pass the laws under the Constitution.

However, the Court did not support the government in its attempts to deny asylum seekers access to Australian law.

The government had particularly sought to deny applicants for asylum the right to appeal against administrative decisions by the Refugee Review Tribunal. The Court, however, found that while the Tampa laws themselves were constitutional, the "privative" clause inserted in the Migration Act last year in no way prevented the Court from reviewing Tribunal decisions and ordering that certain cases be re-determined, where the court believed that the Tribunal may have erred in law.

Federal Labor MP Duncan Kerr, who led the case against the government, commented that from now on: "...no statutory provision can prevent the High Court's right to ensure that administrative decisions are made lawfully."

At stake in this case was a major legal issue, and the ruling has profound implications for applicants for protective visas, including the 700 people currently involved in appeals to the High Court.

They will now be entitled to have their cases heard.

In short, legal entitlements we consider to be a civil right in Australia will still be available to those seeking asylum on Australia's sunny shores. ☺

Greek Australians have a century-long history of activity for the causes of peace, democracy and human rights.

Each speaker emphasised that there is no sound justification for an attack on Iraq and that the Australian Government should respond to the wishes of the Australian people rather than respond to the call of the US Administration.

Senator Nettle criticised Prime Minister Howard for not consulting the Australian Parliament and the Australian people before committing troops to war.

Dr Lawrence referred to the weaknesses of Secretary Powell's arguments placed before the UN Security Council last week and the disinformation being spread by US

the issue around to justify its ambitions of controlling Iraqi oil.

"The peace movement does not support a US war or a UN war on Iraq!", she said.

Penny Thliveris-Costa from the Greek Orthodox Community pointed out that Greek Australians have a century-long history of activity for the causes of peace, democracy and human rights.

The Greek Orthodox Community fully supports the movement against war on Iraq.

Michael Christodoulou of the Cyprus Community commended the initiative in organising actions in the

Unions rally in support of Kingham



Building workers march in protest in Melbourne last week

About 5000 unionists marched from Trades Hall along La Trobe Street and William Street to the Magistrates Court in support of CFMEU Victorian State Secretary Martin Kingham. It was the second time unionists have rallied to accompany him to court regarding charges laid by the building industry Royal Commission. Last October, about 10,000 unionists marched to the court.

by Janice Hamilton

In a speech at the rally ACTU Secretary Greg Combet said that the Royal Commission was a "\$60 million witch-hunt against workers".

He said 90 per cent of the matters raised before the Commission were allegations against unions, their officials and members.

Mr Kingham appeared before the Melbourne Magistrates Court on February 6 on two charges of contempt of court for failing to co-operate with the building Royal Commission headed by Terence Cole, QC, last year.

Victorian Trades Hall Secretary Leigh Hubbard in a statement before the rally said, "Make no mistake, the outcome of the Royal Commission and legislation that Abbott and Howard attempt to introduce will affect every union and every worker, not just those in the building industry.

"The Royal Commission has had an anti-union agenda from the start and the charges against Martin Kingham are simply another example of its futile attempt to discredit the CFMEU."

The Royal Commission was a "fishing expedition" that was being used to set up the building industry taskforce whose aim would be to intimidate active union members, Mr Hubbard said.

The \$65 million tax-payer funded Commission had devoted 97 per cent of proceedings to investigating alleged misconduct by unions and failed to address serious neglect of health and safety and other criminal conduct of employers.

The prosecution told the Court that Mr Kingham had abused the legal process and the inquiry's terms of reference.

The charges followed Mr Kingham's refusal to produce documents detailing the names of shop stewards, trainers and people who have attended training courses for shop stewards.

Robert Richter, QC, for Mr Kingham, told the Court that he expected the prosecution to call Commissioner Cole and counsel assisting the inquiry to appear at the hearing so they could be ques-

tioned on why they demanded the documents.

Prime Minister John Howard and Workplace Relations Minister Tony Abbott would also be welcome, he said.

Mr Richter told the Court he had earlier described the conduct of the commissioner (Cole) as, "calculated to produce a climate of war on the CFMEU".

The Commission completed its hearings in October and is due to present its report to the Government on February 24.

The evidence hearing for Mr Kingham's charges has been set down for four days starting from April 29.

Grocon had lodged an application before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to end the bargaining period.

Without a bargaining period in place, unions cannot legally take industrial action/

Grocon also sought leave to sue the union for damages for previous industrial action after making commitment's to drop all proceedings no less than two weeks ago.

The CFMEU lodged notices it intended to embark on an industrial campaign on Grocon sites starting this week.

Grocon was the only major construction company in Victoria to opt out of an industry-wide enterprise agreement last year. ☼

LABOUR NOTES

Australian Workers' Union members have voted to accept an enterprise bargaining agreement that was reached following the threat of industrial action. The agreement delivers a 15 percent pay rise over three years. It follows months of talks between Esso, the Australian Workers Union and other unions including the manufacturing, electrical, services and maritime unions. It covers more than 550 workers at four onshore and 13 offshore facilities. AWU National Secretary Bill Shorten said: "It is a fair deal that shares some of Esso's \$700 million in profits from its upstream operations with its workforce." Mr Shorten said the deal was the first major wage round of the energy companies, and would put pressure on non-union companies in North Western Australia to offer reasonable rates to their workers. "The challenge is now on companies operating in parts of the Timor Sea and North West Shelf to improve their inferior agreements."

The New South Wales Government will press the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to grant an \$18 per week increase to award rates of pay in the upcoming Minimum Wage Case. It is estimated that one in five NSW workers relies on the Minimum Wage Case for a wage increase. Many are women, young people, casual workers and residents in rural and regional areas who lack economic and industrial strength. The ACTU is seeking a \$24.60 increase in its Minimum Wage Case. While any increase is to be welcomed, low paid workers are in need of far larger increases if they are to achieve a living wage.

In a major victory the Australian Services Union in South Australia and its members have finally won a long running battle with employers for "regular" or "permanent" casual workers under the Clerks' SA Award to have the right to convert to permanent full-time/part-time status. The recent decision handed down by a Full Bench of the State Industrial Commission represents a significant step forward in the ASU's fight for greater job security for casual employees. Casual employees who have worked on a regular and systematic basis for their employer for 12 months or more will have the right to convert to permanent part-time or full-time employment as the case may be. Casual employees will also need to show that they regularly work more than 15 hours per week, this being the minimum number of hours for a part-time employee under the Award. Employers must not unreasonably refuse casual employees who meet the criteria the right to convert. Thus the onus is on the employer to demonstrate why such a conversion is not reasonable. It is now illegal for an employer to dismiss or prejudice or threaten to dismiss or prejudice a casual employee in their employment because they may have the right to convert. The provisions apply to all employers bound by the Award, including labour hire firms. The maximum ordinary hours that a part-time worker may work in any week before overtime applies has been extended to 37.5 hours.

SA TAFE needs urgent injection of funding

The Australian Education Union (AEU) has challenged the South Australian Government to make a genuine commitment to education by reinvesting in the State's cash-strapped TAFE institutes.

The recently released government report (Kirby Report) states quite clearly that an additional investment must be made and it is needed urgently.

AEU President John Gregory said the worsening financial woes of the institutes jeopardise SA's future development and must be urgently addressed.

Commenting on the Kirby Report, Mr Gregory said he was disappointed to have confirmation on the depth of damage wrought by the previous administration and the policies of the previous Government.

"The latest figures show the accumulated deficit has reached \$192.2 million. That's a big jump from Kirby's original estimate of

\$11 million. Quite clearly, it's a debt beyond the means of individual institutes to resolve. A financial injection is needed", said Mr Gregory.

"The wrong way to deal with this problem would be further cuts, yet we've learned that's been exactly the knee-jerk reaction. Some 35 staff are set to get the chop at Spencer Institute in an effort to recoup \$900,000. Such a cut hobbles the Institute's ability to offer a full curriculum and would further debilitate it. Kadina has been especially hard hit.

"If such a cut were extrapolated to Institutes with bigger debts, such as Onkaparinga with debts of more than \$6 million and Regency with debts of \$9 million, then 700 jobs would be at risk", warned Mr Gregory.

The results would be disastrous for future students and the community at large.

"Why should the current generation of TAFE students, already paying the highest fees in the nation, be denied an opportunity to build the social and economic skill base envisioned by the economic development board in order to pay for the mistakes of the previous generation?"

"A farsighted Government would recognise the value of TAFE and undertake to repair the damage. To do so is to invest in the State's economy and secure our future."

The pattern emerging in SA TAFE is similar to the under-funding of all sectors of public education by governments at state and federal levels.

Public education is being undermined, jeopardising the quality of education and student fees are becoming prohibitive, as more and more public funds are syphoned off to the private sector.

The AEU is seeking meeting with Premier Rann. ☼

Living on the edge

Welfare agencies turned away over 180,000 impoverished Australians during 2002, according to the results of the latest *Australians Living on the Edge* survey. The 700 organisations participating in the survey reported that they had been deluged with 2.4 million requests for assistance during the year.

Andrew Jackson

Higher operating and insurance costs, a 19 percent increase in the number of people seeking assistance and the complexity of client needs help to explain why agencies had to turn people away.

"Services should be congratulated for the effort they have made trying to keep up with demand", said Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) President Andrew McCallum.

However, the report's finding must also be viewed as a strong condemnation of the Federal Government.

Since 1996 the Howard Government has progressively implemented US-style welfare "reforms", where the government washes its hands of fundamental social responsibilities and turns the poor over to private and religious charities.

The extent of this welfare crisis is illustrated further by new data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics showing that as at December 2002 the number of Australians who are reliant long-term on unemployment benefits is now over 390,000.

This represents a rise of 8,000 in the past year and a rise of 32,000 since the Government took office in March 1996.

These figures lay bare the ineffectiveness of the Government's "mutual obligation" strategies such as the appalling "Work for the Dole" scheme.

Despite the Government's sales-pitch that this shameful unpaid labour provides essential training and work-skills, two out of three unemployed people do not get work after participating in the scheme. ☼

VOICES FOR PEACE

Stop the aggressive war on Iraq! Joint statement of Communist, Workers and Left parties:

We find ourselves in a critical period, when the USA and Britain are escalating preparations to unleash a new imperial war, which NATO also decided to support during its Prague summit.

The extensive military capacity of US bases in Europe is being activated for the purpose of conducting this war. The preparations being made for this war of aggression have led to violations of the constitutions, laws and international treaties of specific countries.

In recent days, the US administration has asked its allies, through NATO, for additional facilities on their territory and their military participation in the "occupation of Iraq".

There can be no doubt that preparations for the war were decided upon in advance, regardless of UN resolution 1441 and the work of the UN inspectors and regardless of the accommodating measures taken by Iraq in the face of UN demands.

It has become increasingly obvious that the planned war will pursue its military aim of gaining control of a strategic area, oil and markets. It is at the same time an attempt by the US Government to overcome its economic crisis and solve its problems at the expense of others.

The war will result in huge losses among the Iraqi people, who have already suffered severe hardships as a result of embargo, air strikes and policy of Saddam Hussein's regime.



The war on Iraq, which has cooperated with the UN inspectors, will further the military aims of the US in the Near East and contrasts sharply with its support for the government of Israel and its toleration of the repressive occupation of the Palestinians' land.

Aggression against Iraq, which is based on the new US doctrine of "pre-emptive" strikes, threatens to destabilise the whole region and bring grave consequences for human civilisation as a whole.

It poses a huge threat to international peace and the system of international law and creates a precedent for other arbitrary acts of aggression.

No argument or sleight of hand can legitimise any imposed support by the UN for this war.

We condemn the attitude of the governments and political leadership of those EU countries, which have failed to take the necessary steps or made any effective effort to halt this unjustified war of aggression and

therefore in practice are supporting the US pro-war policy.

International tension is being further escalated, international relations are being militarised, military budgets are being increased and new national, EU and NATO "rapid deployment forces" are being created.

On the other hand, the threat of war has led to justified protests throughout the world.

There is an unprecedentedly broad mobilisation of world opinion against the war, against the US bases and NATO and against the militaristic policies of governments.

Many states, including movements of the politically uncommitted, intellectuals, artists, politicians and diplomats, are calling for a diplomatic, peaceful settlement of the issue.

Our parties, which have already taken various initiatives, are playing an active part in this broad anti-war movement and are calling for an even more massive mobilisation of the people.

We must intensify the anti-war campaign among the population, at workplaces, in the trade unions and the media, in parliaments and wherever there is an opportunity to do so.

We must stop the aggressive war on Iraq. We must warn against attempts by the big powers to blackmail the UN.

We must oppose any form of European support for the war or participation in it.

We demand that our countries do not provide the US with military or other facilities to carry out its aggressive aims. ☺

Signed by:

AKEL (Progressive Party of Working People, Cyprus)
Bulgarian Communist Party
Communist Party of Austria
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia
Communist Party of Britain
Communist Party of Canada
Communist Party of Denmark
Communist Party of Finland
Communist Party of Greece
Communist Party of Chile
Communist Party of Ireland
Communist Party of Israel
Communist Party of Mexico
Communist Party of Poland
Communist Party of Russian Federation
Communist Party of Slovakia
Communist Party of Spain
Communist Party of Syria
Communist Party of Turkey
Danish Red Green Alliance
German Communist Party (DKP)
Hungarian Workers Party
Iraqi communist Party
Izquierda Unida (United Left of Spain)
New Communist Party of Britain
New Communist Party of the Netherlands
New Communist Party of Yugoslavia
Party of Communists of Belarus
Portuguese Communist Party
Rifondazione (Party of the Communist Refounding, Italy)
Romanian Socialist Party
Socialist Party of Latvia
Sudanese Communist Party
Syrian Communist Party
Tudeh Party of Iran
United Left Movement in Luxembourg
Workers' Party of Belgium
Workers' Communist Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Communist Party of Australia is a proud signatory of the joint statement and is continuing to fight for peace.

The list of signatories is still open and many more parties will be joining in. For the latest list visit: www.solidnet.org

Millions act against war

As the US, UK and Australia mass hundreds of thousand of troops on the borders of Iraq – and some reportedly already inside Iraq – tens of millions will be taking to the streets of the world this weekend in protest.

"The largest demonstration since the Vietnam War" is the catchphrase being used to describe actions already taking place around Australia.

An estimated 7000 protestors on the streets of Wollongong, 3000 in Coffs Harbour, 1000 each in Ballarat and Bendigo, 140 in Claire, and 300 in Colac among the many across regional Australia.

Several hundred women in Byron Bay took part in a "Disrobe to Disarm" protest in which they lay naked in a field in the shape of a giant peace sign. A photo of the action will be presented to Prime Minister John Howard this week.

Even in the remotest corners of the earth, people are voicing their opposition to war. Residents of McMurdo Station in Antarctica, drawn from the seven continents, lay on the ice in the shape of a peace symbol as a demonstration of world peace.

Waving goodbye to families and denouncing "imperialist" warmongering, the first convoy of 60 "human shields" left London headed for Iraq on January 10.

"I would rather die in defense of justice and peace than 'prosper' in complicity with mass murder and

war", said organiser Ken O'Keefe, a former US Marine who served in the first Gulf War.

The group were hoping to attract thousands of followers as they travelled through Europe, and were expected to arrive in Iraq on February 5 after crossing at the Turkish border.

Jordan will be another rallying point for human shields, with organisers hoping for some 100,000 people from the Islamic countries to volunteer. Baghdad has said it will receive all volunteers with open arms, and help them decide where to place themselves.

Protests are well underway already in the United States, with demonstrations having taken place in over 100 cities already this year.

January 18 saw 200,000 taking to the streets in San Francisco, and 500,000 in Washington.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People used the celebration of Martin Luther King Jr's birthday that weekend as the focus point for rallying against the impending war.

Speaking out against the Vietnam War, Rev. King once said:

"Increasingly, by choice or by accident, this is the role our nation has taken – the role of those who make peaceful revolution impossible by refusing to give up the privileges and the pleasures that come from the immense profits of overseas investment."

Meanwhile, 72 US city councils have now passed resolutions against a US war on Iraq as part of the "Cities for Peace" action.

In the UK a group of British train drivers refused to move a freight train carrying ammunition believe to be intended for British forces being deployed the Gulf. Railway managers cancelled the Ministry of Defence service after the crewmen said they opposed Tony Blair's threat to attack Iraq.

Prior to the mass protests planned on February 15-16, thousands took to the streets of Germany on the Saturday 25 January, the largest being in Cologne where 10,000 people protested.

January 25 was also the date of the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, with Swiss authorities spending \$20,000,000 to protect the elite 2000 attendees.

Officially, protestors are allowed into the town. However, German police were called in to assist local authorities 40km away in Lanquart

after protestors – refused entry to Davos – threw snowballs. The German police responded with water cannons.

"No Business over dead bodies", chanted some 1000 protestors who did make it into Davos, as they beat makeshift world globes symbolising the WEF's destruction of the planet and its people.

In Malaysia, over one million citizens have already signed a petition against the war.

Over 10,000 demonstrated in Jakarta, Indonesia on February 8.

While the Government in Turkey remains coy about its position on a war on Iraq, there have been spontaneous outpourings of anger erupting all over the country.

When Turkish Parliamentarians attended a "briefing" at the US Embassy on January 17 in Ankara, they were faced with thousands of jeering demonstrators demanding that the US bases and troops be ousted from Turkey.

In Ireland, 1000 people blockaded Shannon Airport to protest against its possible use as a refuelling base for the US Airforce.

Elsewhere, the January 18-19 weekend of international protest saw millions of demonstrators taking to the streets in 40 cities around France, 30 cities in Canada, Italy, Egypt, Syria, Japan, Mexico, Argentina, Austria, New Zealand, Pakistan, Lebanon, China, Russia and India. ☺

If war starts rally at:

Adelaide 5pm on the day Parliament House steps
Brisbane 5pm on the day in King George Sq, and then on the following Saturday at 12 noon
Canberra 5pm on the day US embassy
Hobart 5pm on the day Frankston Square
Melbourne 5pm on the day State Library
Perth 5 pm on the day outside GPO in Forrest Place
Sydney 5pm on the day at Town Hall
Wollongong 5.30pm the day after at the Ampitheatre

To Kill Iraq: The Reasons Why

In October 2002, after several days of full-dress debate in the House and Senate, the US Congress fell into line behind almost-elected president George W. Bush, giving him a mandate to launch a massive military assault against the already battered nation of Iraq. The discourse in Congress was marked by its usual cowardice. Even many of the Senators and Representatives who voted against the president's resolution did so on the narrowest procedural grounds, taking pains to tell how they too detested Saddam Hussein, how they agreed with the president on many points, how something needed to be done about Iraq but not just yet, not quite in this way.

by Michael Parenti

So it is with Congress: so much political discourse in so narrow a political space. Few of the members dared to question the unexamined assumptions about US virtue, and the imperial right of US leaders to decide which nations shall live and which shall die.

Few, if any, pointed to the continual bloody stream of war crimes committed by a succession of arrogant US administrations in blatant violation of human rights and international law.

Pretexts for War

Bush and other members of his administration have given varied and unpersuasive reasons to justify the "war" – actually a one-sided massacre – against Iraq.

Having seen that the pretexts given by the White House to justify war are palpably false, some people conclude that the administration is befuddled or even "crazy".

But just because they are trying

We may soon witness the biggest oil grab in the history of Third World colonialism by US oil companies aided and abetted by the US Government.

to mislead and confuse the public does not perforce mean they themselves are misled and confused.

Rather it might be that they have reasons which they prefer not to see publicised and debated, for then it would become evident that US policies of the kind levelled against Iraq advance the interests of the rich and powerful at much cost to the American people and every other people on the face of the earth.

Here I offer what I believe are the real reasons for the US aggression against Iraq.

Global Politico-Economic Supremacy

A central US goal, as enunciated by the little Dr Strangeloves who inhabit the upper echelons of policymaking in the Bush administration, is to perpetuate US global supremacy.

The objective is not just power for its own sake but power to insure plutocratic control of the planet, power to privatise and deregulate the economies of every nation in the world, to hoist upon the backs of peoples everywhere – including the people of North America – the blessings of an untrammelled "free market" corporate capitalism.

The struggle is between those who believe that the land, labour, capital, technology, and markets of the world should be dedicated to maximising capital accumulation for the few, and those who believe that these things should be used for the communal benefit and socio-economic development of the many.

The goal is to insure not merely the supremacy of global capitalism as such, but the supremacy of US global capitalism by preventing the emergence of any other potentially competing superpower or, for that matter, any potentially competing regional power. Iraq is a case in point.

Some nations in the Middle East have oil but no water; others have water but no oil. Iraq is the only one with plenty of both, along with a good agricultural base – although its fertile lands are now much contaminated by the depleted uranium dropped upon it during the 1991 Gulf War bombings.

In earlier times, Iraq's oil was

completely owned by US, British, and other Western companies. In 1958 there was a popular revolution in Iraq. Ten years later, the rightwing of the Ba'ath party took power, with Saddam Hussein serving as point man for the CIA.

But instead of acting as a com-pradore collaborator to Western investors ... Saddam and his cohorts nationalised the Iraqi oil industry in 1972, ejected the Western profiteers, and pursued policies of public development and economic nationalism.

By 1990, Iraq had the highest standard of living in the Middle East, and it was evident that the US had failed to rollback the gains of the 1958 revolution.

Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, US leaders decided that Third World development no longer needed to be tolerated.

Just as Yugoslavia served as a "bad" example in Europe, so Iraq served as a bad example to other nations in the Middle East.

The last thing the plutocrats in Washington want in that region is independent, self-defining developing nations that wish to control their own land, labour, and natural resources.

We can anticipate ... that following a US occupation: An Iraqi puppet government will be put in place, headed by someone every bit



as subservient to the White House as Tony Blair.

The Iraqi state-owned media will become "free and independent" by being handed over to rich conservative private corporations.

Anything even remotely critical of US foreign policy and free market capitalism will be deprived of an effective platform.

Conservative political parties, heavily financed by US sources, will outspend any leftist groupings that might have survived.

On this steeply unlevelled playing field, US advisors will conduct US-style "democratic elections", perhaps replicating the admirable results produced in Florida and elsewhere.

Just about everything in the Iraqi economy will be privatised at giveaway prices. Poverty and underemployment, already high, will climb precipitously.

So will the Iraqi national debt, as international loans are floated that "help" the Iraqis pay for their own victimisation. Public services will dwindle to nothing, and Iraq will suffer even more misery than it does today.

We are being asked to believe that the Iraqi people are willing to endure another massive bombing campaign in order to reach this free-market paradise.

Natural Resource Grab

The present White House leadership is composed of oil men who are both sorely tempted and threatened by Iraq's oil reserve, one of the largest in the world. With 113 billion barrels at US\$25 a barrel, Iraq's supply comes to over US\$2.8 trillion dollars.

But not a drop of it belongs to the US oil cartel; it is all state owned. Baghdad has offered exploratory concessions to France, China, Russia, Brazil, Italy, and Malaysia.

But with a US takeover of Iraq and a new puppet regime in place, all these agreements may be subject to cancellation. We may soon witness the biggest oil grab in the history of

Third World colonialism by US oil companies aided and abetted by the US Government.

One thing that US leaders have been interested in doing with Iraqi oil – given the glut and slumping price of crude in recent years – is keep it off the market for a while longer.

The *San Francisco Chronicle* (22 February 1998) headlined its story "IRAQ'S OIL POSES THREAT TO THE WEST."

In fact, Iraqi crude poses no threat to "the West" only to Western oil investors. If Iraq were able to re-enter the international oil market, the *Chronicle* reported, "it would devalue British North Sea oil, undermine American oil production and – much more important – it would destroy the huge profits which the United States [read, US oil companies] stands to gain from its massive investment in Caucasian oil production, especially in Azerbaijan."

We might conclude that direct control and ownership of Iraqi oil is the surest way to keep it off the world market and the surest way to profit from its future sale when the price is right.

Domestic Political Gains

War and violence have been good to George W. Bush. As of September 10, 2001, his approval ratings were sagging woefully.

Then came the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, swiftly followed by the newly trumpeted war against terrorism and the massive bombing and invasion of Afghanistan. Bush's approval ratings skyrocketed.

But soon came the corporate scandals of 2002: Enron, WorldCom, and even more perilously Harken and Halliburton.

By July, both the President and vice-President were implicated in fraudulent corporate accounting practices, making false claims of profit to pump up stock values, followed by heavy insider selling just before the stock was revealed to be nearly worthless and collapsed in price.

By September, the impending war against Iraq blew this whole issue off the front pages and out of the evening news.

By October 2002, the Republican party, reeling from the scandals and pegged as the party of corporate favouritism and corruption, re-emerged as the party of patriotism, national defence, and strong military leadership to win control of both houses of Congress, winning elections it should never have won.

War also distracts the people from their economic problems, the need for decent housing, schools, and jobs, and a recession that shows no sign of easing.

Since George II took office, the stock market has dropped 34 percent, unemployment has climbed 35 percent, the federal surplus of US\$281 billion is now a deficit of US\$157 billion, and an additional 1.5 million people are without health insurance, bringing the total to 41 million.

War has been good for the conservative agenda in general, providing record military spending, greater profits for the defence industry, and a deficit spending spree that further enriches the creditor class at the taxpayer's expense, and is used to justify more cuts in domestic human services. Liberal intellectuals are never happier than when, with patronizing smiles, they can dilate on the stupidity of George Bush.

What I have tried to show is that Bush is neither retarded nor misdirected.

Given his class perspective and interests, there are compelling reasons to commit armed aggression against Iraq – and against other countries to come.

It is time we dwelled less upon his malapropisms and more on his rather effective deceptions and relentless viciousness.

Many decent crusaders have been defeated because of their inability to fully comprehend the utter depravity of their enemies. The more we know what we are up against, the better we can fight it.

Abridged. For the full text visit: www.michaelparenti.org

NO WAR! NO US WAR! NO UN WAR! NO WAR! NO US WAR!

Powell rejected

Even before US Secretary of State Colin Powell delivered his speech to the UN Security Council last week, Chief UN Weapons Inspector, Hans Blix had already dismissed several of the claims that Powell was expected to make, and did make, to the Security Council.

Hans Blix said there was no evidence of mobile biological weapons laboratories or of Iraq trying to foil inspectors by moving equipment before his teams arrived. He had already inspected two alleged mobile labs and found nothing. Blix said the problem of bio-weapons laboratories on trucks had been around for a while and that he had received tips from the US that led him to inspect trucks in Iraq.

Hans Blix also contested the theory that the Iraqis knew in advance what sites were to be inspected.

The real purpose of the Hollywood style presentation of alleged evidence that Iraq is in "material breach" is crystal clear. It is to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq into the distant future and seize control of Iraq's oil resources.

However, there are other aims. By a massive display of US military power, the US hopes to intimidate and terrorise all other countries into accepting US political, economic and military dictation.

The war would not be confined to

Iraq. It would also be waged against other Middle Eastern countries that refused to bow to US demands. It would not stop with the Middle East either, but spread war to the continent of Asia with an assault on North Korea. The longer-range plan is war against the People's Republic of China.

Many of Powell's assertions could have been presented to the UN Security Council long ago for investigation. By his last minute revelations, the US Government hopes to stampede other UN Security Council members to endorse the war agenda.

Powell threatened the UN Security Council by asserting that unless it agreed to the US agenda, it would become irrelevant. The reality is that if the UN Security Council agreed to the US agenda it would violate the Charter of the UN and the responsibility of the UN Security Council to settle international disputes by negotiation.

Powell's threats and rhetoric aim to cover up the desire of the US to do away with the United Nations so that the US becomes the sole arbiter of what is right and

wrong. All UN principles and objectives and all international law would be torn up.

Should the UN Security Council capitulate to US demands (which seems unlikely but not impossible), it would not alter the fact that the invasion of Iraq would remain a US war. It would not alter the US objective of seizing Iraqi oil for itself. The military forces involved would still involve those of the US, Britain and Australia.

Most countries would not join the US, certainly not France, Germany, Russia or China.

A UN-sanctioned war would not alter the fact that hundreds of thousands of Iraqis would be killed by US cruise missiles, US smart bombs, US depleted uranium weapons and even US nuclear weapons.

A UN-sanctioned war is no more acceptable than one resulting from unilateral action by the US, Britain and Australia.

The massive opposition of the people of the world has not been diverted by Colin Powell's theatrical performance.

Very large demonstrations will take place throughout Australia and the world over the weekend of February 15-16. Many local peace groups in suburbs and country towns have sprung up across Australia and are initiating grass roots actions.

The Senate's condemnation of the Australian Government's mindless support of US actions is a knock to the Government's war plans, even though the Senate resolution failed to rule out support for war if it were to be endorsed by the UN Security Council.

Among the Australian people there is a growing opposition to war under any circumstances. War is an abomination. The only war forward for humanity is by establishing a peaceful and totally disarmed world.

It is the huge worldwide demonstrations that are now the main factor in straitjacketing the warmongers. It is to be hoped that the countries that make up the UN Security Council will stand by the principles of the UN Charter and the interests of the people of the whole world. ✪



Powell's Hollywood style presentation was to justify the invasion of Iraq

A tale of two malls

On Saturday morning (February 8) something remarkable happened in the Steel and University city of Wollongong, south of Sydney. Thousands of people, as many as 7000 according to helicopter scrutineers, but certainly 5000, took to the streets to protest against war with Iraq. Not just war without the blessing of the UN, but WAR FULL STOP.

by Rowan Cahill

The huge crowd choked the streets of the CBD, stopped traffic for the best part of half an hour, as it streamed from the Labour Council building near the railway station to the amphitheatre in the heart of the city Mall.

It was a multicultural and cross generational mix. There were old people with walking sticks, and those too frail to walk rode on fire trucks; there were adolescents with spiked hair; there were trade unionists with union flags and banners (the Teachers and the Maritime workers stood out); there were young people in their early 20s, protesting for the first time; there were people who hadn't protested since the 1960s and '70s; there were Muslims; there were Christians; and there were young families, many young families, complete with kids, strollers, and pet dogs on leads with peace ribbons around their necks.

The crowd settled in the amphitheatre area around the stage, and filled the Mall. During the songs and speeches there were, for me, two memorable occasions.

The first was the speech by the Catholic Bishop of Wollongong, Peter Ingham; he spoke calmly, his confident delivery care-

fully paced and phrased. He drew from the Sermon on the Mount, and ended with the Peace Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi.

In between he spoke about God in a way that crossed faiths, and he spoke about peace, and how while war is expensive, peace is priceless, and he questioned the motives of politicians who seem intent on creating a huge conflict with the Muslim world. God, he said, was smiling on the Wollongong demonstrators, which in context seemed to imply that He was not as close to George Bush as the White House claims.

The crowd was quiet; the Mall was quiet; many shops ceased trading; and as I moved through the crowd I saw people on tip toe craning to catch the Bishop's words. It was as though the Mall had momentarily become an open air church.

On the verandah of the restaurant overlooking the stage, Saturday morning coffee drinkers also listened attentively, and when the Bishop finished, joined the huge applause.

Later John Maitland, National Secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, spoke; the second memorable occasion. What concerned him was the racism that courses through Australia's

"war against terror" and the forthcoming war with Iraq.

He spoke with conviction, and with controlled passion, and when he told the crowd that the trade union movement welcomes Muslims, there was thunderous applause that sent the Mall's seagull community packing.

At the same time in another Mall, 60 kilometres south-west of Wollongong in the Southern Highlands town of Bowral, right in the heart of Liberal territory, 300 local anti-war protesters gathered. They were addressed by former Midnight Oil singer Peter Garrett.

Again, the same generational mix of people, the same sort of sentiments, but minus the multiculturalism of Wollongong. And this at a time when the Bowral Post Office reports a deluge of demands to return John Howard's 'anti-terror' booklet to the sender; a local citizenry outraged by the waste of public money and the attempt by the Howard Government to create a political climate of uncertainty and fear.

There is something stirring in the Australian soul, possibly similar to the cantankerous oppositional spirit that variously came alive during the anti-conscription battles of 1916-1917, during 1951 and the campaign against the banning of the Communist Party of Australia, and during the 1960s and early '70s in opposition to conscription and the Vietnam War.

Rowan Cahill is a historian and journalist. ✪

From the Pacific

The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Michael Somare, called on the Australian Prime Minister to consider the well-being of all Pacific Island peoples before supporting a war against Iraq. Sir Michael Somare said, "while we condemn all forms of terrorism we do not accept the choice made by Australia to support the option of a war. A war for many Pacific Island countries means that we may be used as strategic points if the possibility of engagement does arrive". Sir Michael said that history shows that larger nations have often fought their wars on foreign soil away from their home countries.

"Many Pacific Island countries including Papua New Guinea do not have the means to monitor activities on our shores and carry out surveillance in our waters. This leaves our country and our people exposed to exploitation if Australia persists in its support of a war", he said.

Sir Michael said that it was not the first time that the people from the Pacific Island countries face the possibility of being roped into a war that may be costly and serves only the interest of the few larger countries.

"We were roped into the First and Second World Wars. Today we are an independent nation that desires peace in the Pacific.

"We are also the closest neighbour to Australia but like New Zealand would prefer non-violent alternatives that would maintain peace in the Pacific region." ✪

DU: keeps on killing

The armoured regiments spearheading any British involvement in the war on Iraq will be using radioactive depleted uranium (DU) shells. The DU previously used in weapons in Kosovo and Iraq has caused many deaths, illnesses and birth defects and will continue to do so for some time into the future because of long-term radioactive soil contamination. DU is blamed by soldiers from the 1991 Gulf War as contributing to Gulf War syndrome. DU weapons are currently being test fired in Kuwait by the two British regiments waiting to move into Iraq in a planned invasion force.

As a weapon of mass destruction DU shells smash through tank armour and disintegrate into a cloud of uranium dioxide dust which can be breathed in by anyone near the stricken vehicle for a long period after the impact. Said Shaun Rusling, chair of the UK National Gulf War Veterans and Families Association: "The shame is that if there is an invasion of Iraq, then hundreds of allied servicemen and perhaps thousands of Iraqi civilians are going to be exposed to the killer after-effects again." ✪

Speaking of security ...

The USA, since 1951, has produced 67,500 nuclear missiles, at a cost of US\$5.5 trillion (Education Foundation for Nuclear Science report).

The cost to US tax payers of just maintaining the US's huge nuclear weapons stockpile – the biggest in the world – is US\$35 billion per year.

There are more than 12,000 dismantled plutonium storage pits in Amarillo, Texas alone. Along the east and west coast of the US, 90,000 canisters of radioactive waste were put into ocean waste dumps between 1946 and 1970.

If this money had been spent on providing the people of the world with safe drinking water, housing, jobs, education, health and other services, and in developing alternative renewable energy and other environmental programs, think what a safer, healthier and happier place the world would be today. That would be real security.

So, if anyone should be pressured to disarm ✪

NO UN WAR!

NO WAR!

NO US WAR!

NO UN WAR!

NO WAR!

Iraq war a criminal act?

Australia's participation in an armed invasion of Iraq without explicit UN Security Council authority will be illegal under international and Australian law. It will render the Prime Minister and his government liable to be prosecuted as war criminals, and expose our servicemen and women to the same action.

by Michael Salvaris

Australia is signatory to the UN Charter and the Australian Government is constitutionally bound to obey it. The main purpose and effect of the Charter is to outlaw war and the use of force, except in narrow and explicitly prescribed circumstances: when a country is acting in individual or collective self-defence against an actual or imminent armed attack; and when the UN Security Council has authorised the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Neither of these circumstances now exists. Iraq has not attacked Australia or any other State and is not immediately threatening to do so. UN Security Council resolution 1441, requiring Saddam Hussein to cooperate with weapons inspections, does not include any automatic authorisation for force against Iraq in the event of a breach of the resolution, either by the UNSC or any Member State. Even the US now concedes this.

For this to occur, the UN Security Council is required after considering all the issues, including the report of weapons inspector Hans Blix and the extent of Iraqi compliance, to conclude that there is a serious or potential breach of threat to international peace, and that no other measures short of force are likely to succeed.

Only then can it authorise force and it must do so explicitly. This would be odd in the present case, since Blix himself reports that weap-

ons inspections have had at least some success and met with significant if not total cooperation.

In fact a large number of UNSC resolutions have been disobeyed and gone unpunished, some going back 30 years.

There are currently about 91 such resolutions, many directed at countries which constitute as serious a threat to the peace as Iraq. Amongst others, they concern the development of nuclear weapons (by India and Pakistan, which proceeded anyway), withdrawal from illegally occupied lands (31 resolutions against Israel) and the disarming of militias in Timor (Indonesia).

Australia is now also a signatory to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

This means that Australians participating in an illegal war in which many civilians are killed and excessive violence is used may be tried and imprisoned by the Court for crimes against humanity, war crimes, the crime of aggression or even genocide.

The Court's statute specifically applies to Heads of State, Ministers and bureaucrats, as well as military officers merely obeying orders.

The extent or nature of any crimes that may be committed by Australians will of course depend on the course of the war itself and the role actually played by Australia.

It seems likely that the impending war will be largely based on bombing, including the deliberate bombing of civilian infrastructure (water, power, transport etc), which

caused massive civilian suffering during and after the last Gulf War. Close fighting in cities is also likely. Nuclear weapons may be used.

Recent reports by the Oxford Research Group and MEDACT estimate likely Iraqi deaths this time around at between 20-30,000 (half of them civilians) in a "conventional" war, and perhaps hundreds of thousands if it should escalate to a nuclear war – as President Bush has threatened, if Iraq uses chemical weapons.

These estimates seem low: the 1991 Gulf War cost an estimated one to 1.5 million lives, including the effects of 11 years of harsh economic sanctions, which, according to UNICEF, caused the deaths of 500,000 Iraqi children under five: "a price worth paying for", as US Secretary of State Madeline Albright put it.

Australian politicians and military planners will have difficulties in proving they were unaware of and did not condone or support these forms of war, even if Australian troops themselves play a minor role.

The moral and logical fallacies of the US and Australian Governments' case for war are obvious enough, whether the supposed justifications are the prevention of terrorism, upholding the UN, promoting democracy, regime change or reducing weapons of mass destruction. On many of these issues the US itself has very dirty hands.

However, until recently, arguments about the legality of the war seemed to have taken a back seat. Late last year, Tony Blair received some disturbing advice from his own Attorney General, Lord Goldsmith: he said that an attack on Iraq without the backing of a specific UN resolution could find the Blair government hauled before the newly



established ICC. To make matters worse, the most detailed opinion confirming this advice came from Matrix Chambers, the legal practice founded by the Prime Minister's wife, Cherie Blair.

In America, international lawyers including Richard Falk, Frances Boyle, the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy and the Centre for Constitutional Rights have offered the same advice to the US Government.

Legal actions by UK and US citizens against their own governments are currently being planned. Some of these lawyers have also queried the UN and US failure to indict Saddam Hussein himself for crimes against humanity, rather than killing his people.

Over the past 50 years, the international legal and human rights

system has been built up slowly and painfully, through many failures, and occasional success. It is now facing one of its greatest tests.

To succeed, it must be shown to be as tough on the most powerful and assured transgressors as it is upon outcast and despised members of the international community: exactly the same principle of equality that applies to national legal systems.

Australia was one of the key builders of this system, but our record recently has not been a proud one. Will it take Australian war crimes trials to wake us up?

Mike Salvaris is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology, (Melbourne).
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Five questions for the Prime Minister

by Scott Burchill

1. You have said that "Australia doesn't have chemical or biological or nuclear weapons and we don't want them, we don't have them. And we don't think other countries, other than those authorised by international agreement should have them" (Radio 6PR, 30 January, 2003).

Israel has chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. It was able to acquire them because of technology proliferation by France and the US. It has refused to declare that it has such weapons. It has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has not signed any international agreements which authorise it to stockpile these weapons.

What steps will the Australian Government take to disarm Israel of its weapons of mass destruction?

Could you outline the international agreements which permit Pakistan and India to possess nuclear weapons and, if not, the steps you are taking to disarm them?

2. You have said that it is "in Australia's interests to prevent the spread of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons to more states than now have them and particularly the states that are rogue states." (Radio 6PR, 30 January, 2003).

Will you be telling Washington and London to ensure that they do not return to their policies of the recent past that provided Saddam Hussein with weapons of mass destruction?

What steps are you taking against more than 150 Western companies – listed in Iraq's weapons declaration to the UN last December – which sold Iraq the technologies to develop weapons of mass destruction?

What steps are you taking against France for assisting Israel to develop nuclear weapons?

What steps are you taking against Pakistan for assisting North Korea to develop nuclear weapons?

3. You have said that "...there are a lot of people who argue that there is already adequate authority under existing United Nations resolutions for further military action [against Iraq]" (ABC Radio, 31 January, 2003).

Is this your view, based on legal advice the Government has received? Will you publicly release this advice?

4. You have said that "... only five years ago, both sides of politics in Australia were willing to countenance a situation where we would be involved [in military action against Iraq] without the passage of an additional special resolution" (ABC Radio, 31 January, 2003).

Will you release the Government's advice on the legality of this action?

5. You have said that "you could have a resolution that is carried by a majority of the Security Council but it's vetoed by one country. Now, I think there would be strong opinion here that that one veto should not stand in the way of the implementation of the majority will of the Security Council" (ABC Radio, 31 January, 2003).

Could you explain the legal basis for disregarding Security Council votes in this way? What precedents exist for this approach to UNSC vetoes?

Will you also adopt this approach towards Washington's consistent use of its veto power to block UNSC resolutions on Israel's breaches of international law when it stands in the way of the majority will of the Security Council?

Scott Burchill is a Lecturer in International Relations, School of Social & International Studies, Deakin University.
For more info on Scott Burchill: www.arts.deakin.edu.au/burchill/

Guernica cover-up

On January 27, the famous Guernica painting by Pablo Picasso which hangs near the entrance of the Security Council of the United Nations Organisation, was covered with a large blue curtain. The work features the horrors of war.

The work is where diplomats make statements to the press – providing a background reflecting the charter of the UN.

Apparently it was thought to be inappropriate as a background if the US ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte, or Colin Powell were to promote war when they were surrounded with women, children and animals shouting with horror and showing the suffering of bombings.

Aim of US war

"I think there is also the possibility that success could fundamentally reshape that region in a powerful, positive way that will enhance US interests ..."

Colin Powell

(Addressing Senate Foreign Relations Committee)

Israel

Labour-led election debacle

Headed by Labor chair Amram Mitzna, most of the Labor Party ranks blame their election debacle on the Party's 20 months of fig-leave cabinet collaboration with the Sharon Government. This collaboration in Sharon's atrocious war and anti-social course, caused a further deterioration of the security situation, as well as pushing the masses further into the abyss of dire poverty.

by Hans Lebrecht

Their departure from that catastrophic government in November and the short six-week election campaign came too late to repair the damage done to the credibility of the Labor Party.

The self-styled "left" Zionist Meretz Party lost almost half of its support, winning only six Knesset seats, compared to its former ten. Let's remember that Meretz, led by Yossi Sareed, refused to join the Coalition of Peace forces, in which 29 parties and organisations are united.

In particular, they could not accept that one of the components of the coalition is a group of army officers and soldiers who refuse to serve as occupation oppressors in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Now Sareed has paid the consequences of his party's election debacle and resigned from post as chairman (but not from the Knesset).

The Meretz leadership plus two former Labor "doves" (Yossi Beilin and Yael Dayan) are now trying, with or without the Labour Party, to form a new social-democratic party. Whether they will succeed, is still written in the clouds.

However, the peace camp will remain active as before, or even strengthen its activities in face of a probably more violent, more enthusiastic pro-Bush war and anti-social Sharon (or Netanyahu) Government.

A big winner at these elections was the petty-bourgeois party Shinui (Change), chaired by the former journalist and well-known right-wing market place political braggart Yosef (Tommy) Lapid.

His party, which had six seats in the outgoing Knesset, won 15 this time. Lapid's mobilising card was the demand to oust the ultra clerical "Haredi" parties, mainly the Shas, from their major influence on state policy.

The motley composition of Shinui's now elected leaders do not have common backgrounds. Most of them joined because their former "homes" with Labour, Meretz or the Likud Party had disappointed them.

Israel has a long experience with such motley petty-bourgeois upstart parties which cause much trouble, and then disappears when most of their members return to their former parties or, doubly disappointed, leave politics altogether. This happened at the 1977 elections when the Dash party of "Democratic Change", led by a former army chief-of-staff general, Yigal Yadin, also gained 15 Knesset seats.

Right after those elections Yadin and some of his Dash colleagues joined the Mahal (forerunner of today's Likud), chaired by right-wing conservative Menahem Begin of the old rightist Herut party, enabling him to establish his right-wing government.

By this mean they helped topple the hitherto 29-year social democrat Workers Party (forerunner of today's Labour) government rule, headed at the time by Yitzhak Rabin. Shortly afterwards, the Dash leaders returned either to the Mahal or Labour benches, or retired from political life. One even committed suicide.

The attempt of racist elements in the right-wing and fascist parties to outlaw, or at least deprive Arab nationals, of their active election

rights, received a just rebuff. My readers might remember that the politically biased Central Election Board adopted resolutions to ban two Arab Knesset Members, Azmi Bishara and Ahmad Tibi, as well as Bishara's Balad Party, from signing their candidacies and participation in the elections.

The excuse was that they allegedly collaborated with Palestinian "terrorists" and that they undermined the Jewish character of the State of Israel. Both, Bishara and Tibi won seats in the new Knesset; the Balad party even tripled its representation.

True, the under-representation of the Arab minority population – almost 20 percent of the citizens of Israel – in Israel's Parliament is distinctly racist. In fact, especially after the October 2000 police massacre of 13 Arab citizens, the Arab population as a whole has become a stout and strong factor in the peace camp.

Regretfully, the call for a united front of all Arab parties (for instance by the Communist Forum) to compete in the elections against the racist trend in Israel on a platform for peace and full equality, was not adopted.

What now?

Without any doubt, State President Moshe Katzav will ask Sharon to form the next government. Sharon most certainly will not need all the 42 days open to him to form a government, which will be supported by a Knesset majority.

Even if Sharon himself might be forced to resign because of the still smouldering bribery and corruption scandals, his place would be taken by his Likud deputy, Binyamin Netanyahu.

Sharon is still trying to create a so-called broad Coalition of Unity with Likud, the clerical parties, Shinui and Labour. He is reluctant at the moment to form a small coalition which would embrace also the radical right-wing and fascist elements.

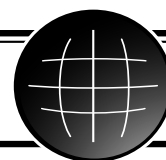
He has one eye on Washington and a Bush "peace initiative", as well as his appeal for another US\$4 billion dollar injection and US\$8 billion bank guarantees from the US treasury.

His other eye is on the European Union, by far the largest trading partner of Israel, which in some ways sympathises with the Palestinians and their demand for justice and national recognition of their rights.

As mentioned already, Labour chair Mitzna rejects all attempts by Sharon, as well as by some of his own party colleagues who sat on ministerial chairs in the Sharon cabinet, to go into partnership with Sharon. How far Labor would be prepared to join the other components of the peace camp, or again remain aloof from such a partnership, remains to be seen. ☸



Downfall came with collaboration with the Sharon Government



Global briefs

GREECE: Despite rainy weather, over 20,000 protesters converged on the town of Nafplio at the European Union's summit of labour Ministers with demonstrations condemning the drive to war against Iraq and anti labour policies of the European Union. Other mass demonstrations took place in many other cities and towns around Greece. The next protest will be on February 15, coinciding with anti-war protests around the world.

BRITAIN: Greenpeace's ship *Rainbow Warrior* blocked the military supply port at Marchwood, South Hampton, to cut Britain's military supplies chain to Iraq. Two Greenpeace protestors also climbed aboard a military supply ship. The action came on the heels of a new poll with over two-thirds of Britons saying Prime Minister Tony Blair hasn't convinced them that military action against Iraq is justified. Only 20 per cent think British troops should join a US attack in the absence of UN backing.

KOREA: In a statement issued January 24, delegations from North and South Korea said they had fully exchanged their views on the nuclear issue and pledged to co-operate actively for a peaceful solution. They said progress had been made in bilateral ties since they signed the South-North Joint Declaration in Pyongyang in June 2000, and agreed to continue the various inter-Korean exchanges and co-operative projects to promote balanced economic development on the peninsula. Since then tension has heightened between the North and the USA as the North responds to the US's military build-up in the region.

BRITAIN: A RAF serviceman's wife said her husband had been asked to sign away a right to compensation if his health was harmed by an anthrax vaccine on offer by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Defence Minister Lewis Moonie denied the reports, although they were immediately confirmed by the National Gulf War Veterans Association. Its chairman Shaun Rusling said that he had been contacted by other military personnel who had been asked to sign a waiver. "The MoD want these troops to be the beagles of the 21st century", he noted.

SCOTLAND: The Scottish Coalition for Justice Not War are moving the location of their February 15 anti-war protest in Glasgow to cope with the large numbers that are expected. Organisers now expect more than 20,000. According to the Coalition spokesperson "the demonstration is set to be the largest of its kind in the last 20 years. Groups from all over Scotland are coming. We expect the demonstration will deliver a message to Tony Blair that he cannot ignore – that an overwhelming majority of Scots believe war with Iraq will not be in our name".

EUROPE: The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), criticised the United States for spying on book buyers and library patrons under sweeping new anti-terror laws. Freimut Duve, who is the media rights monitor for the 55-nation organisation, said that the US Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Immigration and Naturalisation Service were using the Act to monitor book buyers and readers. He said that they are investigating library records, newspaper subscriptions and customers' bookshop receipts. "Governmental prerogatives are being used in a way that might intimidate citizens from exercising their right to freedom of expression", said Mr Duve. Mr Duve told reporters that he became aware of the problem after public complaints by US booksellers and librarians. He said that he had asked for clarification on the new law from Secretary of State Colin Powell, who is the top US representative to the OSCE.



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Allies in fundamentalism

I would like to make a contribution (albeit small) to the growing mosaic that is being put together to form a picture of globalisation. To recap on observations already published in *The Guardian*, corporate globalisation is based on deregulation and privatisation, with the stated objective of competition, what we have come to call economic rationalism. Of course, it is neither economically nor socially rational.

It is rational only to the transnational corporations. They benefit from it through the global dominance of their capital, through the re-division of markets. In fact, they are the only ones who benefit. Their rise to the status of super imperialists of unprecedented power is even killing off the national bourgeoisie.

Today, the national bourgeoisie is compromising with the transnationals in what is essentially a re-ordering of the world in which nation states are to play an ever diminishing role. At the same time the myth of the market regulating itself is being shattered everywhere.

The history of capitalism tells us that self-regulation leads to social and economic inequality. Even a cursory look at this history puts pay to the claptrap coming from the IMF and World Bank about the great benefits of globalisation.

The national bourgeoisie in that context is itself history: even if they wanted to, they are in no position to proffer any alternative "in the national interest" (i.e. their own interests) against the dictates of globalisation.

It is also no coincidence that religious fundamentalism has emerged alongside globalisation. Far from negating each other, they are complementary because globalisation is itself a form of fundamentalism; market fundamentalism.

They have much in common. At base, religious fundamentalism is neither a movement nor religious, but a political and economic force which, like globalisation, professes to be striving to bring an end to the world's injustices, impossible in a society divided by class.

As such, the religious fundamentalism portrayed as the "enemy" by George W Bush and Co is actually pseudo-religious and pseudo-ethnic and an ally in the drive for world domination.

In addition, arising out of the basic contradictions we are seeing the antagonisms between the major capitalist players. So we have France and Germany, for example, opposing the planned war on Iraq. This is a reflection of the unstable nature of the entire system. Economic rationalism cannot but be crisis ridden.

Trying to claw their way out of the slumps and recessions, the major imperialist powers aim to gain control of the whole planet through military force, with the US benefiting more than its "competitors": the contradiction of capitalist appropriation in action.

Thus there is the plan for war, not only on Iraq, but an endless war because the demand for profits by monopoly capital is endless.

What does all this mean for the people's democratic movements, for the progressive forces, for the left? How do we deal with these developments? What are the priorities

in building the Party and the mass movement?

These are questions we need to have debated in newspapers such as *The Guardian*. I look forward to the response from class conscious readers.

Jo Dunleavy
Wodonga, Vic

Moral bankruptcy

When General Tri Sutrisno – the Butcher of Dili – visited Canberra in 1994, the Keating government rolled out the red carpet and invited him to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Australian War Memorial in spite of 40,000 East Timorese having died supporting Australian commandos in WW2 and another 200,000-300,000 killed during the Indonesian occupation of East Timor.

When the US supplied live cultures of anthrax, botulism, bubonic plague, tetanus, small pox, etc to Saddam Hussein in the 1980s a 1994 US Senate Committee report stated: "It was later learned that these micro-organisms exported by the United States were identical to those the United Nations inspectors found and removed from the Iraqi biological warfare program."

The fact that Iraq was perpetrating the most appalling crimes against humanity at the time was not considered important enough.

Did Australia protest at its ally's flaunting of international law? Will John Howard remind President Bush of this past infamy and point up the hypocrisy?

These examples testify to the moral bankruptcy of Labor and Liberal governments.

Our only real hope for a nation governed by consistent moral and legal principles lies with the Greens, Democrats and other small parties/independents.

Gareth W R Smith
Byron Bay, NSW

Treason

I think what is happening in our country at the moment is treason. A handful of people with closed ears are blindly pulling the nation into a new holocaust against our will.

Hundreds of thousands of innocent people – innocent children – will perish, and for what???

We Australians will defend our country to our last breath (don't other people have the right to do the same?), but to MAKE us be a party in the slaughter of helpless, innocent men, women and children, sick and old people ... that is madness, that is sick and that is totally un-Australian.

Gordana Radovanovic
Spearwood WA

Taking us for fools

Our federal politicians must think we are all gullible fools. Amongst the untruths uttered during the debate on Iraq in the federal Parliament was the statement that the Labor Party position has been consistent since last April. It has not.

As recently as late January opposition leader Simon Crean was declaring on ABCTV that Labor

would support an attack without United Nations approval providing that a majority of members of the Security Council supported it but it was vetoed. His position now is that any attack must have United Nations approval.

It was also alleged from both sides of the House that the ANZUS treaty was activated by the September 11 attacks in America. This is another lie. Unfortunately for them the treaty is on the Internet for all to read.

The attacks were not external attacks required under the treaty because they came from within the United States. An external attack would be an invasion, a missile attack or an air raid from an aircraft carrier or from a foreign country, none of which has occurred.

What that lie really means is that both the Labor Party and the Federal Coalition are leaving themselves a weasel hole to align themselves with the United States right or wrong, using the ANZUS treaty as the path.

Wake up Australia.

Col Friel
Alawa NT

Got something to say?

Then write it down and send it to us.

Letters of up to 400 words in length are preferred.

Culture & Life

Ideological cantata

First, a question: do any of you, good readers, have any information on a composer named Ervin Schulhof? I confess that I am unfamiliar with his name, let alone his works.

by Rob Gowland

I have asked around the CPA headquarters to no avail and have been equally unsuccessful on searching the Internet, although that may merely be the inadequacy of the search engine I was using!

I came across Schulhof's name a couple of days ago when I turned over an old clipping of a photo from a Soviet English-language newspaper. The photo was of a stage performance, probably in the 1960s, of Vishnevsky's play about a woman commissar in the Revolution, *An Optimistic Tragedy*.

But on the back was part of a review of a cantata by Ervin Schulhof. The cantata's name was not revealed in the partial clipping I had, but its "magnificent main episode" is called *Unite*.

"Written in the style of a grand march scored *a tutti* (for all instruments)", this episode contains the lines: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workingmen of all countries, unite!"

That, of course, is from Marx and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. This was intriguing: what else, I wonder, did Schulhof

put in his cantata? An extract from *Capital* perhaps?

The review went on to say that "on the whole, Schulhof's cantata is a distinguished composition ... of a high ideological content". The review clipping is in two columns and the first column is cut off at that point.

Despite the foregoing praise, the second column resumes in the midst of some heavy criticism, referring to "... this immobility in certain places where the harmony is based on sequences (in the first episode, for instance, the sequence tone and semi-tone).

"One other defect is that, as music for the masses, the vocal melodies are not sufficiently easy to remember, not always intelligible, and are somewhat difficult to sing." Hardly minor defects in a cantata, one would think, yet the reviewer was unperturbed.

"Yet, for all this, the volcanic force of united feeling, the simplicity, the absence of any trace of preciousness or structural artifice, emotion *à la morceau du salon*, or stilted conceits – all, combined with a sterling quality of instrumentation, neutralises the demerits of the work."

The reviewer then goes on to give this assessment of Schulhof: "In general, Schulhof is still oppressed by a bourgeois heritage. But this deep-minded, gifted and honest musician, one of the finest personalities of the Western intelligentsia, is dearest to us because he has made a decisive break with the old world.

"He has understood the historic significance of the proletariat and he is marching beside them. Herein is the certainty that Ervin Schulhof will reach a towering stature as a composer for the masses."

Which brings me back to the question I asked at the beginning: can any reader give me any information about Ervin Schulhof?

...



The opening of Schulhof's Cantata

In areas of Sydney spiking women's drinks with rohypnol (the so-called "date rape" knockout drug) has become such a problem that women are being warned when at pubs and clubs to allow only men they know really well to buy their drinks, to keep an eye on their drinks at all times and never to accept drinks from chance acquaintances.

What a sad commentary on the mores of our society today. There have always been predatory males who regarded women as prey rather than fellow human beings, and although it is not possible to tell whether this predatory attitude is more prevalent now than it used to be, it is certainly true that the number of rapes being reported has gone up significantly.

But of course, this is a capitalist country, so the same issue of the suburban paper *The Southern Courier* which ran the story about police

warning young women to beware of drink spikers also ran an article promoting wine which contained the highly questionable statement: "When the right man applies wine in sufficient quantity to the right woman, romance has a way of following."

So, the idea is, I get her drunk and romance will follow? Neat.

...

The Southern Courier covers the Botany Municipality, and some of the people who live there have taken issue with the State Government over the rampant overdevelopment of Port Botany. There is now only one remaining estuary feeding into Botany Bay. It is an important breeding area for many types of bird and remnant populations of native animals.

The Carr Labor Government, with its well known friendly atti-

tude towards developers of every stamp, has now given the thumbs up to bull dozing and filling in this last area in order to expand the port facilities.

For its part, Sydney Ports, the government authority in charge of this activity, is running half-page colour ads in papers like *The Southern Courier* pushing the line that if you don't have ports close by you will pay more for things at the supermarket. So don't get in the way of Port development or prices will go up.

A letter writer to the *Courier* sums up the local concerned sentiment: "As we have a monument at Kurnell to commemorate Captain Cook for the discovery of Botany Bay, if the Port Botany extension comes to fruition there should be a monument to Premier Bob Carr for destroying Botany Bay." ♣

Rob Gowland
previews
ABC & SBS public
television programs

Sun February 16 ~
~ Sat February 22

The Office (ABC 10.00pm Tuesdays) is billed as "the hit British comedy" and it is true it has won a number of awards. It is also true that it is very clever. But is it really comedy?

The program is in the form of a cod documentary, a "mockumentary" as the fashionable phrase has it. It purports to be a fly-on-the-wall report on a stationery company's branch office about 45 km out of London.

The Branch Manager is a nauseatingly self-centred sexist pig, and the rest of the staff are dysfunctional, daft or just terrified of losing their jobs. The branch is one of two facing possible closure (only one will be retained) but the manager blithely assures all the staff that none of them will lose their jobs. "Trust me", he demands.

I have only seen the first episode, which is not always a good guide, but the ABC's publicity is certainly correct when it says that the program is devoid of the "witty dialogue of many TV shows".

Instead, it relies on painfully accurate depictions of the types working there, especially the manager, played by writer-director Ricky Gervais. If you find humour in watching a very realistic rendition of a thoroughly obnoxious person making an ass of himself then this is the program for you.

Some of you may have already seen the show, of course: it's been running on Foxtel's UK TV channel for some time (8.30pm Monday nights). In fact, last week's *Sydney Morning Herald TV Guide* said of that week's episode "the final scenes are as always, both hilarious and terribly painful". Perhaps it gets funnier after episode one.

I don't know about you, but I can't abide television program-makers who believe "adult drama" means "dealing mainly with sex". Why can't it mean dramas on serious

issues, on the real problems at home and at work that people might face or have faced in their lives?

But no, it is almost always used for melodramas in which assorted trendy middle class people get their gear off, often with violence cropping up somewhere along the way.

Just such a thing is the new series **Take Me** (ABC 9.30pm Wednesdays), officially described as "a 21st century tale of sexual freedom, troubled relationships and murder".

The protagonists are yuppies who move to the country "in a last ditch effort to save their marriage", and instead become involved in the locals' "lifestyle parties" – nothing less than the swinging '70s, car-keys-on-the-table scene revived for a new generation of empty-headed hedonists.

All rather tiresome really. As for the murders, who cares whether Doug did them. My only question is why the killer did not do away with the rest of the cast as well.

If you're in a position to relax with a cuppa about just before two on a Friday, then tune in while you sip and catch the series of ten-minute English short films **Black Cab** (ABC 1.50pm Fridays).

Sketches rather than short stories, sometimes humorous, sometimes chilling, but always very skilfully done, the series dramatises moments in the lives of the drivers of London's Black Cabs – and their passengers of course.

Black Cab is followed by the umpteenth re-run of **Birds Of A Feather** (ABC 2.00pm Fridays) with Pauline Quirk and Linda Robson as sisters who thought their husbands were in the building game. When the men are caught red-handed by the police, however, the girls learn that their menfolk were in fact in the bank-robbing game.

So if you want to catch feisty Sharon and the whining, moaning, uptight Tracey yet again, now's your chance to catch it from episode one.

In **Silent Witness** (ABC 9.30pm Fridays), Professor of Forensic Science Sam Ryan (played by Amanda Burton) solves all sorts of complicated murders using forensic clues, while coping with complications in her personal life. Lest that sound pejorative, I



Visually impressive (*I Walked With A Zombie*)

think it's one of the best crime shows on the box.

For the sixth series Sam has increased her establishment by adding two new forensic scientists (played by William Gaminara and Tom Ward). This overcomes one of my criticisms from past years, namely that Sam did too much detective work herself, moving so far outside the world of forensics as to indulge in car chases, no less.

The series is well-written and the "crime scenes" and autopsies are very well staged (slicing into dead flesh or probing a bullet hole to determine its trajectory is particularly clinically realistic).

But it's the clashes of personality, the ingenious "who dunnit" plots and the humour that keeps the series high in my favour.

This week's is the first of a two-parter involving a domestic massacre

(three dead, including one child, and two wounded) and ruthless tactics in the trucking business.

The story of how the world's self-appointed "defender of democracy" subverted and abused the US democratic process in order to secure the country's top job is told in hair-raising detail in **Unprecedented: How Bush Won Florida**, screening on **As It Happened** (SBS 7.30pm Saturday).

A timely reminder that all that rhetoric that Bush's speech-writers put in his mouth is merely hogwash.

Val Lewton was a Russian emigré who came to the USA just before WW1. He became in time a successful novelist, and in the early '30s entered the movies as an editorial assistant to David O Selznik.

Lewton closely supervised the production of these films, and his

personal stamp is more evident than that of the films' individual directors. They have all become minor classics of the genre.

I Walked With A Zombie (ABC 10.25pm Saturday), a loose adaptation of *Jane Eyre* to the West Indies, is the most visually impressive of all the Lewton films. It has been beautifully directed by Jacques Tourneur (who also directed Lewton's *Cat People*, seen last week).

"The lyrical quality of the long silent passages – Frances Dee and Christine Gordon's nocturnal walk through the mysterious woods, James Ellison carrying Gordon toward the ocean while a giant zombie (Darby Jones) follows – the shadows, the lighting, the music, the exotic settings contribute to making this one of the masterpieces of the genre" — *Guide For The Film Fanatic*, Danny Peary. ☼

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Movie review

by Brandi Kishner

About Schmidt

Director/Writer: Alexander Payne

About Schmidt is a sad movie. Schmidt, played by Jack Nicholson, is probably just like you and me.

Just like you and me, his story seems ordinary: he works hard his entire life, he retires, he has a party, his wife dies suddenly, he finds out about her infidelity with his best friend and his daughter marries a jerk.

And like the rest of us, Schmidt is not an extraordinarily lovable character. To his chagrin, he is no longer a spring chicken, as the audience is made painfully aware.

Although we don't really know young Schmidt, except in passing, we can guess that in his youth Schmidt was the tense but passive type. Now that he's retirement age, he's angry but sweet.

This unflashy, trendy flick is all about our own plain, simple and familiar lives.

In his first days of retirement Schmidt spends a lot of time watching TV to allay his boredom. While watching he becomes transfixed with one of those Children's Way child sponsorship infomercials.

He calls to order an informational packet about a child that he can sponsor. From this point on, the movie stops being just about Schmidt and becomes about his relationship with a small boy halfway across the world.

As part of the program he is encouraged to write his sponsored child a letter.

Strangely he decides to keep writing. But his writing compels him to be honest about his life and to reflect upon its meaning.

Finally for the first time in his life he is able to communicate all his problems, longings, and regrets to someone, a young African boy.

For the first time in his life, he is able to connect his problems to

problems that affect us all. And to the extent that he helps this boy Schmidt starts to realise that he himself also needs help.

But like for many of us, problems of loneliness, boredom or fear caused by alienation are difficult for him to understand, let alone admit to.

What this movie excels at is showing the causes of Schmidt's unhappiness: his loveless marriage, the drudgery of working in a job that is unsatisfying, a child that is ungrateful.

But like most Americans Schmidt never questions why he is unhappy. He just continues doing what he did the day before, not planning for the future, and not noticing which way the tides flow, and, until now, not looking beyond his own small life.

It is almost by accident, a secret weakness of his compassionate human heart, that he starts sponsoring a child. But from that moment on he starts to look at life from a different perspective.

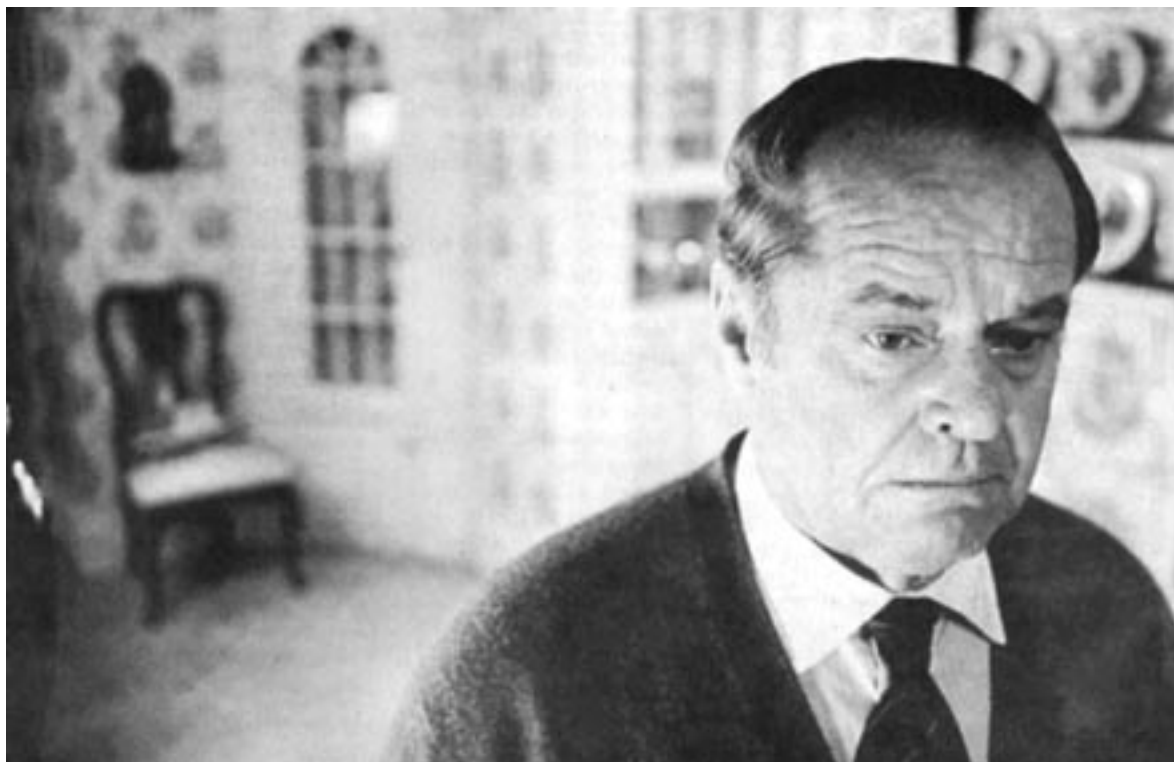
By the end of the movie he may not be happy but he is happier; he may not be a perfect person but he is getting better. An amazing transformation takes place in this one man.

And even though it's only small changes that he makes, the world is almost exponentially better because one person evolved a little. He even explores the county and realises the deep injustices done to Native Americans.

But like I said, Schmidt, like the rest of us, makes mistakes, but we too are getting better, and by our small victories the world will reach a revolution.

bkishner@pww.org

People's Weekly World,
paper of Communist Party USA ☘



Looking at life from a different perspective – Jack Nicholson as Walter Schmidt

Lucas Heights protest

Last week protestors blockaded Sydney's Lucas Heights nuclear facility to highlight dangers posed by the new reactor, and by potential terrorist attacks on it.

by Peter Mac

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) has suppressed a report on a possible attack on the complex, one of Australia's most dangerous civil installations, almost certainly indicating a disastrous lack of preparedness for such an event.

NSW Greens parliamentarian Ian Cohen commented: "Health authorities ... do not have ... stabilised iodine tablets, essential for saving (40,000) lives in the event of a radiation leak or ... a terrorist attack."

Mr Cohen has called on ANSTO to release the report, and has pointed out that the pre-distribution of iodine

tablets is standard practice in many countries with nuclear power plants, including France, Germany and the United States.

However, others have suggested that the real purpose of the facility is to preserve the old Australian imperialist dream of the nation acquiring nuclear arms capability.

Regardless of the government's aims, it is absolutely criminal to build such a facility in suburban Sydney. ☘



JOIN THE NO WAR ON IRAQ GLOBAL ACTIONS FEB 14-16

Brisbane

(CHANGE OF VENUE)

Rally for peace

Sunday 16th February 11am
Assemble at Roma St Forum
(aka Emma Miller Place)
March to City Botanic Gardens
for picnic at 12.30pm
Contact: Queensland Peace
Network phone Gavin Sawford
(QCU) 3846 2468

Perth

Dawn-to-dusk fast for peace

every Friday on Parliament
House steps
No war on Iraq rally
Saturday 15th February 11am

Byron Bay

March & solidarity picnic
Saturday 15th February 11am
Railway Park to Apex Park
Contacts: Maxine Caron
& Gareth Smith 02 6685 8410

Central Coast

Silent Vigil

Sunday 16th February
5.30-7pm Skillon
Wear black or white
with purple ribbon
Contacts: Elaine 4382 2164

Adelaide

Don't attack Iraq

Sunday 16th February 11.45am
Assemble at Victoria Square
for 12 noon walk to Parliament
House via King William,
Grenfell & Pultney Sts and
North Tce to Parliament House
Speakers: Brian Deegan,
Mem Fox & David Palmer

Canberra

Anti-war rally

Saturday 15th February 11am
Garema Place, Civic
Contact: ACT Network
Opposing War, 0417 2699 8402
actnow_canberra@hotmail.com

Sydney

Walk for Peace

Sunday 16th February noon
from Hyde Park North
Contacts: Hannah 0418 668 089
Nick 0409 762 081

Newcastle

Rally

Saturday 15th February 11am
Civic Park

Darwin

No war on Iraq rally

Sunday 16th February, 11am
Oleander St, next to
Nightcliff Market
Contact: Environment Centre
ecnt@octa4.net.au 08 8981 1984

Launceston

Contact: Launceston
Peace Action Network
www.elaunceston.com/people/peace/
Terence Seymour 0409 414 562

Melbourne

No war on Iraq: Rally for Peace

Friday 14th February 5pm
State Library, City
Contacts: Victorian Peace
Network 9659 3582
www.vicpeace.org
CICD 9663 3677

Hobart

Rally

Saturday 15th February
– details to come
Contact: Peace Trust
David Burn 6224 9288
david@lhmu.org.au
or Unions Tasmania
6234 9553

For more information
on the many, other
actions around
Australia visit:

www.anti-bases.org