

No reason for war

* A *New York Times* editorial says, "If it comes down to a question of yes or no to invasion without broad international support, our answer is no ... the report of the inspectors on Friday was generally devastating to the American position."

* One million marched against war in Cairo last week. The Egyptian Government supported the march. It is the first time in the past 25 years that the government has supported and actively participated in public protests.

* "Man cannot march into war and assume God will be at his side", said the Pope. Go into Iraq and you go without God he said.

Cardinal Pio Laghi, the Pope's envoy to President Bush, said that a pre-emptive strike on Iraq is immoral unless backed by the United Nations. "It's illegal, it's unjust", he said. However, Bush told the Pope's envoy that the leader of the world's Catholics is wrong.

* China's Foreign Minister said, "A war would lead to a catastrophic humanitarian disaster for innocent people in the Gulf region, the Middle East and the world."

* The French, German and Russian Foreign Ministers in a joint statement said, "We will not allow a draft resolution authorising the recourse to force to pass."

* Many people demonstrated against the visit of PM Howard to New Zealand last week.

* Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said, "We should rely on the UN inspectors rather than making our own decisions. All the reports have shown that they have not found anything that can be considered a threat".

* Syria's representative to the Security Council said, "We are confident that the United Nations, which represents the will of the international community, will opt for peace. This option will prevail over the use of force."

* The British Government has received its first resignation over Blair's war policy and more are expected. London's *Sunday Times*



Photo: Sam Pearson

"A war would lead to a catastrophic disaster for the world" – Part of the student demonstration in Sydney

reported that Blair faced "a rebellion by up to 200 Labor MPs if he bypassed the UN."

* The US House of Representatives Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (Democrat) said, "Before going to war we must exhaust all alternatives, such as the continuation of inspections, diplomacy and the leverage provided by the threat of military action". President Bush has wasted the goodwill the United States received after September 11, 2001, she said.

* Tens of thousands marched against war in Rawalpindi (Pakistan) on Sunday chanting "No war for oil" and "Bush-Blair are international terrorists".

* Fidel Castro exposed the aims of the US saying: "It wants to play the role of a new Roman world-wide super-empire, which, of course, will last much shorter than the Roman Empire – and it will meet with universal resistance."

The reports presented to the UN Security Council last week by Hans Blix and ElBaradei prove conclusively that there is no justification for war against Iraq. After four months of inspections

the UN weapons inspectors have found nothing incriminating.

ElBaradei, for the International Atomic Energy Agency, said categorically that "there was no evidence Iraq had a nuclear weapons development program... there was no evidence that Iraq had imported uranium ... there was no evidence that Iraq had sought to buy uranium from Niger..." These were all allegations made by the United States in an attempt to justify war.

Hans Blix reported, "we have faced relatively few difficulties ... some practical matters ... have been resolved at meetings which we have had in Baghdad ...

"No evidence of proscribed activities has so far been found ... No underground facilities for chemical or biological production or storage were found so far ... The destruction undertaken constitutes a substantial measure of disarmament ... We are not watching the breaking of toothpicks. Lethal weapons are being destroyed."

These and other statements by the chief weapons inspector show that the US, British and Australian leaders are lying in their attempts to justify war. One after another, their allegations have been shown to be false.

Even if Iraq had some weapons of mass destruction, there is no justification for war. Many other countries have long-range missiles, high-powered bombs, chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Israel possesses all these weapons and has not joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty either.

The US and Britain not only have more weapons of mass destruction than all other countries combined.

They used them in the undeclared and unauthorised aggression against Yugoslavia, in the invasion of Afghanistan, in the years-long bombing of Iraq in the so-called "no-fly zones" and in the US invasion of Colombia.

They will devastate Iraq by using such weapons if they invade Iraq again.

By invading Iraq, irrespective of whether there is a UN Security Council resolution, the US, Britain, Spain and Australia would commit an act of aggression in violation of international law and the UN Charter.

It would be a crime against humanity, a morally indefensible act that would bring enormous loss of innocent lives and human suffering for years to come.

These warmongers ignore the opposition to war on Iraq of the overwhelming majority in all countries. Such opposition is rapidly increasing in the United States itself.

By their actions they threaten the destruction of the United Nations.

They intend to occupy Iraq. Iraq is a small country that is now virtually without weapons with which to defend itself – a truly David and Goliath contest. The immorality and lies of the US, British and Australian leaders have no limit.

By using their massive weapons

of mass destruction, they hope to terrorise other countries to submit to US domination.

They intend to seize control of Iraq's oil resources.

They intend to carve up Iraq and redraw the political boundaries of the whole of the Middle East to secure US and British control into the future.

They claim that war will bring peace. This fraud has been used many times in the past to justify war, invasion, occupation, colonisation and the imposition of governments foisted on the people by an invading power.

The US claims it will bring democracy. How can this be believed. President Bush was not democratically elected. He thieved his own election.

Howard and Downer arrogantly refuse to listen to the people of Australia who oppose war or to accept the majority view of the UN Security Council. They must resign or be removed.

Howard is lying when he says that no decision has been made for Australia's involvement in the war.

The Australian Government intends to throw Australian troops into an illegal and immoral war. Their policies are isolating Australia throughout the world.

There will be specific long-term consequences for Australia. Far from protecting the interests of Australia, they are pursuing policies that ignore and violate Australia's national interests. They must go. ☛

As The Guardian goes to press, the UN Security Council is meeting in what is expected to be an historic vote – for war or for peace. If a war should come, it will be illegal. Do not support it! Throw out the Howard Government! Bring Australian troops home! **Stop the war!**

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Better manager of the system

The 20th anniversary of the election of the Hawke Labor Government on March 5, 1983 has been marked by feature articles in the daily newspapers. The most extensive coverage was carried by the *Australian Financial Review (AFR)* which is not surprising. Hawke always claimed that the Labor Party was a better manager of the system than the Liberals. And by "the system", he meant the capitalist system.

The *AFR* writes, "The Hawke-Keating government unleashed a business revolution that dramatically reshaped the Australian economy". This "revolution" was the adoption of economic rationalist policies – competition policy, deregulation, privatisation, "free trade", floating the dollar, the sidelining of Awards in favour of enterprise bargaining, superannuation, abandonment of wage indexation to name a few.

Says the *AFR*: "the Hawke-Keating reforms were overwhelmingly positive for business..."

Before becoming Prime Minister, Hawke was the President of the ACTU and in that position became notorious as a "Mr Fixxit". A case in point was the South East Queensland Electricity Board (SEQEB) strike struggle over the introduction of individual work contracts. The Electricity workers waged a long struggle with widespread popular and trade union support. At a critical point, Hawke intervened and on the basis of promises the dispute was "settled" but the workers were sold out. The airlines dispute was another. Hawke introduced Airforce pilots and assisted the entry of foreign pilots to scab on pilots to defeat their demands.

Superannuation was sold to the trade union movement as the means by which workers could guarantee an income in their retirement. But it had other objectives. The first was to reduce the Government's obligation to pay old age pensions. The second was to provide investment capital for the finance sector, where the workers' savings were put at risk, rather than the private capital of those doing the investment.

Superannuation funds have accumulated billions of dollars out of workers' pockets – money that should have been paid as wages. Much of it has been invested by fund managers on the share markets and has become an enormous source of capital investments. As an *AFR* article says, "Workers weaned off pension[s], on to stocks".

But as the value of stocks has plummeted so have super funds. In the last year \$50 billion has been lopped off the value of superannuation funds as a result of the slump in share values. In the event of a serious economic slump some funds and every cent of the money put aside by workers could be wiped out.

"Competition policy" was going to ensure "competition" between companies and lower prices. The hidden agenda of competition policy was to deregulate industry (e.g. milk and wheat marketing) and privatise the then existing public enterprises. It was claimed that public enterprises had an unfair advantage over private companies and that there had to be a "level playing field". Using these arguments the Commonwealth Bank, Qantas, government insurance offices, public transport, water supply, electricity, etc, have been privatised.

Have prices been controlled or gone down? Everyone knows that this is a cruel joke.

The agreement between the Labor Government and the ACTU known as the Accord was a cornerstone of the Labor Party's real agenda. It was sold by claiming that the trade union movement could achieve its claims if they sat around the table and co-operated with the employers. Many fell for this nonsense including some who claimed to be left-wing trade union officials.

This unsound approach opened the door to the gutting of the award system, the reduction of real wages, the loss of working conditions and undermining of health and safety in the workplace. Unpaid overtime became widespread together with massive casualisation and part-time work. Progress made on women's wages and putting an end to discrimination was reversed. The trade union movement was weakened in the eyes of many workers. Trade Unions were seen to be unable and often unwilling to defend and fight for the needs of their members. Trade Union membership slumped from about 55 percent of the employed workforce to the present 20-25 percent.

The Hawke-Keating Governments were a bonanza for business and a pain for workers. But then, that is what being a better manager of the system is all about. There is little for workers to commemorate!

PRESS FUND

Last week Tony Blair declared that Iraq could prove it had complied with UN demands, by producing some "weapons of mass destruction" such as anthrax powder, for destruction by the UN. But, er, wait a minute ... what if they haven't actually got any? Too bad! If they can't produce such weapons, then they must be guilty of having them, according to Blair, Bush and Howard! The Guardian is the paper you can rely on to expose such bizarre reasoning. We cannot do this without your support. Our thanks go to this week's generous contributors, as follows:

D A \$7.50, G Busselmann \$70, Ted Forbes \$10, J Galbraith \$50, B J Hawke \$10, D L \$85, "Round Figure" \$12.50.

This week's total: \$245. Progressive total: \$2735.

Los Dias y Las Noches de Los Muertos
The days and nights of the dead

Until the 22nd of this month Adelaide's Experimental Art Foundation is where you can encounter Francesca da Rimini's latest work *Los Dias y Las Noches de Los Muertos* (the days and nights of the dead). The fact that it is taking place in a gallery at all is unusual given that much of Francesca's recent considerable body of work is produced for and sourced from the internet.

by Bob Briton

Putting the exhibition in a large darkened room offers all sorts of other possibilities that the internet on its own does not.

On the net, it is quite possible that it would be passed over by all but a few people making their way across that vast sea of information.

Entering a high ceilinged hall with one massive wall displaying page after projected page of confronting images is a whole other experience. The space cannot now be missed or left "unopened".

I noticed students from the University of South Australia take seats at a low table covered with photocopied sheets – all different but all displaying the same sorts of images and messages as were scrolling endlessly upon the wall.

They put headphones on and listened to an audio equivalent of the visual material – incoherent industrial noise interspersed with observations in that poetic style of the Zapatista's subcomandante Marcos.

Some, but not all, of the Spanish and Italian language material is translated, adding to the feeling that you could never possibly absorb every detail contained in this exhibition.



Images from Francesca da Rimini's considerable body of work

I couldn't help sneaking a peak at the reactions of the students. The first thing I noticed was that they straight away knew how to use all the media being employed.

Then I saw that, as they started to absorb the material, most of them became pensive or agitated. The material is clearly not just bubble gum for the eyes and ears. It is apparent that this younger section of the public has no problem getting the point of the offering.

So what's it about? My own personal impression is that it is a reflection of current day capitalism where outrages and reports of atrocities swirl around us in an endless sequence.

Quotes from Napoleon's *The Art of War* and news clippings about how weapons in space will deliver their owner some economic advantage appear alongside images of the Teletubbies and fast food containers.



Visitors are confronted with page after projected page of confronting images

Skeleton figures of the sort drawn by Mexican artist Posada at the beginning of the last century are a sinister motif – a reminder that what is being treated here is the murderous capacity of 21st century imperialism.

A recurring theme is that of resistance.

There are disturbing images of the protests that took place at the G8 meeting in Genoa in 2001. The death of Carlo Giuliani - who was shot by the police that year - and the deaths of the much-feared Zapatistas put an unsettling question in the mind of the viewer, namely: even when it is likely that marginalised and exploited people will suffer bone crushing defeat when they challenge capitalist state power, do they have any other moral choice than to do so?

For me, the answer is also woven into this overwhelming presentation and the answer is NO! Oppressed people will struggle. If you sift through the huge amounts of information presented to you every day you will find confirmation of this surprising and joyous fact.

The other unanswered question of the exhibition is a direct one from the artist to the onlooker. It asks you, after having taken in all the horrendous things that have just been shown to you, where is your rage?

The exhibition on at the Experimental Art Foundation, Lion Arts Centre, North Tce, at Morphett St, Adelaide. It is open from 11am-5pm Tuesday to Friday, 2pm-5pm Saturdays until March 22. ☘

Yorta Yorta to seek UN help

The Yorta Yorta people of north-east Victoria will take their claim for native title to the United Nations, says the *Koori Mail*.

Yorta Yorta member and co-ordinator of the native title claim Monica Morgan said her people had run out of options under Australian law to address Aboriginal land rights.

Last year, the High Court dismissed the native title appeal by eight members of the Yorta Yorta people.

In a five-to-two majority, the court upheld an earlier Federal Court decision that the forebears of the Yorta Yorta claimants had ceased to occupy their land in accordance with traditional laws and customs.

The court found the claimants had not established that they had

continued to acknowledge and observe those laws and customs.

The Yorta Yorta native title application, lodged in February 1994, covered about 2000 square kilometres around the Murray River in NSW and Victoria.

Ms Morgan said Yorta Yorta representatives would take their case to the United Nations in New York later this year.

She said they would also hand a submission to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, when a representative of the group visited Australia later this year.

"There's a whole raft of issues the Yorta Yorta people may need

to look at because we're just not getting them looked at in domestic law", she said.

"This is the final year of the Decade for Indigenous People. There's already report cards being made on each of the nations within the United Nations, looking at what they have been able to put in place for Indigenous people.

"Australia has really got until the end of the year to get their report card going correctly.

"We're making sure that Australia is brought to task over its failure to meet its obligations to look after Indigenous people."

Ms Morgan said the fight for native title was gaining momentum, with more than 1000 people joining a rally on January 26. ☘

“BOOKS NOT BOMBS”

More than 25,000 students from high schools and TAFE colleges around Australia took to the streets on March 5 to say no to war. In Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Geelong, Hobart, Launceston, Ballarat, Canberra, Perth, Newcastle, Darwin, and Wollongong students marched as part of an international day of action.

In Perth 2000 students rallied for peace in Forrest Place then marched to the US Consulate and blocked St George's Terrace. Dr David Gary from the Australian Education Union declared that peace was union business.

Zanetta Mascaronhas, President of the National Union of Students, welcomed the unity of high school and university and TAFE students. Carmen Green, of Friday Fast for Peace, expressed solidarity with the children of Iraq.

In Adelaide the international call for students to strike and protest against the planned war on Iraq was answered emphatically with 7000 students calling for “Books Not Bombs”. The action, which followed the largest ever protest in South Australia's capital just a few weeks before, culminated in a rally in front of Parliament House.

Around two thirds of the protesters were high school students. Even Adelaide's primary schools were represented, the students delivering

their unambiguous message to the Federal Government.

Student representatives burned a copy of the Government's terrorism booklet and led the participants in a noisy and energetic gathering. Large numbers of motorists tooted their horns in support.

In Sydney around 10,000 students in a “Books Not Bombs” action forced central business district traffic to a standstill. In a carnival atmosphere the march, which stretched for six blocks, received positive responses from workers having their lunch.

“No War In Iraq, Bring The Troops Home”, and “I jiggled history because it was repeating itself” were among the slogans on banners. In Hyde Park students swam in the Archibald Fountain and clambered on its sculptures.

In Canberra 200 Australian National University students joined with 800 high school and college students to protest at Petrie Plaza. “We've got to take the power back”,

Erin Killion from Students Against War told the gathering.

Greens Senator Kerry Nettle said, “I would like to commend all of you for having the guts to make your voices heard.”

In Melbourne a carnival atmosphere was created by an estimated 7000 students who gathered outside the State Library. Many were in their school uniforms and had homemade banners and placards. Most were from high schools with some university and TAFE students and supportive adults.

Slogans included “Our lives have just begun, don't end them with a gun” and “War is not the way”. The protesters marched from the Library to Parliament House.

In Hobart 600 attended the students strike at Franklin Square.

In Geelong around 1000 students poured into the centre of the city and occupied it for two hours.

In Lismore 300 marched and 300 also attended the strike and rally in Launceston.

In Wollongong the student strike and rally of 400 people was held at the University of Wollongong. Speakers included Meredith Henderson from the Greens and Kim Draismore from the National Tertiary Education Union. ☺



Photo: Sam Pearson

Part of the 10,000 strong student action in Sydney

Telstra cuts services for the disabled

Telstra's proposal to close its six Disability Service Centres (A&DC) is a sneaky attack on services to the elderly and disabled people, said CPSU Communications Division Secretary Stephen Jones. The CPSU is demanding that Telstra reverse the decision.

For example, people with advanced Parkinson's Disease who often have difficulty holding the phone can obtain special products to deal with these problems.

The service assists people with mobility problems or who are confined to a wheel chair and are heavily reliant on the phone to do their daily business.

Those with hearing difficulties can have their phone modified to assist them communicate with callers, and so on.

Through A&DC Telstra provides a special information and assistance service for people with disabilities, to whom access to telephone services is vital to their

participation in community life and even survival.

The A&DC centres offer a place where those who are mobile can go and see all of the products available.

The staff also make home visits to allow people to see if the equipment suits them and works in their home environment.

They speak to community and professional groups to let them know the solutions available.

Following its partial privatisation, Telstra began reducing the number of staff who work in this area.

“We are talking about 6 people Australia wide Telstra would spend more money on management

lunches than it would on these services. This is a mean decision and the company should reverse it immediately”, said Mr Jones.

Telstra managers have told staff that the closure is to take effect from March 17, but have told them to keep it secret! They have been warned not to contact the union.

“We're not surprised that Telstra wants to keep the lid on this one. The community and the government will be very angry when they find out”, said Mr Jones.

Telstra wants to send all of these people into a busy Telstra Shop instead of providing a specialist service, “but this is no solution at all”.

“Even if disabled people are able to access the T-shops, the staff are already too busy and are focused on selling products. There is little room to hold a private conversation”, said Mr Jones. ☺

NSW Election March 22 The people deserve better!

For the last 50 years in New South Wales we have known only Labor or Liberal Party Governments. This stranglehold on power has been maintained by the two parties actively working together to prevent any competition. This cosy relationship – which guarantees they both have turns in government – allows the Liberal and Labor Parties to treat the people with contempt.

The 1999 state election was a shock for the major parties.

Eighty-one parties and hundreds of independent candidates contested the election.

Disillusioned with the two major parties, 30 per cent of the electorate voted against them.

Five independent members were elected to the Legislative Assembly (lower house), and nine minor parties were represented in the Legislative Council (upper house).

The voters' message was clear: We are sick and tired of being ignored, being lied to, and being walked all over by big business. We are ready for a change!

Parliament shows they are two sides of the same coin – voting together for legislation that hurts the people and profits big business.

Liberal and Labor joined together in the NSW Parliament against the Greens, Democrats and independents to pass legislation that:

- gave NSW the most extreme and oppressive “anti-terrorism” laws in the country;
- weakened planning controls, allowing property developers a free-for-all;
- changed workers' compensation laws – wiping out the rights of injured workers in favour of employers and insurance companies;
- allowed a proliferation of gambling to the extent that *NSW* now houses 20 per cent of all poker machines in the world!

The big parties panicked!

The Labor Party introduced new legislation that was clearly intended to choke off this voter rebellion against the “two-party system” by eliminating most of the alternative political choices available to voters.

The reason put forward to justify the undemocratic “reforms” was the large size of the ballot paper.

Certainly it was large, and there were jokes about “tablecloths”, but it did not seriously inconvenience people voting above the line, and filling it in was relatively straightforward.

Now, if you want to register a political party, you have to give the names and addresses of 750 party members to the Electoral Commission.

If you want to stand candidates in the upper house and have an “above the line” voting box, you need to stand 15 candidates at the cost of \$750 each. (A minimum of \$11,250 before spending a cent on campaign material!)

This means that groups of people campaigning on a local issue, or members of a small ethnic community, or even long established and legitimate political parties, are locked out of the system, either due to small memberships or lack of finances.

Although all the minor parties and independents voted against the changes, it passed easily – by the Labor and Liberal Parties working together.

Working together – against the people

While the Labor and Liberal Parties bicker all year round, and engage in ugly mudslinging at election time, their voting record in

Show us the money!

But we must ask: Why do both major parties vote together on these anti-people laws?

Because that's the way big corporations pay them vote!

In the three years from 1999-2001, business donations to the major parties totalled **\$39 million!** (\$22m to Labor, \$17m to the Liberals).*

This money is not given because the corporations believe one party is better than the other – many businesses donate to both parties at the same time!

So when you find your local streets full of massive apartment blocks and colossal shopping centres; when your fragile parks or coast lands are bulldozed; when your local public school or hospital has been closed and sold off for development, just remember that **property developers donated \$6.2 million** to the Coalition and Labor during those three years.

And when we see both parties voting away your rights to workers' compensation, and severely restricting the amount you claim from public liability insurance (while massively increasing the premiums you pay), we must remember that donations by **finance and insurance companies** to the major parties totalled almost **\$5 million**.

In the upcoming election:

- **Reject policies dictated by big business.**
- **Reject the cosy power-sharing.**
- **Reject the two-party system!**

* For full details of the corporate donations scandal, go to The Greens website www.nsw.greens.org.au/parl/lee/donations ☺

International Women's Day

On March 8 around Australia women rallied to mark International Women's Day. Speakers at Adelaide's action included Kaurna Elder Josie Agius who welcomed the participants onto her people's traditional lands and urged them to be joyful in their celebrations even though they were taking place in tense and uncertain times.

Tina Dolgopol of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom spoke about the effects of war on the lives of ordinary people. A poem by the veteran feminist and socialist Connie Frazer, who passed away this year, was read and a wreath was carried at the head of the march in her honour.

In Sydney a bright and colourful march of around 2000 women went from Town Hall to Belmore Park near Central Station. Speakers raised the importance of paid maternity leave and the struggle of Indigenous women for their rights in an unjust and racist society.

A group of 50 women gathered

in Perth to celebrate the Day. A passionate speech was delivered by Cheryl Davenport, who in her previous role as a State MLC had introduced a bill to legalise abortion in WA. Cheryl reminded the gathering that as part of George W Bush's fundamentalist crusade, rights that women in Australia take for granted are once more under threat in the US.

In Wollongong on the NSW South Coast 200 women marched with the main slogan "Peace Not War". Greens MP Lee Rhiannon called on Australian women to band together to send a message of solidarity to the women of Iraq. ☘



Tina Dolgopol addressing the Adelaide rally

Global Unions Women's campaign "Women for Unions, Unions for Women"

On March 8, International Women's Day, and as part of the Global Unions Women's campaign, the trade union movement launched a worldwide call for "Pay Equity Now!"

Equal pay is a fundamental right, recognised in many international instruments such as in Conventions 100 (1951) and 111 (1958) of the International Labour Organisation. But worldwide, women are still paid between 10 and 50 per cent less than men for doing similar work or jobs of comparable worth.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), to which the ACTU is affiliated, released a "briefing" entitled *Equality Through Pay Equity*, illustrating how this shameful reality continues to persist.*

"Why should a female nursery [children's day care centre] nurse earn less than a male veterinary assistant who is in charge of pest control, working in the same hospital in the USA?"

"Why should a female nursing assistant in a hospital in the Philippines earn less than the male car park attendant?"

"We need to recognise and revalue the work that women do, in particular in health and education services", Ms Wintour added.

The Global Unions' Organising Campaign, "Women for Unions, Unions for Women", is attempting to raise awareness of the nature of discrimination and to identify where it exists and how to bring women's wages up to the same level as their male counterparts.

The objective is to significantly increase female membership rates, with the ultimate goal of doubling the number of women union members.

Evidence from all over the world shows that workers receive better pay and conditions if they are union members.

Key target groups in the campaign are women workers in the informal economy and atypical workers, young workers, migrant women and women from ethnic minorities, along with those working in export processing zones

and in the public sector. Since the launch of the campaign, activities have taken place in more than 30 countries around the world.

"The fact that women are concentrated in those areas of work which are our key organising challenges – the informal economy, part-time, and other 'atypical' work, as well as the rural sector – only underlines the urgency of the challenge."

*The full text of *Equality Through Pay Equity* can be found at <http://www.icftu.org> ☘

BHP locks out South Coast steel unions

BHP Steel Port Kembla, the Illawarra's biggest employer on the South Coast of NSW has done the unthinkable, told unions to get out. The steel giant has made their position clear, it has imposed what they call "sanctions" on union officials from entering their plants and has cut off payroll deductions for union fees of over 3000 employees. The provision for the deduction of union fees was part of an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) agreed to by all parties in May last year.

by Janice Hamilton

According to the company, it has taken the action against the unions to protect the security of its employees. The unions involved are the Australian Workers' Union (AWU), the Electrical Trades Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union.

AWU Branch Secretary Andy Gillespie said the actions of BHP Steel meant that the existing EBA was dead in the water.

"No matter what spin BHP

put on it, their industrial relations policy is now the jackboot, fear and threats", Mr Gillespie said.

"This is smelling more like the Pilbara where BHP tried to force workers into individual contracts. They didn't win in the Pilbara and they are less likely to win at Port Kembla", he said.

The three unions have filed a notification of dispute with the NSW Industrial Relations Commission.

In relation to the notification Mr Gillespie said, "Quite clearly BHP Steel is not honouring the agreement. So as far as we are concerned the deal is off and we will be telling the commission that."

Electrical Trades Union Assistant Secretary Warwick Tomlins said he did not believe BHP Steel could enforce any entry restrictions on union officials.

The NSW laws governing the right of entry to workplaces by union officials are pretty clear.

"If he gets away with it we'll call meetings of members outside the gate", Mr Tomlins said.

A mass meeting of steel workers was due to decide what if any action would be taken as "The Guardian" went to press. ☘

LABOUR NOTES

Australian discount airline Virgin Blue has agreed to a 14 per cent pay rise over three years for 2000 employees. It has also agreed to a four percent profit bonus and six weeks of parental leave. Three enterprise bargaining agreements were reached with the Transport Workers Union, Flight Attendants Association of Australia and the Australian Federation of Air Pilots.

Shocked and angry construction workers have reported an explosion at the Samson Brook Dam site near Waroona in Western Australia's south west. A contractor on the site created the explosion on February 28 to remove overburden without taking appropriate precautions, thereby exposing the construction workers to extreme danger. The site is under supervision of Works Infrastructure who have a contract with the Water Corporation to build the dam. "Following the explosion, workers up to one hundred metres away were showered with blue metal", AMWU Construction Organiser Glen Anderton said. The incident was reported to the Water Corporation but not to WorkSafe WA. "It does to some extent indicate that safety, particularly on non-unionised sites and where workers are under workplace agreements [individual contracts] do not have the same degree of protection."

The Queensland Council of Unions (QCU) described Prime Minister Howard and Treasurer Costello's failure to ensure universal bulk-billing under Medicare as mean and tricky. QCU General Secretary Grace Grace said, "Medicare and bulk-billing are vital to the workers of Australia and to those who are unemployed or no longer in employment for whatever reason. Given that all Australians pay for Medicare, the only fair way to implement the system is to apply bulk-billing rules the same for all Australians." The unions also called for the scrapping of the private health cover rebate and for the funds to be used to provide access to bulk-billing for all and to invest in a quality health system for all Australians. "The rebate is nothing more than an ideological mess that is misdirecting much needed funds from the public to the private sector." The \$2.3 billion rebate would go a long way towards solving this crisis.

PERTH

NO WAR ON IRAQ NO AUSTRALIAN SUPPORT

Protest Rally, March & Festival
Saturday 22nd March 12 noon
Perth Esplanade

(Cnr Barrack St & The Esplanade)
March commences 12.30 sharp!

For more info call: 9218 9608 or 9477 6301
or visit: www.nwawa.org

Convergence on Canberra

March 23-24

Demand that Howard listens to the voice of the people.

No War on Iraq!

Bring the troops home!

Sunday March 23

- morning cultural activities
- 2pm speakers

- 6pm networking meetings of anti-war activists at ANU

Monday March 24

- 1pm stop the war rally

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The US War Against Iraq

Third World Resurgence Issue No 147-148

“The problem the globe faces today is not Iraq, but the United States”, writes author and editor Claude Alvares. Claude recalls a statement made by Senator Wayne Morse when the US Senate passed the Tonkin* Gulf Resolution in 1964. The Senator said: “We’re going to become guilty, in my judgement, of being the greatest threat to the peace of the world. It’s an ugly reality, and we Americans don’t like to face up to it. I hate to think of the chapter of American history that’s going to be written in the future in connection with our outlawry in South-East Asia.”

And says Claude, we might add: “And in the Middle East as well.”

The quote comes from one of 12 articles published in the Nov-Dec 2002 (double) issue of Third World Resurgence on the theme “The US War Against Iraq: Some Perspectives”.

Third World Resurgence is a monthly magazine published by the Third World Network** which is based in Malaysia. The aim of publishing these articles is to help clarify US foreign policy and to strengthen the anti-war effort.

The articles cover different but related issues which together provide a very useful and important analysis of the US’s strategy and aims.

The material is extremely rich and the arguments are well substantiated. Historical comparisons in a number of the articles show how the capitalist system operates.

An interview with former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter can leave no doubts on the question of whether Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction capability has been eliminated or poses a threat.

Scott deals in detail with the potential of Iraq to use nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, biological weapons, delivery systems that could reach the United States, and on possible connections between Saddam Hussein and al Qaida or other terrorist networks.

Several articles deal with US propaganda, lies, rewriting of history and the methods used to attempt to justify war on Iraq.

In an article titled “The Iraq

Syndrome: Demonic victims and angelic demons”, British free-lance journalist Jeremy Seabrook points out, “When the powerful set out to crush the weak, there is always one serious problem: how to moralise their work of destruction...”

He then explains how conditions and ultimatums that are impossible to fulfil are imposed upon the putative enemy. He cites the examples of the demands placed on the Taliban in Afghanistan (to hand over Osama bin Laden) and on Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat (to prevent suicide bombings).

Saddam was given an ultimatum to disclose weapons of mass destruction. The inspections, says Jeremy, were merely the ritual preliminaries to invasion.

No matter what confessions of diabolical weaponry that Saddam admits to, he will inevitably be accused of concealment, double-dealing and duplicity.

In all of these cases the US or the United Nations would appear to be reasonable and have done everything to accommodate these demons.

Political and economic aims

A number of the articles discuss the political and economic objectives of the US’s drive to war and not surprisingly, the questions of oil and US domination feature highly.

“The US has always been fearful that if Iraq became a regional power, it might forever endanger

access to oil reserves of the Middle East”, writes Claude Alvares.

He quotes the Washington Centre for Strategic and International Studies: “Regardless of whether we say so publicly ... we will go to war, because Saddam sits at the centre of a region with more than 60% of all the world’s oil reserves.”

Other writers deal with the question of imperialism and the threat to the national sovereignty of nations (except the US) that the “war on terror” poses.

Jim Lobe in “The new world imperial order” writes: “The right and power of the nation state to regulate its internal affairs and external relations without foreign dictation – is clearly being subordinated to the will of the US.”

While the US steadfastly refuses to accept any form of “global governance” that might encroach on its sovereignty, it asserts a unilateral right to intervene anywhere in the world in what it sees as its own interests.

Sasha Lilley’s article, which draws heavily on an interview with British MP George Galloway, reveals US and British plans to reorder the borders of the Middle East following the invasion of Iraq.

Sasha gives an insight into the thinking of the British establishment.

From the US/British perspective, “... a war against Iraq could provide the opportunity for excising the presumed sources of malignancy in the regime: the Syrian and Lebanese governments, the Palestinian Authority, Iranian theocracy, and pro-American but unstable regimes like Mubarak’s Egypt.

“A reformulated Middle East would oust the troublemakers – regardless of whether or not they were originally created and supported by the West – and leave the region turning on the axis of US client states Israel, Turkey, Jordan and a re-colonised Iraq.”

John Bellamy Foster in “The Rediscovery of Imperialism” states that US and Western intellectuals and political leaders are now openly embracing the term imperialism and declaring that it is both necessary and benign. The Western powers have embarked on a “civilising mission”.

“Our goal [of the American military] is not combatting a rival, but maintaining our imperial position, and maintaining imperial order”, John quotes from the head of the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Stephen Peter Rosen.

Boasts Henry Kissinger: “[T]he US is enjoying a pre-eminence unrivalled by even the greatest empires in the past.”

In an extremely moving article Barbara Nimri Aziz writes on “Surviving in Iraq”. She brings home the realities of war.

During the past 12 years five million Iraqis (one in four) have fled their country. For the many, however, fleeing their country

is not an option and they remain battling to give their lives some meaning and some hope.

The people of Iraq know a war can be nothing other than further deaths and more hardship.

Third World Resurgence is always worth reading; this edition is not to be missed.

* An incident organised by the US as an excuse to go to war against Vietnam.

** Third World Network is an international network of groups and individuals who strive to bring about a greater articulation of the needs and rights of peoples in the Third World; a fair distribution of world resources; and forms of development which are ecologically sustainable and fulfil human needs.

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<http://www.twinside.org.sg>
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“Dear Prime Minister”. There’s been a lot of messages to John Howard published in the daily papers from various groups opposed to Australia’s involvement in a war on Iraq. The latest is from the Australian Sociological Association signed by a long list of its members and supporters. It argues with clarity and common sense why we shouldn’t be involved in any conflict. Such as: “How can being responsible for the probable loss of 100,000 civilians over a six-month war be in Australia’s national interest? How can a war which is likely to provoke more numerous and violent responses from terrorists be in Australia’s national interest? How can the alienation of Australia from many of its Asian neighbours as a result of our involvement in a war with Iraq be in Australia’s national interest?” And so on. Common sense doesn’t apply in the rush to war, which is based on greed and domination through hatred and conflict. Common sense arises from the determination of the people to understand the world. The war plans of Bush, Blair and Howard fly in the face of reason, and the world knows it.

Q: What floats, has 12 decks, a corner store, restaurants, a casino, a spa and weighs 43,000 tonnes? A: The liner *Residensea*, which last week departed Melbourne on its continuous trip around the globe. In a world racked with conflict, crisis and poverty, *Residensea* is the acme of sickening self-indulgence and a prime example of the growing chasm between the haves and have nots. Apartments are priced from \$3.3 million to \$11.5 million.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is Treasurer Peter Costello. It’s your induced economic slump, stupid. Costello is blaming the drought for the sliding economy, claiming it’s the cause of a drop in household spending, resulting in reduced household savings. Here is his rationales. “Because farm incomes are down so much, farmers are spending more than they have in terms of income, which contributes to a negative saving ratio”, announced the PM in waiting. What a brilliant insight. So, it’s not the GST driving prices through the roof. It’s not the privatisation of services and their resultant increased costs that are eating into people’s disposable incomes. It’s not the billions dolled out by the government in corporate tax breaks and bail outs. It’s not the tens of billions being poured into the insatiable war machine. It’s not the slashing of welfare. It’s not the burgeoning numbers of people who are unemployed and under-employed ... Costello must be bucking for Treasurer of the Year.



Major parties beholden to corporate spend Greens' groundbreaking study exposes rampant

Last week the NSW Greens released a groundbreaking study exposing corporate donations to political parties. **ANDREW JACKSON** interviews Greens **LEE RHIANNON** about this and other issues in the upcoming NSW state election.

Lee Rhiannon: Corporations give millions of dollars to political parties in Australia and it's something that worries many people. The Greens believe it has a very corrupting influence on the democratic process.

How it plays out is that the people, I find, often withdraw from participating in public life.

For instance, if they are involved in some campaign where there is over-development, they come up against a system that allows the developers to give huge amounts of money to political parties.

They think "how can my voice be heard when I'm up against such powerful forces?"

Andrew Jackson: *But political parties are required under the electoral laws to declare donations.*

LR: Many people have tried to navigate the NSW political donations register, to see if there is a conflict of interest between a company they are fighting and the government of the day.

Often they see donation money being donated by a certain company, but they don't know what that company does. They don't know if it is a hotel chain, an IT company, a developer or what sort of business it is.

The Australian Electoral Commission can't answer their questions. This information should be readily available.

The current system, in terms of regulating campaign donations is highly unsatisfactory and it's certainly not transparent. The current guidelines issued by the Australian Electoral Commission and the State Electoral Office are not clear enough on the issue.

So the Greens thought it was time to have a big research project into it so the public could find out where the money was coming from.

We thoroughly researched the donations that have been made in NSW over the three years since the last election. It took a team of researchers thousands of hours of work to accomplish this.

With this information now available on our website members of the public are able to find out a lot more about who's funding the major parties. What impact that may be having on government decisions is still the big question.

AJ: *So what changes need to be made?*

LR: The Greens have come forward with a Private Members Bill that addresses these problems.

There are two key aspects to it: one is that there should be a total ban on money from developers going to political parties; the other one is a general tightening up on reporting requirements for donations that are coming from corporations and other bodies.

The present system is that corporations and parties only have to declare donations once every four

years, which fits into the election cycle in NSW. What the Greens are proposing is that it should happen within 21 days, and then within a further 14 days that information goes up on the website.

The public needs to know about these donations when they are made not years after the money has changed hands.

For example, just prior the last state election, the Circular Quay Traders Association made a \$60,000 donation to the ALP. In the same month – March 1999, the Planning Minister approved an application for the redevelopment of Circular Quay.

There may be no connection, but with a lack of transparency, how would the public know?

In 2000 there were momentous changes to the Workers' Compensation Act, and in 2001 we debated the issue of public liability.

Who benefits from those changes in the legislation? Certainly not the people of NSW.

It was, in the main, insurance companies. And what industry is one of the main donors to both the Labor and Liberal parties? Insurance companies.

And you see a similar story in the gaming industry. The clubs and hotels lobby are major donors. Clearly laws on political party donations need to change. The Greens will continue to work on this issue.

AJ: *Your Bill covers all political donations, but you have specifically called the Bill Developer Donations (Anti-corruption). Why single them out?*

LR: Up and down the NSW coast huge developments are being thrown up. These projects are able to proceed even when they are causing environmental damage, and are inappropriate in terms of the local community needs.

They are able to go ahead because the planning laws in this State have been weakened by successive governments.

We started off in 1979 with the Planning and Environmental Assessment Act. It wasn't a bad piece of legislation.

The Act has since been watered down by successive governments and at the same time, over about a 20-25 years' time span, we have seen an increase in money going to the major parties from developers.

What the Greens are concerned about is that the attraction of being able to pick up what amounts to millions of dollars in donations from developers ends up tying the hands of these parties when it comes to listening to the community.

Local communities are fighting back but as the local planning laws are so weak, wins are difficult.

AJ: *Has the Greens' stance on this issue been vindicated by the election of Michael Organ to Federal Parliament?*



Lee Rhiannon – "The public needs to know about these donations"

LR: Yes Michael Organ's campaign in Cunningham [NSW] had a lot to do with the issue of Sandon Point.

Sandon Point is a beautiful coastal area around Bulli. The area contains sites of Aboriginal significance as well as significant European history sites.

Michael is closely associated with that campaign, and the community has worked really hard to safeguard this part of the coast, the last green corridor below the Escarpment north of Wollongong.

The community has just celebrated two years of having their permanent picket line in place for seven days a week, 24 hours a day. It's an incredible achievement.

It is widely recognised that it is irresponsible to build on the land because it's a floodplain.

The Greens became well known in the area prior to the Cunningham by-election for our stance on over-development.

Michael's election was also on the back of considerable dissatisfaction with Labor's lack of compassion on refugees and lack of commitment for basic concerns of working people in the Illawarra. But over-development was certainly a big part of it.

AJ: *Your study shows that donations from developers over the three-year totalled over three million dollars each to Labor and the Liberals. Last weekend the Coalition released a policy, which the Herald headlined as "the Coalition's pledge to protect public land". The Liberals have been using Callan Park as an example of their commitment to this issue.*

LR: Well that's an interesting one. When you come to elections you see parties saying all sorts of interesting things, and what the Liberal Party is responding to there is one of the major issues in that local community.

So they have jumped on this issue although it's not something you usually associate with the Liberal Party because they're the party of the big end of town.

The Greens welcome support from all quarters for the campaign to save public land. But let's remember that the Liberals are a party committed to a policy of privatisation, and they're a party that has an appalling record on this issue.

We will see their true colours once they get elected.

AJ: *The Labor Party outscored the liberals in terms of donations from 33 million to 22 million, what does that say about our State Government?*

LR: Labor has been in power for eight years, and our research project has only covered the time that Labor has been in office, so it's not surprising that Labor scored really well with millions of dollars coming from the corporate world.

Corporate interests want to feed their money into a party that's got the power to make decisions.

And I think it shows the degree to which Labor has shifted away from working with the organised Labor movement. The unions still give Labor money but they are by no means the major donor.

We've got a Labor party that hangs out with the big end of town and it does that quite successfully

as evidenced by the amount of money donated.

Labor is not a party that is working in the interests of the majority of people in NSW.

AJ: *The launch of your corporate funding policy seems to have been buried by the mass media's obsession with your drugs policy. What's so scandalous about your drug policy?*

LR: Well, the only scandal is the way the *Telegraph* and the rest of the press have responded to it.

The Greens in no way support the retail sale of drugs – no over the counter sales of amphetamines and ecstasy as the *Telegraph* has suggested.

Our policy is for regulating the availability. At the moment our system in NSW has failed – prohibition is not working. Prohibition is not stopping drug sales, prohibition is not saving lives. It didn't work when alcohol was banned decades ago, and it is not working now.

Even Peter Ryan [former NSW Police Commissioner] said the war on drugs is not working.

NSW Premier Bob Carr is critical of the Greens' drug policy. What we need to recognise is that under his government drugs are available in NSW, and that availability is unregulated.

Every weekend in Sydney there are thousands of tablets of ecstasy, speed and other drugs being sold and consumed.

The young people who are buying the drugs don't know what's in them, and more often than not where those drugs and coming from is corrupt police and criminal elements.

Sponsors corruption

So if Bob Carr wants the drug industry to continue under those conditions, he can maintain his present policy.

What the Greens are saying is we need to change from the present policy of unregulated availability to a system of regulated availability. We want the government to put resources into an expert medical panel that would determine how we move from prohibition to regulation.

We need a system that saves lives and reduces crime and builds safer communities.

AJ: John Brogden quickly announced on the back of this media frenzy that he was not going to do any preference deals with the Greens, particularly in Port Jackson.

LR: Well, the key issue here is that the Greens don't do preference deals with the Liberals. We have never had preference arrangements with them. It is a total furphy.

And when you consider that the liberal party is the party of war, the issue of preferences would not get on the agenda.

Brogden is looking for a quick headline in an election where he is very much on the backfoot. So I guess he couldn't resist a chance to beat up on the Greens and get a bit of mileage for himself.

As far as Port Jackson goes, we were always the outsider, and we are still the outsider, but we are pleased with our campaign.

We are very strong on the ground. We have 40 local groups around the State; we are standing in all 93 electorates in the lower house.

The drugs issue may have set us back a bit, it may not have. But we certainly stand by our policy.

AJ: The Telegraph has been running a concerted campaign against the Greens during the last week. They ran an Editorial last Sunday in which they used very flawed logic and a deliberate distortion of your policies in an attempt to discredit you. Why are they doing this?

LR: The suggestion is already out there that the *Telegraph* works closely with the Labor Government.

And while the ALP are interested in our preferences, they are working hard to discredit the Greens to reduce our primary vote.

The *Telegraph* is owned by Murdoch, a deeply conservative corporation. And we have seen a history in Australia that as progressive forces grow stronger, and raise their voices louder, the media attacks mount.

They are attacking our policies now, but we've taken very similar policies to the elections in 1995 and 1999.

We were attacked a little bit then, but it never reached the crescendo it has now.

I suggest the difference is because our vote has gone from two to eight per cent. Now these deeply conservative forces see us as a threat. ☘

Castro speaks for the "dark corners of the world"

The 13th Conference of the heads of states or government of the Non-Aligned Movement met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, at the end of last month. In a speech made to the conference, Cuban President Dr Fidel Castro Ruz called on people of conscience in developed first-world nations to challenge the drive toward US empire, unbridled environmental destruction, impossible misuse of money for weapons, and out-of-control consumerism. The following is his speech.

Your Excellency and very dear friend Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia: Esteemed leaders and members of delegations: Distinguished guests:

These are hard times we are living. In recent months, we have more than once heard fearful words and statements.

In his speech to the West Point graduating cadets, on June 1st, 2002, the United States President stated: "Our security will require transforming the military you lead, a military that must be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world."

That same day he proclaimed the doctrine of a pre-emptive strike, something that no one had ever done in the political history of the world.

A few months later, while referring to the unnecessary and almost certain military action against Iraq, he said: "And if war is forced upon us, we will fight with the full force and might of the United States Army."

That statement was not made by the government of a small and weak nation, but by the leader of the richest and mightiest military power that has ever existed, the same that possesses thousands of nuclear weapons, enough to obliterate the world population several times over – and other fearful conventional military systems and weapons of mass destruction.

That is what we are: dark corners of the world. That is the

perception some have of the Third World nations. Never before had anyone offered a better definition; no one had shown they despise us so.

The former colonies of powers that divided the world among them[selves] and plundered it for centuries constitute today the group of underdeveloped countries.

There is nothing like full independence, fair treatment on equal footing or national security for any of us; none is a permanent member of the UN Security Council with a veto right; none has any possibility to be involved in the decisions of the International Financial Institutions; none can keep its best talents from being drained; none can protect itself from the flight of capital or the destruction of Nature and the environment caused by the squandering, selfish and insatiable consumerism of the economically developed countries.

After the last world carnage in the 1940s, we were promised a world of peace, the reduction of the gap between the rich and the poor and the assistance of the highly developed to the less developed countries.

It was all a huge lie. We had imposed on us an unsustainable and unbearable world order. The world is being driven to a dead [end] road and within hardly 150 years, the oil and gas it took the planet 300 million years to accumulate will have been depleted.

In just one hundred years, the



Third world nations are being forced to pay a \$US2.5 trillion debt

world population has grown from 1.5 billion to over six billion people that will have to fully depend on energy sources that are still to be researched and developed.

Poverty continues its expansion while old and new diseases threaten whole nations with annihilation.

The soils are eroded and lose fertility; the climate is changing; breathing air, drinking water and the seas are increasingly contaminated.

Authority is snatched from the United Nations, its established procedures obstructed, and the Organisation itself destroyed; development assistance is reduced; there are continuous demands on the Third World countries to pay a 2.5 trillion US dollars debt that cannot be paid under the present circumstances while one trillion US dollars are spent on ever more sophisticated and deadly weapons.

Why is that? What is that for? A similar amount is spent on commer-

cial publicity, sowing consumerist expectations that cannot be realised into the minds of billions of people.

Why is that and what for? For the first time the human species is running a real risk of extinction due to the insane behaviour of the very same human beings, who are thus becoming the victims of such "civilisation".

However, no one will fight for us, that is, for the overwhelming majority, only we will do it. Only we can save humanity ourselves with the support of millions of manual and intellectual workers from the developed nations who are conscious of the catastrophes befalling their peoples.

Only we can do it by sowing ideas, building awareness and mobilising the world public opinion and the American public opinion. No one needs to be told this. You know it very well. Our most sacred duty is to fight, and fight we will! Thank you, very much. ☘

Australia typical of global neglect

The United Nations released a report last week that takes a sobering look at the stocks of the world's fresh water and their quality. The UN document is the result of two years' work by 23 of the international body's agencies and, given the authoritativeness of the sources, should give governments all over the globe cause to act on the gloomy predictions contained in its 600 pages.

by Bob Britton

The UN World Water Development Report is a major contribution to the International Year of Freshwater but, unfortunately, is constrained by reality to make dire predictions unless measures are taken urgently to halt the degradation of the planet's supplies of fresh water. Unless urgent steps are taken, as many as seven billion people in 60 countries could be facing water shortages by the year 2050.

The report divides the countries of the world into water rich and water poor categories.

The "rich" category is relatively small and includes countries like Greenland, Canada and Iceland.

Australia ranks 40th on the list – among the water poor – and is rated only 20th out of 188 countries in terms of water quality.

UNESCO director-general Koichiro Matsuura says that the average supply of water available per person could drop by one third within 20 years. "Water supplies are falling while the demand is dramatically growing at an unsustainable rate", he said.

The UN report maintains that erratic rainfall due to climate change will be responsible for around 20 percent of the decline in supplies. Pollution continues without effective controls. About two million tonnes of waste are dumped into the world's waters every day.

"Attitude and behaviour problems lie at the heart of this crisis ... Inertia at the leadership level and a world population not fully aware of the scale of the problem means we fail to take the needed timely corrective actions", the UNESCO media release pointed out.

The comments are clearly applicable to Australia's case.

Land clearing, unsustainable levels of irrigation and other environmentally irresponsible practices have put us in our unenviable position.

Last year the government-appointed "Wentworth Group" of experts put the bulk of the blame squarely where it belonged – with profit-driven agribusiness. It pointed to practices affecting the availability of fresh water that require urgent action.

For example: "In recent decades the rate of land clearing has accelerated, with as much land cleared during the past 50 years as in the 150 years before." This land

clearing is continuing unabated to this day.

Instead of taking measures to meet this real life emergency, the Federal Government is hell-bent on dealing with other imaginary crises at an international level and spending fortunes in the process. Calls from the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Farmers' Federation two years ago to do something about the threat of land clearing have gone unheeded.

Conferences about the imminent death of the Murray/Darling river system have been held and others are on the agenda. State and Federal Ministers are due to meet in a "council" in October. All the participants are describing this as "crunch time" for the outstanding issues on the agenda.

Few commentators, however, believe that the participants have the political will to tackle the powerful vested interests that benefit from the current (though unsustainable) situation. ☘

Greece

MPs and trade unions act to stop war

One hundred and twelve members of the Greek Parliament (out of a total of 300), coming from all political parties have signed an "appeal for peace", which will be handed to the United Nations.

In their Appeal for Peace they declared that Greece should not participate in any way, directly or indirectly, to the imminent war against Iraq.

"...the war on Iraq may and must be averted" since "a drop of child's blood cannot be counter-weighted even by a thousand oil barrels", their appeal said.

This appeal will be presented to the European Parliament as well as to the Parliaments of the other European countries.

Massive demonstration are being organised by the anti-imperialist movement for March 15 when a meeting of EU Ministers of Defence is due to be held.

The agenda for the ministerial meeting includes issues related to the war on Iraq, the further militarisation of the EU and the "euro-army".

Popular opposition against the meeting is fuelled by the "common position" taken by an EU summit held on February 17, when the EU leaders provocatively ignored the message sent by millions taking part in the February 15 actions, and paved the way for the "war option".

Having as main mottos "We Can Stop Them" and "Greece out of the war" the Greek Committee for Peace and Détente (EEDYE), the Balkan Anti-NATO Centre, Youth Action for Peace and Action-Thessaloniki 2003 have called for

mobilisations across Greece on March 15.

In Athens the demonstrators will march from the Propylaea of the Old University to the US Embassy while in Thessaloniki the demonstration will end at the US consulate.

Trade unions will hold a 24-hour strike on March 21 which has been declared by federations and labour centres all around Greece. The All-Workers Militant Front (PAME) is working hard for its success.

Apart from opposing the war, the strike demands include labour rights, especially social security and employment, opposition to EU policy and the so-called "Lisbon Strategy".

The European Union ministerial meeting will be discussing the "Lisbon Strategy", which the class-oriented labour movement has characterised as a "declaration of indefinite war on the workers and their rights".

Unions in the oil companies have appealed to the leadership of the Pan-Hellenic Federation of Workers in the Refineries and the Oil industry to mobilise against the oil supply of the US and NATO war forces.

The Greek monopoly groups of shipowners and oil companies have offered their readiness to supply the US forces and their allies. ☛



"A drop of child's blood cannot be counter-weighted by even a thousand oil barrels"

Stalin's death commemorated

The 50th anniversary of the death of Joseph Stalin was commemorated in Moscow with a demonstration of about 3000 Moscovites who placed a wreath on Stalin's grave next to the Kremlin wall in the Red Square. Many other Soviet leaders are commemorated by busts or by plaques in the Kremlin wall.

Gennady Zuganov the Chairman of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation led the commemoration.

Speaking to the gathering, the head of the Communist Party's Moscow branch, Alexander Kunayev, said, "We came here to pay our respects to a great figure".

Stalin is admired by many because he led the Soviet Union to victory in World War II and pushed through economic reconstruction, industrialising a country that was based largely on peasant society in tsarist times.

"There were some problems, but he was working in a difficult time", said Kunayev.

A public opinion poll held in connection with the anniversary showed that 53 per cent of Russians said they thought Stalin played a positive role in Russian history, while 33 percent said they thought he played a negative role.

Zuganov said that "Stalin is the founder of a superpower – if we had succeeded in maintaining the Soviet Union, we wouldn't be talking today about war in Iraq".

Zuganov called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to work from Stalin's legacy in deciding how to vote on a US-backed resolution presented to the UN Security Council authorising the use of force against Iraq.

"It is Stalin that offered Russia its UN Security Council right of veto and Putin must use it", he said.

Commenting to *The Guardian*, CPA General Secretary, Peter Symon said that "although Stalin is usually reviled in the West and certainly made mistakes and committed crimes, his role should be looked at from the undoubted achievements of the Soviet Union under his leadership.

"He was faced with a concerted counter-revolution over many years but rapidly industrialised the Soviet Union to meet the expected aggres-

sion coming from imperialism. It came with the Nazi invasion in 1941.

"If the Soviet Union had not created a strong industrial base it would probably have been overrun and occupied.

"Stalin avoided the trap being set by the leaders of Britain and France at the time, who attempted to push Nazi Germany into war with the Soviet Union while sitting on the sidelines themselves. They hoped that Germany and the Soviet Union would exhaust themselves and leave Britain and France as the masters of Europe.

"Stalin was commander in chief of the Soviet armies during the war

and after years of war and huge sacrifices, the German armies were defeated. This history is largely ignored in the West.

"Stalin proved to be more than a match for Winston Churchill and US President Harry Truman in post-war diplomacy", said Peter Symon.

"Under Stalin's leadership there were many advances in science and culture. It should be recalled that the Soviet Union put the first satellite in space in 1957, only three years after Stalin's death. Industrially and in other respects the Soviet Union was regarded as a superpower.

"These are all reasons why Stalin is so reviled in the West and why his achievements are ignored. In the long run, however, history will also give a positive assessment of his achievements as the Russian people are doing today". ☛

India

Left Front victory in Tripura elections

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has hailed the decisive victory of the CPI(M) and the Left Front in Tripura. For the third successive time, the Left Front has been returned to office with a two-thirds majority.

"The people of Tripura have recorded their appreciation for the resolute fight waged by the CPI(M) to defend the unity of the tribal and Bengali people and for the impressive performance of the Left Front government headed by Manik Sarkar", said a statement issued by the Central Committee of the CPI(M).

"It is the pro-people policies which rendered the anti-incumbency factor irrelevant in Tripura, just as in West Bengal.

"At the same time, the people have resoundingly rejected the opportunist Congress-INPT alliance. Their unscrupulous politics have been firmly rebuffed. The Congress leadership must realise the harm it has caused to the state and national unity by allying with a NLFT-backed party.

The Central Committee recorded its deep appreciation of the hard and determined struggle waged by the Tripura state unit of the CPI(M) in the electoral battle. It paid homage to the 34 members and supporters of the Party who sacrificed their lives during the election campaign.

Following the announcement of the Left Front's two-thirds mandate

in the 60-seat state assembly people poured onto the streets across the state in spontaneous celebration of the victory

Asked by the media for his reaction to the Left Front victory, the state Left Front committee convenor Baidyanath described it as the combination of their response to the Left Front's perfect pursuance of their hopes and inspirations on the one hand and their rage and repugnance towards the barbaric blueprint of the Congress-extremists to shatter such hopes and aspirations of this backward, landlocked state on the other.

State secretariat member and spokesperson for the CPI(M), Gautam Das, said that the Left Front victory was achieved by the ceaseless struggle of the people of Tripura wading dauntlessly through the blood of 540 activists and supporters of the Left Front martyred over the last five years statewide.

The Left Front committee described the victory as a yes-vote for the continuation of democracy and development in Tripura.

For more information visit:
<http://www.cpim.org> or
<http://pd.cpim.org> or
<http://www.solidnet.org> ☛

Israel demolishes houses in Kafr Qasem

The Israel Lands Administration (ILA) has demolished 16 so-called illegal houses in Kafr Qasem as part of the government's crackdown on illegal building in Arab communities. Kafr Qasem local council head Sami Isa complained of an acute housing shortage due to a government refusal to approve any new building plans. "People are suffocating here, what can you expect them to do? They have no alternative but to build illegally", he said.

by Yair Ettinger

Some 250 police, border police and mounted police backed by a large amount of riot control equipment entered the town before dawn to safeguard the demolition work. A number of residents who confronted the police and ILA inspectors were detained for questioning.

The demolished structures were under construction and two of them were inhabited already.

Although the residents have been negotiating with the authorities for several months in an attempt to reach an agreement, the police and ILA gave them no advance warning of the demolition.

Eyewitnesses said one of the

houses was knocked down with all its contents inside it, after its owner was arrested.

The Kafr Qasem operation follows a series of demolitions of Arab houses in the past months in the Negev, Lod, Ramle and Jaffa, on the basis of administrative or court orders. The implementation of other demolition orders, in Wadi Ara, is being held up by a court injunction.

Mossawa, the Advocacy Centre for Arab Palestinian Citizens of Israel, says the number of illegal structures in the Arab community reached 36,000 by the end of 2002, with an additional 30,000 in the Bedouin sector.

Gush-Shalom (abridged) ☛

Fair tax campaign begins

The Fair Taxes for All Coalition (FTFAC), uniting over 500 grassroots organisations, has launched a petition and direct action campaign demanding that the House and Senate block George W Bush's US\$674 billion tax cut for the rich, which they warn will cost US\$2 trillion in lost revenues over the coming decade.

by Tim Wheeler

The new coalition was announced at a Capitol Hill news conference on February 12 attended by AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, People for the American Way President Ralph G Neas, ACORN* President Maude Hurd and other leaders.

Nancy Duff Campbell, President of the National Women's Law Center (NWLC), co-chair of the FTFAC told the news conference, "NWLC is co-chairing this Fair Taxes for All Coalition for one reason: to fight the devastating effect of President Bush's massive new tax cuts on women and children.

These tax cuts threaten to sabotage all of the priorities critical to woman and the vast majority of Americans."

Bush's US\$364 billion cut in taxes on dividends, she charged, could provide health insurance for all the 9.2 million uninsured children

It could also extend the Head Start program to all eligible school children in the US. Instead, Bush's 2004 Fiscal Budget tightens eligibility for these programs.

"But it gives millionaires an average tax cut of \$89,000", Campbell said.

Hurd, a substance-abuse prevention specialist, told the news conference that Bush's proposal for "yet more tax cuts for millionaires

is so willfully blind to the destruction it will cause that it reminds me of the behavior of a substance abuser."

Bush peddles his tax cut scam as an "economic stimulus" but Hurd argued that "putting money into the hands of the least well off would be most likely to stimulate the economy while giving piles of cash to millionaires doesn't help.

"People choosing between heat and food will immediately spend any money they get. Millionaires will put money in the bank."

Hurd said ACORN and its allies will not just "scream at the addict ... We are going to stop this destructive policy in Congress."

In the coming weeks ACORN and others in the coalition will be circulating the petition, staging rallies, teach-ins and other mass actions. Rachel Burrows, ACORN legislative representative told the *People's Weekly World*, "Our petition is directed to Congress and it seeks to get across one point: that there are literally millions upon millions of people across this country who are opposed to these tax cuts.

"I think we are in a different situation than we were when Bush's first tax cut for the rich was approved", she said. "We are acting on the assumption that this is a fight we can win", Burrows said.

The combined US\$150 billion in state and local budget deficits

caused by Bush's tax cuts loomed like an 800 pound gorilla at the National Governors Association annual meeting in Washington.

George W Bush told the Governors they had received enough federal money.

He told them to line up in support of another tax cut for the rich. Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) reminded the governors that Bush's "homeland security" is an unfunded mandate that will cost them billions with no help from Washington.

Yet Bush doled out US\$37 billion in taxpayer funds to bribe Turkey to allow the Pentagon to invade Iraq from Turkish territory.

The governors demanded that Bush come up with an immediate US\$15 billion aid package for the states.

They also demanded that the federal government assume the costs of providing health care for six million low income seniors by shifting them from Medicaid, partially funded by the states, to Medicare, wholly funded by the federal government.

These seniors are 15 percent of those enrolled in Medicaid but 35 percent of the programs costs.

Washington Governor, Gary Locke, told reporters that the governors struggling with the deepest deficits since World War II "received nothing but great smiles and rhetoric" from the Bush administration.

*ACORN - from the ground up - is a neighbourhood-based group committed to organising the poor and powerless in the USA.

People's Weekly World ✪

Professor crucified by US authorities

An imprisoned Florida university professor says he is being "crucified" by US authorities and has vowed to continue a protest hunger strike. Dr. Sami Al-Arian, a Palestinian born in Kuwait, was arrested with three other men on February 20.

The Department of Justice announced a 50-count indictment of eight Arab men, four of whom are not in the US, for alleged crimes including support of terrorism, racketeering and conspiracy to commit murder. The government claims that these individuals constituted a stateside support group of the Islamic Jihad, a group that has claimed credit for terrorist attacks against Israel.

Attorneys for the defendants deny the charges. A spokesman for the Islamic Jihad also denied connections to the arrested men, Al-Arian, Sameeh Hamoudeh, Hatim Naji Fariz, and Gassan Zeyed Ballut.

The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and the Arab-American Institute Foundation are among a number of organisations raising questions about the indictments, especially of Al-Arian.

The ADC statement says it "supports efforts to enhance our nation's security but remains committed to ensuring that our civil rights are not violated in the process."

The ADC noted that Al-Arian has been under investigation for many years, and no evidence was ever presented suggesting his involvement with any illegal activity.

The government emphasised comments that Al-Arian had made about Israel some years ago, raising worries among civil libertarians that he is being singled out for opposing US and Israeli policies in the Middle East.

Some civil libertarians also see these arrests as a way to win political support for even more far-reaching and anti-democratic laws, like the "Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003" which is being pursued by Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Called "Son of Patriot Act", this draft legislation allows for secret arrests and a host of other actions that contradict the Bill of Rights.

Al-Arian, the most high profile member of the group, was teaching engineering at the University of South Florida (USF) in Tampa. Al-Arian had been fighting efforts of the University to fire him after appearing on right-wing Fox News' "The O'Reilly Factor".

In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, when the media was anxious to promote the far-right line of vengeance, the show's host, Bill O'Reilly, revived inflammatory but never proven [but thoroughly investigated] charges against Al-Arian dating back, in some cases, 15 years.

Al-Arian had also played a leading role in an unsuccessful effort to keep the government from deporting his brother-in-law, Mazzen al Najjar, on the basis of "secret evidence", a procedure made legal under the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996.

A federal judge had denied the government's right to deport Al Najjar, and the Reno Justice Department appeared to have given up the effort to do so. However, after 9/11, the Ashcroft Justice Department promptly re-arrested Al Najjar without giving public reasons and deported him.

Al-Arian, a very high profile member of the Arab-American and Muslim communities, had organised Muslim support in Florida for George Bush in the 2000 elections.

People's Weekly World ✪

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Global briefs

SOUTH AFRICA: Some 4000 people representing 60 organisations - including the governing African National Congress, the Communist Party of South Africa and the Congress of South African Trade Unions - brought a powerful anti-war message to the US Embassy in Pretoria on February 19, with the slogan, "No to war, Yes to peace".

ITALY: Public opinion polls say seven out of 10 Italians oppose war even if the UN endorses it, while PM Silvio Berlusconi continues to give strong support for US war on Iraq. The union representing 90 percent of waterside workers has declared that it will refuse to load or unload all shipments of US weapons coming through Italy's ports. "We don't want our workers involved in the transport of arms", union leader Guido Abbadessa said in an interview.

VENEZUELA: In mid-February, 30 tire factory workers in Barquisimeto were attacked while riding to work in a bus operated by their employer. Two workers were injured - one hit in the eye with a glass splinter and the other shot in the arm. The attack occurred in front of a police officer, and the driver had slowed down just before a burst of nine bullets was fired into the bus. The workers at the tire factory occupied the plant in January to protest against their employer's attempt to make them take "unpaid holidays" as part of the business-led lock-out against the Chavez Government. Their action inspired other workers to occupy a neighbouring factory in early February, demanding full payment for the time they lost in the lockout.

BANGLADESH: About 20,000 Bangladeshis, brandishing placards that read: "Blood for Oil, No, No, No", "Peace, Not War" and "Push Bush" marched through the capital Dhaka on February 20 to protest against US plans to invade Iraq.

POLAND: Poland's official unemployment rate hit a new record of 18.7 per cent in January when 3.32 million people were registered jobless, the Central Statistics Office said.

BRITAIN: The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) accused the BBC of making a "politically motivated decision" to sack two Arab union activists. Palestinian Adli Hawwari and Iraqi Dr Abdul Hadid Jiad worked for the Arabic service, the biggest section of the World Service. Both were sacked on the spot with no warning and without the right to trade union representation. It was confirmed that the unprecedented dismissals had been ordered by BBC Director-General and that the Foreign Office had been informed. NUJ deputy General Secretary John Fray said: "The BBC has laid itself open to accusations of the World Service being the lackeys of the government. Is it a coincidence that two Arabic service journalists are sacked when a war over Iraq is on the horizon? Let's not forget that it is the British Government that pays for the World Service through a Foreign Office grant", added Mr Fray. Mr Hawwari is a member of the NUJ national executive.

By the short and curly

Catching "the willing" to take part in the slaughter of the Iraqis has been a hard task. The Anglo-Saxon club was a breeze – Tony was willing from the word "go" and provided the British accent to counter-balance what passes for English with our Trans-Atlantic allies.

Howard didn't even wait to be asked – he was up there, fair dinkum. Not really committing anything, not really sending Australian troops to fight, not really interested in the opinion of the country – he just did it. Pig-iron Bob would have loved it. Many of us don't.

But I love the list of other willing.

For Israel, Jordan, Kuwait,

Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Pakistan, their reasons are clear. With the Americans running the show in their countries as we speak, it will be a brave ruler to mutter anything against.

I'm sure they are all queuing up for "democracy, freedom and regime change" in their own countries.

Spain had one of the largest anti-war demos but its President wants to be on the world stage. It's a shame the play is so rotten.

Why Denmark is there is a complete mystery to me, maybe it'll become clear later.

And then, of course there are others: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania.

I loved a quick response to an ABC newsreader's question why these countries are supporting the war – "It's the money, honey".

When Jacques Chirac had described the behaviour of the east European countries that are joining or wish to join the EU in the future as infantile and dangerous for their "no-questions-asked" support for Bush, he topped it off by saying that they had "missed a good opportunity to keep quiet". Can't agree more with that sentiment.

The Philippines has already allowed US troops inside the country to take part in local military actions – against the constitution.

Japan's government has been asked by the USA to persuade United Nations Security Council's non-permanent members to vote for a new resolution allowing the use of force.

The Japanese Government targets the recipients of official development assistance. The countries involved are Cameroon, Guinea, and Chile.

What has been promised to Mr Howard and his friends? Nice lucrative jobs in the weapons industry? Cosy positions for family members in finance and trade? Free lunch with the Bushes?

Three lines in a history book condemning him and his government for helping to start a WW3?

I want to know, because in one way or another I, as many others will be paying for it. Every missile launched is a house not built, care denied to a child, bed not available for the sick.

Ten thousand Australian troops are in the Gulf now, ready to fight a US war for corporate world dominance. Why? Haven't they got better things to do at home?

J Smith
Darwin, NT

Make Medicare an election issue

The Howard Government today signalled its intentions to begin dismantling Medicare. According to Howard, Medicare was never intended as a system of Universal Health Care but rather as a band-aid for low income earners.

This is undoubtedly the most vicious assault by this reactionary government on the Working Class and the most vulnerable in the community.

I believe that the Communist Party of Australia, in conjunction with other progressive organisations should attempt to turn the forthcoming State Election in NSW into a referendum to save Medicare.

This can be achieved by simply writing "Save Medicare", "Defend Medicare", "Universal Health Care for All" on ballot papers.

I look forward to your suggestions on this matter.

Denis Berrell

178 MPs refuse the Challenge

The 1994 US Senate report into biological-warfare dual use exports to Iraq itemises the lethal micro-organisms that US firms sold to Iraq.

It states that these were identical to those later discovered and removed from the Iraqi biological-warfare program by UN inspectors.

On February 11, I presented this fact to 178 ALP and Coalition MPs and challenged them to seek an explanation for such malfeasance, from US Ambassador Tom Schieffer.

So far not one of them has responded.

Independent MP Peter Andren is right: the major parties have sold out to US interests and do not deserve our votes.

Gareth W R Smith
Byron Bay, NSW

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

Culture & Life**The return of anti-Sovietism**

On February 21, *The Australian Financial Review* published a two-page article by Paul Monk on "the role of defectors in exposing the crimes of Stalin and Saddam". The article was called "Bearing witness against tyrants".

by Rob Gowland

Paul Monk was described as "the founder of Austhink, the critical thinking skills research, training and consulting group".

The article reproduces, without the slightest trace of any critical thinking of any sort, US propaganda about Iraq's alleged "weapons of mass destruction", backed up with a stack of equally uncritical anti-Soviet propaganda, some of it from people thoroughly discredited years ago.

These include what Monk is pleased to call "two of the more notable defections from Stalin's regime": Alexander Orlov and Walter Krivitsky. I will come back to them in due course.

Earlier in the year, on January 4, in fact, SBS ran another piece of US anti-Soviet propaganda in their *As It Happened* slot. *Secrets, Lies And Atomic Spies* purported to provide the long-hidden proof that Stalin had in fact had a vast network of spies in the USA (as many as 300, including, of course, "top-level Roosevelt Cabinet members").

Why is this anti-Soviet propaganda appearing – or re-appearing – just now? To answer that question

and deal with the allegations in the *Financial Review* piece may take some time, so I hope readers will forgive me if I continue this commentary over the next issue.

It will be no news to readers of *The Guardian* if I note that capitalism is making a concerted global assault on the organised working class, on wages and conditions, on public enterprises and on democratic rights.

The assault is after all, self evident. This assault is part of the drive by the largest and most rapacious corporations, the transnationals, to impose their dictatorship over the people of the world.

Strong words, but faced with the kind of crisis that confronts the people of the world today, it is no time to be mealy mouthed.

Under the guise of "combating terrorism", remarkably similar repressive legislation has been enacted in a host of supposedly democratic countries, including Australia. Not surprisingly, this legislation is at its most spectacular in the US, where it rejoices in the name "Homeland Security".

Alongside this attack on the people's democratic rights goes a vigorous propaganda war.

Much of the media manipulation, the lurid, planted stories, the exposés and dramatic dawn raids on flats where "chemical weapons were suspected of being made", are obviously intended to promote and maintain a popular fear of terrorist activity as a "clear and present danger".

At the same time, however, the real drive of the propaganda war is to discredit the very concept of democratic rights and those who advocate them or defend them. And especially, they must discredit the communists.

But why the communists? Surely they are too small and impotent now to be of concern to capitalism's power brokers?

Don't be fooled. The ideologues of capitalism know their dialectical



Steering the Ship of State – anti-Sovietism remains a propaganda device

and historical materialism very well. They are well aware that the real class enemy of capitalism is the world communist movement, the parties of scientific socialism.

They are the ones with a scientific perspective for changing society. They are the ones that will, given any kind of chance, organise the working class to build a mass cohesive movement capable of overthrowing capitalist class rule.

After all, they have done it before. It took three quarters of a century and vast sums of money to wrest the USSR back from the socialists. In the meantime, the world's most populous country had also succumbed to Red revolution.

The communists and the socialist countries they created had inspired a national liberation movement that ultimately smashed the old imperialist powers' colonial empires. And thanks, at least partly, to the existence of the socialist countries, the world's workers had achieved tremendous gains in working conditions, wages and recognition of their rights.

That is why capitalism uses every means, from movies to

schools to the mass media, the obvious and the subtle, to constantly and continuously denigrate and discredit socialism and communists.

It is capitalism's intent that communist parties be kept small, and especially that they be kept isolated from the rest of the left and progressive forces. The main propaganda device in support of this used to be anti-Sovietism. In some quarters it clearly still is.

Anti-Soviet propaganda portrayed communist parties as the tools of Moscow, and the Kremlin (with the eager help of the Trotskyists) as another imperialist state bent on world conquest practically indistinguishable from Nazi Germany.

In fact, while Nazi Germany prepared for a real war of world conquest, a strange collection of anti-Soviet propaganda appeared all over the world (but especially in the USA) determined to convince the world that the real enemy of human progress was not Fascist Germany but the USSR.

Instead of opposing the efforts of Germany and Japan to prepare

for war, these people argued, the Axis powers should be aided and abetted, because that war would rid the world of the "scourge of Communism".

Paid agents of Germany and Japan joined with former employer and police spies within the union movement, home-grown fascists, adventurers of every hue, Trotskyists and communist party turncoats to slander the USSR, and by implication the communist movement everywhere (after all, weren't the communist parties "agents of the Kremlin"?).

In the USA, these anti-Soviet elements found many outlets for their evil propaganda: *The New York Times*, the Hearst and McCormick press empires, the numerous pro-fascist newsletters and magazines. The *Reader's Digest* was always keen to publish anti-Soviet material, the more bizarre and incredible the better.

But one outlet stood out and fed material to all the others: the Special Congressional Committee to investigate Un-American Activities. But more about that next week. ☛

Rob Gowland previews

ABC & SBS public television programs Sun March 16 ~ ~ Sat March 22

The burning question on everyone's lips today is of course "What used to be on the menu in the best houses of Tudor England?" Or so the producers of the new series *Eat Like A King* (ABC 7:30pm Sundays) seem to think.

In the first episode, *Henry VIII* we learn that the much-married monarch dined on dolphin, whale tongue, peacock and pies stuffed with songbirds. Tudor food (for rich folk) also included elaborate gelatines, some made of deer antler, others stained with children's urine. Truly an epicurean delight!

Funny how they don't make programs called *Eat Like A Poor Peasant*, isn't it?

In 1995, the 100th anniversary of film, four Danish film directors, fed up with the expensive crassness of Hollywood product issued a Manifesto called *Dogma 95*, the subject of this week's *Mastertpiece* (SBS 9.35pm Sunday).

Although the problem they were trying to overcome was ideological (to do with *content*), the intrepid Danes, being middle-class filmmakers, sought their solution in changes to *form*.

Their Manifesto insisted that stories must be set in the here and now; films must be shot on location with a handheld camera, using natural light and direct sound; and there can be no murder or weapons (staples of the modern action movie genre).

This is nonsense, of course. Whether a film is meaningful or shallow is not a function of its form. It does not depend on what sort of camera you use, but on what you have to say, and how you say it.

Form, in fact, is a function of a film's content, not the other way round.

Nevertheless, middle class critics have seized on the *Dogma 95* group as some bold new wave. Films from *Dogma 95* directors

have predictably won at Berlin and Cannes.

Why does the Bush Administration want to invade Iraq? To get the country's oil? Yes. To dominate the Middle East and the world's major oil reserves (and thereby dominate the world)? Yes again.

To stop the Europeans doing the same thing? Yes to that too.

After all, from the '70s to the present, France, Germany and the US (with Britain in the background) have competed for influence in Iraq.

France sold Saddam nuclear power plants and nuclear fuel; Germany sold Iraq the means of producing chemical and bacteriological weapons.

After a visit by Donald Rumsfeld (now Secretary of Defence), the US sold Iraq sophisticated Harpoon missiles and sent live viruses, including anthrax, to Iraqi military units.

Saddam's Friends on The Cutting Edge (SBS 8.30pm Tuesday), a very new production from France, examines the whole sorry story (or at least some of it).

Journalists working for *Unreported World* (SBS 7.30pm Wednesdays), from Britain's Channel Four, specialise in covering conflicts that are not grabbing the headlines any more – or yet.

This week it's Nigeria, next week it's Aceh. Then follow El Salvador, The Ivory Coast, Nepal and Haiti.

Being Channel Four, "imperialism" doesn't get mentioned much, despite its evil hand being evident in all these places. Instead, we have a new socio-political trend discovered: "The Identity Factor".

"Never before have so many countries faced unrest, revolt and civil war. Conflict has become the defining factor in the lives of hundreds of millions of people, when living in a hostile world becomes a battle for survival between 'them' and 'us' – i.e. 'The Identity Factor'."

What will they think of next? If you think David Attenborough has been gracing our TV screens for what seems like half a century, you'd actually be right.

In an undemanding but quite pleasant BBC documentary, *Life On Air: David Attenborough's 50 Years In Television* screening



Showing viewers the true picture *Life On Air: David Attenborough's 50 Years In Television*

in *The Big Picture* (ABC 8.30pm Wednesday), Michael Palin takes us through Attenborough's remarkable career.

A talented executive (Head of BBC-2, Director of Programs for BBC Television) he was always primarily a believer in science and in showing viewers the true picture.

After he resigned in 1973 in order to devote himself to program making, his various series with the BBC's Natural History Unit have become definitive, especially in their delineation of the process of evolution.

The new comedy series *Manchild* (ABC 9.00pm Thursdays) is a sad affair striving desperately to be at the cutting edge of modern TV comedy. The star, Nigel Havers, who tries hard I must admit, spends much of the time talking direct to camera.

It is about four sad men aged 50: two are divorced, one is single and one still married. All are obsessed with sex.

That it failed to make me smile let alone laugh is probably because it tries too hard. It could also be

because it is not very witty (despite a plethora of laboured aphorisms about marriage, divorce and relations between men and women).

Or it could be the producers' obvious belief that talking about sex, flaccid penises, muffs, etc. is inherently really, really funny.

I found it really, really boring.

Impersonators about these days, but they too require a witty script to be funny (or a clever and agile mind, as Robin Williams demonstrated on *Parkinson* the other night when he did an impromptu and excruciatingly funny impersonation of Bush senior and junior).

The new series of the British impersonation program *Dead Ringers* (ABC 9.30pm Thursdays) relies too much on references to TV programs (and especially to British TV personalities) that we do not have in Australia.

In the first episode of the new series, there is only one sketch that I actually found funny: a delightful idea, of having a perfectly impersonated Michael Parkinson "interviewing" a surprised girl on a bus stop.

All Parky's mannerisms were on display, perfectly integrated with the surroundings ("So did you start sitting on bus stops when you were a child?")

Overall, very much a hit and

miss affair, but much more miss than hit, I'm afraid.

In 1993, a year after Gorbachev had been ousted by Yeltsin, privatisation began in Russia in a big way. Every Russian citizen received a voucher that could be sold or exchanged for shares.

The vouchers were skilfully intended to make them feel like they had personal ownership of part of the newly privatised public property (that they had formerly owned collectively).

Like NRMA shares, people were promptly enticed to trade their vouchers. The former Soviet citizens, unused to the lies and dirty tricks of capitalist "entrepreneurs", were easy targets for sharp operators, and the latter were springing up like daisies.

As It Happened: The MMM Affair (SBS 7.30pm Saturday) recounts just one (but one of the biggest) of the fraudulent get-rich-quick schemes that were offered to the hapless Russians.

Forty million small investors lost their money. One of the perpetrators used some of the funds he fraudulently obtained to get himself elected to Parliament, before finally fleeing abroad with the rest of the money.

Paradoxically, it is a revealing study of capitalist thinking being implanted in people. ☘

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Sydney

Politics in the Pub

Every Friday night 6pm – 7.45pm

Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills

(across from the Chalmers St exit and Devonshire St tunnel at Central Station)
Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

March 14

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND THE RIGHT TO DISSENT

Lee Rhiannon MLC, NSW Greens

Rev Ray Richmond CEO Wayside Chapel

Simon Butler Resistance

March 21

IS AUSTRALIA'S DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT?

Justice John Dowd, International Commission of Jurists

Paul White, Researcher, Peace and Conflict Studies, Sydney Uni

March 28

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

Maha Abdo President Muslim Women's Association;

Keysar Trad Adviser to the Mufti,

Director of Lebanese Muslim Association

The Gaelic Club, like all clubs, is required to have non members sign in.

To avoid queues you may wish to become a social member for \$5.

Inq: Pat Toms 9358 4834 pbtoms@bigpond.com; Jan O'Leary 9818 3737,
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Voices speak out against US intervention in Colombia

On February 13, a US government plane was downed by gunfire over southern Colombia and crashed into the jungle below. Forces from Colombia's largest revolutionary army took three survivors prisoner, all US citizens. A fourth US citizen and a Colombian Army sergeant were reportedly shot and killed at the scene of the crash.

by Leslie Feinberg

President George W Bush did not pre-empt network television to rattle the sabres for full-scale war in this hemisphere. Nor did his generals conduct live Pentagon briefings so the networks could proclaim a "hostage crisis."

Why such low-key coverage? The flight was carrying out a secret intelligence mission. US officials refuse to identify the missing personnel or admit what government agency employs them, but there is speculation that it is the CIA. The rebels are offering a prisoner exchange.

While Bush and his generals prepare to lay all-out siege to the Middle East, Colombia is their quiet war. But it is no less dirty. The anti-war movement in the United States and around the world needs a clear view of the Pentagon's "Plan Colombia" and its impact on this hemisphere.

Now that information is available in a book from the International Action Center: *War in Colombia-Made in USA*. Many authors contributed to the book.

Section I, "US Intervention in Colombia", debunks the "war on drugs" excuse and shows how massive aerial chemical defoliation of farmers' cropland, first employed by the United States in Vietnam, is itself a violent act of war.

Former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark writes that the

multi-billion-dollar Plan Colombia, announced in September 1999 by the Clinton administration, was meant to "eradicate the four-decades-old revolutionary struggle of the poor in Colombia, bring drug cartels under government control and reinforce small oligarchies subservient to US economic and political interests in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela."

Journalist Andy McNerney analyses the world political context for Plan Colombia and its continuation, Bush's Andean Regional Initiative.

IAC Co-Director Teresa Gutierrez shines light on the real terrorists in Colombia: the US/paramilitary alliance. More than 35,000 Colombians have been murdered in this reign of Klan-like terror over the last decade.

Part II, "Voices from Colombia," lends this extraordinary book even greater power. It speaks directly from front-line trenches of this war - the jungle, the shop floor, the tilled land.

The reader hears from Manuel Marulanda Vélez, founder and commander in chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP); Antonio Garcia, over-all military commander of the National Liberation Army (ELN), the country's second-largest guerrilla movement; women commanders; Javier Correa Suárez, a leader of the National Union of



Members of FARK form a security cordon during negotiations with the Government in 1999

Food Industry Workers (Sinaltrainal); the Lawyers Collective Corporation; the peasant organisation of coca and poppy growers; a joint statement by 60 Colombian social, human-rights, non-governmental and peace organisations. And more.

Part III analyses how US intervention in Colombia affects the region.

Cuban President Fidel Castro Ruz explains that the United States "simply wants to take possession of the markets and natural resources of the Third World countries, including those that were part of the former Soviet Union.

"It is already almost the master of the great oil reserves of the Caspian Sea. It wants to play the role of a new Roman world-wide super-empire, which, of course, will last much shorter than the Roman

Empire--and it will meet with universal resistance."

Venezuelan Minister of Education Dr. Aristóbulo Isturiz lays bare the vivid events of the unsuccessful right-wing coup attempt in his country orchestrated from Washington in April 2002.

The wide impact in this hemisphere is also examined by President Lucio E Gutiérrez of Ecuador; former political prisoner Ismael Guadalupe, a leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques; and Dominican activist and poet Narciso Isa Conde.

Part IV contains documents from many international gatherings rejecting Pentagon intervention in Colombia.

In the last section, "The People of the US Say No," we hear from former US Representative Cynthia

McKinney, Roman Catholic Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, Senator Paul Wellstone, and School of the Americas activists the Reverend Roy Bourgeois and Linda Panetta. There is also a statement supporting Colombian labour unionists by the AFL-CIO national executive council.

Access to the book's contents is aided by a chronology of Colombian history, appendix documents and an index.

Co-editor Rebeca Toledo, a Latina lesbian activist who contributed her skills in many aspects of the book's production, took part in the Tribunal Against the Violence of Coca-Cola in Bogotá in December 2002.

For further information

on the book visit:

<http://www/leftbooks.com> ✪

The Virtual March on Washington

"As an American citizen with ancestry on this continent that precedes the Revolutionary War, I want to register my complete opposition to any kind of pre-emptive attack on Iraq or any other sovereign nation." This is the message Bob Vance of Petoskey, Michigan, phoned in to his Senators in the February 26 Virtual March on Washington.

The Virtual March, initiated by MoveOn.org and the Win Without War Coalition, tied up Senate and White House phone and fax lines to oppose the Bush administration's drive for war on Iraq.

Many callers reported they could not get through - despite repeated efforts they heard a phone company recording: "All circuits are busy." The office of Senator Richard Durbin reported his lines were "pretty jammed."

MoveOn co-founder Joan Blades told the *People's Weekly World* many participants were calling their senators' local offices because they were "determined to get their message heard."

White House phone lines were feeling the heat. MoveOn's Peter Schurman told the *People's Weekly*

World when he placed his call to the White House and then asked how things were going, the operator replied, "The March is on."

"Well over one million phone calls were made in just eight hours by people from every state in the country", former Maine Congressman Tom Andrews, national director of Win Without War, said. "Every Senator's office and the White House switchboard received at least two and often more calls per minute."

The MoveOn website was reporting more than 300,000 people scheduled to place calls by 3pm Eastern Time. Many more were expected to call, fax and e-mail Senate offices and the White House through other organisations or on their own, opposing unilateral preemptive war and demanding

that the US let weapons inspections work.

MoveOn participants had registered online ahead of time and were assigned a specific time to call each of their senators, as well as Senate leaders and the White House.

On February 26, the MoveOn website featured a real-time "anti-war room" where the number of scheduled callers spun upward faster than the blink of a viewer's eye. The site also displayed a 50-state map with callers' names and messages flashing in rapid succession over their states.

From Houston, Texas, Celia Morgan told her senators, "I am one of the 59 percent of Americans who believe that the President should give the United Nations more time. Nothing but ill will and lost lives are to be reaped by invading Iraq."

Eunha Jung, in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, said, "The US is in a position to be an excellent role model for the rest of the world by achieving peace by means of superb diplomacy."

From Bethel, Alaska, Dave

Kirby urged, "Please give peace a chance. Don't let the President cowpoke us into a fight."

"We can't afford war", was the message of Leticia Gilmore of Pierre, South Dakota. "While we are all whipped up about what may or may not be a threat from the Iraq government our own economy is falling to pieces."

"War is not the only option", said Lowell Stanley in Springfield, Oregon. "Peace, while more difficult to achieve, is worth the time and effort; give enhanced inspections a chance."

Win Without War director Andrews commented, "The outpouring of support for tough inspections to disarm Saddam Hussein, and against an invasion and occupation of Iraq got through loud and clear today." Americans want the administration to work through the United Nations to resolve the crisis, he said.

"We knew that so many people who don't participate in demonstrations would take

the opportunity, by letting their fingers do the marching, to send a clear message to their Senators and the President. Our support is clearly growing as the American people begin to reject the administration's arguments for war", Andrews said.

Win Without War is a coalition of 32 national organisations supporting United Nations inspections to disarm Saddam Hussein and opposing a US invasion and occupation of Iraq. Its members include the National Council of Churches, the NAACP, National Organization for Women, and the Sierra Club.

The National Council of Churches called February 26 "A Day of Prayer and Faxing", and urged all its Protestant and Orthodox denominations and congregations to join the Virtual March.

From New Orleans Jean Egan told her Senators, "Our God is love, our Gospel is peace. No war, never again war!"

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